

NEW FREEDOM INITIATIVE

2007 Progress Report



JULY 2007

Table of Contents

Foreword by President George W. Bush	1
Executive Summary	2
Frequently Used Abbreviations and Acronyms	5
Chapter 1: Increasing Access through Technology	
<i>Promoting Greater Access to Assistive Technology</i>	6
<i>Spearheading Revolutionary Technological Innovations</i>	7
<i>Fostering Policies and Procedures Promoting Use of Assistive Technology</i>	8
<i>Increasing the Availability of Electronic Information</i>	9
<i>Implementing Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act</i>	10
<i>Creating a Robust Assistive Technology Industry Domestically and Abroad</i>	12
<i>Additional Activities</i>	13
Chapter 2: Expanding Educational Opportunities for Youth with Disabilities	
<i>Enhancing the Special Education Service Delivery Structure</i>	15
<i>Preparing Children with Disabilities for the Future</i>	17
<i>Enabling Youth with Disabilities to Enter the Workforce or Post-Secondary Education</i>	17
<i>Providing Post-Secondary Students with Meaningful Internship Opportunities</i>	19
<i>Upholding the Civil Rights of Students in Grade School and in Post-Secondary Education</i>	20
Chapter 3: Integrating Americans with Disabilities into the Workplace	
<i>Addressing Causes for Unemployment Among People with Disabilities</i>	21
<i>Removing the Physical, Programmatic, and Attitudinal Barriers to Employment</i>	22
<i>Improving the Service Delivery Infrastructure to Support Persons with Disabilities</i>	26
<i>Eliminating Work Disincentives</i>	28
<i>Expanding the Pipeline of Prospective Employees and Business Contractors</i>	29
Chapter 4: Promoting Full Access to Community Life	
<i>Implementing the Olmstead Decision Swiftly and Decisively</i>	31
<i>Securing Voluntary Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act</i>	34
<i>Expanding Transportation to Enhance Mobility</i>	35
<i>Creating More Housing Options</i>	36
<i>Enforcing the Rights of Voters with Disabilities</i>	37
<i>Increasing Access to Healthcare, Services, and Supports</i>	37
<i>Implementing the Recommendations of the New Freedom Commission on Mental Health</i>	39
<i>Integrating Persons with Disabilities in Emergency Preparedness</i>	42
<i>Protecting the Rights of Crime Victims with Disabilities</i>	47
<i>Improving Access to Telecommunications</i>	48
<i>Working to Ensure that Everyone Counts</i>	49
<i>Increasing Access to Federal Lands</i>	50
<i>Broadening Access to the Arts by People with Disabilities</i>	51

FOREWORD BY PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

July 26, 2007

Today, Americans with disabilities are enjoying greater freedom than they have ever known. This is freedom in a very real sense — a freedom beyond the imaginings of persons with disabilities from generations past. This new freedom — the freedom to dream and to do, the freedom to be and to become, the freedom to give and to grow, and the freedom to participate and to progress — is at the heart of my New Freedom Initiative, an agenda that I launched within three weeks of entering office. The New Freedom Initiative aims to remove the obstacles that still remain for Americans with disabilities.

One of the cornerstone projects of the New Freedom Initiative became a reality on January 1, 2007, when the Department of Health and Human Services awarded the first of the Money Follows the Person Rebalancing Demonstration grants, offering \$1.75 billion over 5 years in competitive grants to States to rebalance their long-term support systems. These grants were created so that individuals have a choice where they live and receive services, and the grants are available to help individuals transition from institutions to the community. Money Follows the Person promotes a strategic approach to building a person-centered, needs-based system that supports quality of care and quality of life in both home and community-based settings and institutions. Giving people with disabilities the ability to choose where they live helps create a strong foundation to help achieve greater freedoms at work, at school, and throughout the community.

Today, people with disabilities have greater access to assistive and universally designed technologies, receive broader opportunities to excel in the classroom, are integrating themselves into the workplace, and are participating actively in every facet of life in their communities. We are fighting against low expectations, and we are winning. Individuals and organizations of every description are answering the clarion call to make things better, not just for people with disabilities, but for everyone.

Considering that over 54 million Americans currently have a disability and that most others will become disabled at some point in their lives, work in this arena touches us all. We must each do what we can to continue to create a world in which equal dignity and treatment are not the exception but the rule, a world in which disability is an incidental rather than a defining characteristic.

This New Freedom Initiative Progress Report details the ongoing work done by the federal government to advance full participation for people with disabilities and to involve them in the work of securing their own tomorrow.

Executive Summary

The President's New Freedom Initiative for People with Disabilities: The 2007 Progress Report

Introduction

Announced in February, 2001, the New Freedom Initiative is President George W. Bush's plan to tear down barriers to full integration into American life that remain for many of the 54 million Americans with disabilities. This report highlights the many accomplishments of the Administration in implementing the President's vision and builds upon the reports issued in May 2002 and May 2004.

Increasing Access Through Technology

The President recognizes the power of assistive and universally designed technology to create greater access to the workplace, school, and community life for persons with disabilities. The Administration supports the development of creative ways to leverage the power of new technologies and the removal of financial barriers to acquisition of assistive technology. The Administration has:

- Empowered states to develop plans for acquisition of assistive technology through the Assistive Technology Act of 1998 Amendments, signed in October 2004;
- Aided state efforts to incorporate assistive technology into their education programs;
- Streamlined accessibility standards for voting machines and other important technological advances;
- Provided grants to various agencies to develop and stimulate technological advances;
- Brought together a variety of agencies and organizations to better understand the need for assistive technologies and to discuss ways to make the technology a usable reality;
- Advanced the President's Executive Order centralizing electronic information of use to the disability community at www.DisabilityInfo.gov;
- Continued full implementation of section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, making electronic and information technology acquired by the Federal government accessible to people with disabilities; and
- Worked to develop a robust assistive technology industry at home and abroad.

Expanding Educational Opportunities for Youth with Disabilities

The President recognizes that people with disabilities need a complete and appropriate education in order to join their communities as equal members. In order to further this goal and ensure that no child with a disability is left behind in the educational system, the President has:

- Emphasized the importance of including youth with disabilities in the annual improvement mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act.

Agencies have responded to the President's direction and furthered his agenda in the following ways:

- The Department of Education has issued final regulations implementing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, established the Teacher Assistance Corps, monitored the first annual state progress determinations under the IDEA, and launched various other initiatives;
- The Department of Health and Human Services has made specific efforts to reduce youth recidivism, homelessness, institutionalization, and other factors that inhibit a full and complete educational experience and that may disproportionately effect youth with disabilities; and
- The Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights has promoted voluntary compliance with applicable civil rights laws relating to students with disabilities, including fostering classroom inclusion and limiting references to disability on report cards, and has also developed other civil rights initiatives.

Integrating Americans with Disabilities into the Workforce

The unemployment rate for persons with disabilities, while falling, remains unacceptably high. The President believes that full inclusion of persons with disabilities into the workforce is an important goal not only because of the positive impact this will have on the worker, but also because of the benefits to the economy as a whole as production increases and people begin to leave government assistance. The Administration has:

- Sought to increase the number of employees with disabilities in the Federal workforce by implementing innovative hiring and working practices, including telework; by revising Schedule A hiring authority; and by forming new disability coordinating councils to address employment within federal agencies;
- Established new initiatives integrating the efforts of the Justice, Labor, Housing and Urban Development, and Veterans Affairs Departments in advancing training and employment for persons with disabilities;
- Released "Disability Employment 101" companion materials with the collaboration of the Justice and Education Departments;
- Vigorously enforced the Americans with Disabilities Act;
- Begun implementation of the "Ticket to Work" program as part of the Social Security and Supplemental Security Income programs to eliminate work disincentives among persons with disabilities; and
- Reached out to individuals with disabilities and employers to facilitate productive employment opportunities.

Promoting Full Access to Community Life

The President believes that all Americans deserve an opportunity to become a part of the American dream: to vote, to participate in the marketplace, to own their own property, and to go about their business free of attitudinal and architectural barriers to full participation. This commitment includes implementation of the *Olmstead* decision affirming the right of persons

with disabilities to live in their own communities, and goes further by creating new initiatives to promote community participation. The Administration has:

- Instituted the "Money Follows the Person" grant program through the Department of Health and Human Services, which includes \$1.75 billion to support states in building Medicaid programs that enable recipients to live in their communities;
- Won a number of Title II and Title III victories under the Americans with Disabilities Act, successfully defended the constitutionality of the ADA before the Supreme Court, and worked with employers to ensure voluntary compliance with its provisions;
- Established the twenty-agency Interagency Council on Homelessness to seek innovative policy solutions to the high homelessness rate among people with disabilities.;
- Increased transportation options by securing disability provisions in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act, and worked with the Federal Interagency Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility to simplify access to reasonable transportation options for all;
- Improved access to housing for all through the Department of Housing and Urban Development's enforcement of the Fair Housing Act and the Architectural Barriers Act;
- Issued an ADA checklist for polling places and administered the Voting Access for Individuals with Disabilities project;
- Improved access to healthcare with the Medicare Prescription Drug Program, and sought to increase accessibility of healthcare for the elderly, minorities, and other at-risk populations, including people with disabilities; and
- Taken numerous steps to modernize emergency preparedness plans and standards for persons with disabilities, including appointing a new director of disability preparedness at the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Conclusion

The President's vision for people with disabilities is not yet achieved, and continuing to implement the provisions of his New Freedom Initiative remains one of his highest domestic priorities. The Administration, through the programs outlined in this document and others, will aggressively pursue innovative strategies to ensure that people with disabilities are included in the American Dream, and empowered to reach their full educational, social, and professional goals.

TABLE OF FREQUENTLY-USED ABBREVIATIONS

Agency Name	Abbreviations and/or Other Commonly-Used Terms
Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board	U.S. Access Board; Access Board
Corporation for National and Community Service	CNCS
Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled	Committee for Purchase
Federal Communications Commission	FCC
General Services Administration	GSA
Interagency Committee on Disability Research	ICDR
Javits-Wagner-O’Day Program	AbilityOne
National Council on Disability	NCD
National Endowment for the Arts	NEA
Office of Personnel Management	OPM
President’s Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities	PCPID
Small Business Administration	SBA
Social Security Administration	SSA
United States Department of Agriculture	USDA
United States Department of Commerce	Commerce
United States Department of Defense	DoD
United States Department of Education	ED
United States Department of Health and Human Services	HHS
United States Department of Homeland Security	DHS
United States Department of Housing and Urban Development	HUD
United States Department of the Interior	DOI
United States Department of Justice	DOJ
United States Department of Labor	DOL
United States Department of Transportation	DOT
United States Department of the Treasury	Treasury
United States Department of Veterans Affairs	VA
United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	EEOC

THE PRESIDENT'S NEW FREEDOM INITIATIVE 2007 PROGRESS REPORT

CHAPTER 1

Increasing Access through Technology

The Administration has engaged in a multi-tiered approach that enables more individuals to reap the benefits of universally designed assistive technology. These efforts include supporting the development of new technologies while helping to remove the financial barriers associated with their acquisition.

Promoting Greater Access to Assistive Technology

The President continues to devote significant resources to meeting the diverse technology-related needs of people with disabilities and enabling them to have access to these technology resources.

- On October 25, 2004, the President signed into law the amendments to the Assistive Technology Act of 1998 (AT Act), which empowers the Department of Education to continue to manage programs including the State Grants for AT program. On October 1, 2005, all 56 of these statewide assistive technology programs began implementing new three-year State Plans for Assistive Technology.
- The Department of Education initiated funding for 33 Alternative Financing Programs (AFP) that provide loans to individuals with disabilities. In FY 2006, these programs made over 1,000 loans worth more than \$12 million.
- The Department of Education sponsored a national conference on the reuse of assistive technology devices in May 2006 and awarded more than \$2 million in grants to support starting or expanding state and local reuse programs.

Next Steps:

- The Department of Education will administer an AT Device Reuse Technical Assistance and Coordination Center. The Center will:
 - Develop resources and guides on AT reuse to provide practical tips on how to begin, maintain, and expand device reuse programs.
 - Examine common problems encountered by reuse programs and possible solutions to solve these problems.
 - Work to create state and national device reuse networks.

Spearheading Revolutionary Technological Innovations

Assistive technology allows persons with disabilities to maximize their independence and integrate themselves into every aspect of societal life.

Accomplishments:

- The Department of Commerce streamlined accessibility and usability standards of various technology advancements, including electronic voting machines, hearing aids, automatic rich transcription equipment, wheelchair design, and biocompatibility and prosthetic devices.
- The National Science Foundation's Research to Aid Persons with Disabilities (RAPD) program supports the development of technologies for new and improved devices or software for persons with disabilities through advancement of fundamental knowledge and research grants to undergraduate projects. In FY 2006, \$3,346,845 was awarded to these projects.
- The National Science Foundation's Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer (SBIR/STTR) Program stimulates technological innovation in the private sector to increase the incentive and opportunity for small firms to undertake cutting-edge scientific and engineering research, including research into prosthetic devices, battery design, and mobility devices.
- The National Science Foundation provides on-going support for the Quality of Life Technologies Engineering Research Center (QoLT ERC), jointly administered by the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie-Mellon University, and maintains partnerships with industry and other universities. In FY 2006 \$2.5M was awarded to support Center activities.
- The National Science Foundation's Research in Disabilities Education Program promotes and funds technological innovations that allow people with disabilities to access science, technology, engineering and mathematics with appropriate assistive devices.
- The Interagency Committee on Disability Research (ICDR) released a compendium of currently funded research projects in the area of assistive technology in order to coordinate funding and reduce duplication.
- The AbilityOne (formerly Javits-Wagner-O'Day) Program promotes technological innovations by:
 - Expanding financial support to nonprofits employing people with significant disabilities.

- Opening new Federal contract possibilities, and developing individually-tailored employment options.
- Initiating an engineering design challenge to spawn technological creativity in assistive technology.

Fostering Policies and Procedures Promoting the Use of Assistive Technology

The Administration continues to make efforts to minimize duplication among the many Federal agencies, the private sector, and non-profit groups in accessing and utilizing appropriate assistive technology.

Accomplishments:

- The Department of Veterans Affairs convened the White House Conference on Emerging Technologies to bring together leaders in the field to exchange information and facilitate greater cross-disciplinary collaboration.
- The National Science Foundation's Research in Disabilities Education Program funds awards to numerous universities to train faculty and staff on the use of assistive technology for students with disabilities studying science, technology, engineering and mathematics.
- The Department of Commerce brought together leaders in the technology field via the Assistive Technology Roundtable to discuss policies impacting innovation, investment, and marketing for disability-related technology products.
- The Department of Commerce, in conjunction with the President's Committee for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (PCPID), expanded its assistive technology work to better serve those individuals.
- The Department of Education trained 150 representatives from colleges and universities from around the nation on the importance of assistive technology for students.
- The Department of Health and Human Services completed an analysis of barriers to implementing technology in residential long-term care settings, releasing its Report on Home Modification and Assistive Technology in October, 2006.
- The Department of the Interior has promoted greater awareness of the many uses of assistive technology through its Disability Resource Center, a state-of-the-art facility that assists employees with the use of assistive technology and ergonomic solutions.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs has made substantial progress in the development and use of assistive technology. Examples include:

- Automobile Adaptive Equipment Program giving veterans greater freedom to travel.
- The Center of Excellence on Wheelchairs and Related Technology designing and testing assistive technology that truly works.
- Other technology including video phones, an audible prescription reading device, GPS navigation for the visually impaired, and many more.

Next Steps:

- As a follow-up to the June 2006 workshop, “Technology to Improve Cognitive Function,” co-sponsored by the ICDR and PCPID, recommendations will be forthcoming in such areas as:
 - Technology for improving function in employment settings.
 - Technology for improving cognitive function in educational environments.

Increasing the Availability of Electronic Information

The Administration has significantly expanded development of web-based content while clustering material by subject in order to enhance ease of use by the reader, including subjects such as civil rights enforcement information, emergency preparedness and response, and health and wellness. This effort complies with Section 508 standards under the Rehabilitation Act and assists people with disabilities who use assistive technology to access electronic information.

Accomplishments:

- The Department of Labor continues to build www.DisabilityInfo.gov as a one-stop source of disability-related government information.
- The Internal Revenue Service has made hundreds of its tax forms and products electronically accessible and compatible with assistive technology including screen readers and magnification devices.
- The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) has dedicated efforts to help blind and visually impaired individuals gain access to electronic forms.
- The Department of Health and Human Services has made a considerable number of its materials electronically accessible to persons with any type of disability and established a new civil rights web portal on effective communications in hospitals.

- The Department of Health and Human Services developed an online resource to assist families in applying for health and other services for children with disabilities and a “Partners for Recovery” program for those with psychiatric disabilities.
- The Department of Health and Human Services developed an assessment instrument to collect assistive device and environmental information from adults with disabilities and older persons living in the community during national surveys.
- The Department of the Interior has made 840,000 documents available and electronically accessible through its Bureau of Land Management, allowing people with disabilities to use assistive technology to access them for the first time.

Next Steps:

- The Department of Labor will expand the DisabilityInfo.gov website by continuing its aggressive partner development campaign and recruiting state and local partners.
- The Treasury Department, through its Alternative Media Center, will make its products accessible to individuals with disabilities using any type of common assistive technology.
- The Department of Health and Human Services will continue to support the national database and resource website on home and community-based services at <http://www.hcbs.org>.
- The Department of Health and Human Services will undertake the “Healthy Choices through Family History Awareness Project” which will increase awareness of the ways that family history may influence personal health, including the propensity for genetic disorders and other inherited disability.

Implementing Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act

Under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, Federal agencies must make their electronic media accessible to people with disabilities, at a level approaching that of people without disabilities. President Bush strongly supports implementation of Section 508 and views compliance as integral to meeting the requirements of the E-Government Act that he signed into law in December 2002. An August 2005 memorandum from the Executive Office of the President reminded agencies of their obligation under Section 508, provided information about resources available from the GSA, and called for the continued coordination between agencies, the Chief Acquisition Officers' Council, and the Chief Information Officers' Council.

Accomplishments:

- The Access Board has provided technical assistance to more than 10,000 callers and has given 80 training sessions concerning Section 508 compliance.

- The Department of Health and Human Services issued a policy statement on reasonable accommodations and trained more than 2,000 managers on the importance of complying with Section 508.
- The Department of Homeland Security established and built a Section 508 Program Management Office, established new procurement procedures, initiated Section 508 outreach and awareness plans, established work stations for equipment testing, and implemented review criteria to ensure compliance.
- The Department of the Interior provided technical assistance and training for employees and program visitors about the need for assistive technology.
- The Department of Justice’s Project Civic Access efforts are resulting in increased accessibility of its websites. Also, its ADA.gov website serves as an information resource with other valuable material to assist with compliance.
- GSA’s Office of Government-wide Policy (OGP) continues to be the Government’s principal advocate and coordinator for Section 508 information, tools, and direct assistance. It accomplishes this by:
 - Continuing to host, maintain, and improve Section 508.gov, a comprehensive resource for understanding and implementing the requirements of Section 508. Over 300,000 people per quarter visit the site.
 - Providing Section 508 training through the “508 Universe,” a dedicated on-line educational portal providing free training on design of web sites, how to acquire accessible electronic and information technologies, and other topics.
 - Providing support to the Section 508 Executive Steering Committee and its working group, focusing on government-wide implementation issues.
 - Developing, over the last two years, the Buy Accessible Wizard. This tool assists purchasers of Electronic and Information Technology in 508 compliance.

Next Steps:

- GSA will implement planned functionality improvements, including: solicitation language support, usability improvements, and management reports.

- The Access Board is revising and updating its Telecommunications Act Accessibility Guidelines and Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Standards through the creation of a Federal Advisory Committee, which began meeting in September 2006.
- The Department of Health and Human Services, through the Office on Disability, will:
 - Facilitate Section 508 compliance in web design, acquisitions, and enterprise architecture by performing a baseline assessment of web content for compliance with applicable accessibility requirements.
 - Fully document electronic and information technology acquisitions regarding Section 508 compliance.
- The Department of Justice will work closely with the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and GSA to develop a set of survey questions to be used for the next survey of all federal agencies regarding compliance with Section 508.

Creating a Robust Assistive Technology Industry Domestically and Abroad

The Administration has worked diligently to promote opportunities for American companies to expand their reach in this industry both domestically and abroad, linking providers of state-of-the-art assistive technology to individuals with disabilities who need the technology.

Accomplishments:

- The Department of Commerce has assisted the European Commission on Innovation in understanding the complexities of e-accessibility, resulting in ongoing efforts in other parts of the world to increase electronic access for people with disabilities.
- The Department of Commerce encourages the development of assistive technology patents, resulting in greater direct involvement by small businesses and inventors.
- The National Institute of Science and Technology (NIST) of the Department of Commerce has collaborated with the Veterans Administration (VA) on a number of advanced mobility, sensory, and other technologies, and is developing advanced robotic training and lifesaving devices.

Next Steps:

- During the coming months, the International Trade Administration of the Commerce Department will acquaint the Commercial Service's domestic and international offices with the assistive technology industry.

Additional Activities

Agencies from across the federal government have either maintained or expanded their activities under the New Freedom Initiative, and many other efforts are the direct result of following the President's lead. The following is some of the work that has been done since 2004.

Accomplishments:

- The GSA Center for Information Technology Accommodation will continue to provide a monthly Assistive Technology Day event to demonstrate the latest assistive technology available.
- The Department of Defense Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program provides technology-related job accommodations to federal government employees filling a total of more than 52,000 requests from military and civilian personnel since its inception. CAP has also:
 - Provided online job accommodation information and assessments to millions.
 - Conducted regional training sessions for managers and employees in the use of assistive technology and the benefits of the CAP program.
 - Increased accessibility to the Military Health System and reemployment assistance.
 - Continued to implement its Telework Initiative to expand options of federal employees to work at home or at other offsite locations.
 - Enhanced options to enable federal employees to return to work after on-the-job injuries.
- The National Council on Disability (NCD) published a report entitled "Over the Horizon: Potential Impact of Emerging Trends in Information and Communication Technology on Disability Policy and Practice."

Next Steps:

- The Department of Defense will continue to improve and expand its initiatives under the Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP).
- The Treasury Department will remain strong in meeting the technology needs of its employees with disabilities and will continue to identify new and innovative ways to be of optimum support to these individuals.

- The Department of Transportation will continue to expand the use of video relay services from Headquarters to field offices where deaf or hard-of-hearing people are employed.
- To assist both employers and employees interested in learning more about assistive technology, the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy will develop materials on the availability of assistive technology in the workplace, including employer-targeted information on technology-related loans and tax credits.

THE PRESIDENT'S NEW FREEDOM INITIATIVE 2007 PROGRESS REPORT

CHAPTER 2

Expanding Educational Opportunities for Children with Disabilities

The President believes that all children, including those with disabilities, deserve to be taught by highly-qualified teachers in environments appropriate to their skills and achievement level. For too long, children with disabilities were forgotten in the system, contributing to a lower high school graduation rate, lower secondary education rates, and lower employment rates. In order to ensure that no child with a disability is left behind in our schools, the President has emphasized the importance of including youth with disabilities in accountability systems under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which ensures these students receive more attention and targeted instruction.

Enhancing the Special Education Service Delivery Structure

On December 3, 2004, the President signed into law the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (PL 108-446), which amended IDEA. The new IDEA made several significant changes designed to help redefine how States and schools identify children with disabilities, set assessment standards, strengthen the contents of students' Individual Education Plans, and adopt NCLB's highly qualified teacher standards. It also refocused special education programs on student achievement and required States to establish performance plans and implement programs to achieve performance goals.

Accomplishments:

- The Department of Education:
 - Required supplemental educational services and school transfer options for students with disabilities attending low-performing schools, and required states to offer appropriate assessment accommodations to students with disabilities during the academic assessment process.
 - Issued final regulations implementing the reauthorized IDEA Part B program, which provides grants to states for special education, on August 3, 2006.
 - Issued regulations under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized by NCLB, to provide additional flexibility to states to more appropriately measure the achievement of certain students with disabilities.

- Established the Teacher Assistance Corps to facilitate professional development of special education teachers, ultimately leading to better quality instruction for children with disabilities.
 - Published the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard, increasing the speed at which schools provide instructional materials to students who are blind or vision impaired.
 - Assembled and released a new “Tool Kit on Teaching and Assessing Students with Disabilities,” published in April 2006 which helps students with disabilities receive a quality education.
 - Issued the first annual State Determinations under the IDEA in June 2007. The State and Federal reports will provide valuable information to the public on the success of the State’s efforts to educate children with disabilities to high standards.
- The Department of Health and Human Services is now expanding assistance to Native American children with disabilities by helping to provide appropriate and coordinated services, resources, and personnel.
 - The National Science Foundation’s Research in Disabilities Education Program promotes and funds innovations in teacher preparation and training to help students with disabilities access and learn about science, technology and mathematics.

Next Steps:

- The Department of Education’s Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services is implementing a comprehensive plan to help states, families, local educators, and administrators implement the IDEA 2004 final regulations, including establishing a one-stop website, <http://idea.ed.gov>, with a variety of print and electronic resources.
- The Department of Education will finalize implementing regulations for the reauthorized IDEA Part C Infants and Toddlers program, which provides state grants for early intervention services for young children.
- The Department of Education will finalize implementing regulations for two pilot programs in the reauthorized IDEA. One pilot will focus on reducing the law’s paperwork burden on teachers and administrators. The other will allow parents and school districts the option to develop multi-year Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), which may enhance longer-term educational planning and reduce burdens on teachers and administrators compared to current annual IEPs.

Preparing Children with Disabilities for the Future

Accomplishments:

- The Department of Health and Human Services supports 15 Information, Training, and Resource Centers to serve children and young adults with disabilities.
- The Department of Education, through the recently established National Center for Special Education Research, is working to generate solutions to special education challenges in 10 core areas, including both student and teacher-based improvements.
- The National Science Foundation's Research in Disabilities Education Program funds projects that are working with national, state and local educational organizations to make science and math curricula fully accessible to youth with disabilities.

Next Steps:

- The Department of Health and Human Services will:
 - Increase the school readiness of children with disabilities from low-income families as part of the Head Start program.
 - Provide technical assistance to the states that participate in its Young Adult Program, which promotes smooth transition from youth to adulthood for persons with disabilities.
 - Endeavor to identify children with autism at younger ages and ensure the earliest possible initiation of intervention programs as well as target community and physician awareness of this disorder.
- In 2007, NCD will be releasing a report that explores the multitude of issues surrounding youth with disabilities in foster care.
- In 2007, NCD's Youth Advisory Committee will present its findings regarding issues that young people through age 30 face in preparing for their futures.

Enabling Youth with Disabilities to Enter the Workforce or Post-Secondary Education

In order to help provide for a smooth transition for students with disabilities from secondary educational settings either to work or post-secondary education, the Administration has embarked on a series of collaborative partnerships that brought together stakeholders from around the country to address ways to enable students to reach their greatest potential.

Accomplishments:

- The Department of Education:
 - Supported seven Parent Training Information Centers to enable individuals with disabilities to increase independence through satisfaction of vocational rehabilitation goals.
 - Established a new five-year National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) in 2005 to help states build their capacity.
 - Hosted a Capacity-Building Institute in 2007 to assist state education agencies in coordinating four transition-related state performance indicators.
 - Held the first National Transition Conference in June 2005 to highlight programs and develop strategies to improve overall transition services.
 - Convened a National Employment Conference on Transition into High Demand Industries in 2006 to promote collaborative relationships between State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies and employers.
 - Launched the Youth to Work Coalition with both public and private partners to promote mentoring and internship opportunities for youth with disabilities.
 - In conjunction with an independent contractor, conducted an assessment of transition policies and practices among state vocational rehabilitation agencies.
- The Department of Labor, through its Responsible Reintegration of Youthful Offenders Initiative, continues to reach out to and serve youth with disabilities who return to their communities after involvement in the criminal justice system.
- The Department of Health and Human Services:
 - Worked to prevent homelessness, criminalization, unemployment, attrition out of high school, and inappropriate and unnecessary institutionalization of young people with disabilities.
 - Supported efforts to train transitioning youth with disabilities to learn how to solidify career goals, develop interview skills, and become familiar with the qualities employers seek

- In September 2004, the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) launched the ongoing Youth@Work Initiative, a national outreach and public education effort designed to address discrimination against teens with disabilities, and to increase awareness of their workplace rights and responsibilities.
- The Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Labor, NCD, and SSA partnered with the National Youth Leadership Network to select and train young men and women with disabilities to be leaders in their communities.

Next Steps:

- As the result of the first Transition Conference, the Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration will implement the following recommendations as put forth by event attendees:
 - Disseminate information for transition coordinators using web-based resources about effective vocational rehabilitation transition practices (listserv for transition coordinators).
 - Increase the support and use of youth leadership forums.
 - Host similar national conferences focused on vocational rehabilitation and employment.
 - Develop tools or strategies for more creative ways to collaborate.
- The Department of Education will:
 - Conduct a competition in 2007 to award 5 year grants to states to demonstrate and evaluate collaborative models for successful transition of students with disabilities into post-secondary education and employment.

Providing Post-Secondary Students with Meaningful Internship Opportunities

The Administration has emphasized the importance of empowering students with disabilities making the transition from secondary education to life at a college, university, vocational/technical school, or an adult education program.

Accomplishments:

- The Department of Labor:
 - Initiated and continues to support the Public Service Internship Program, helping students with disabilities develop leadership skills and gain valuable work experience in the public sector.

- Supported a large-scale domestic and international effort to promote career-oriented mentoring through job shadowing for students with disabilities.
- Expanded support for students with disabilities by increasing the number of such individuals participating in Job Corps.

Upholding the Civil Rights of Students in Grade School and in Post-Secondary Education

The Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) ensures that students both enjoy the rights to which they are entitled and understand the responsibilities that accompany those rights. The Department has engaged in an aggressive effort to promote voluntary compliance with applicable civil rights laws.

Accomplishments:

- The Department of Education:
 - Issued a “Dear Colleague” letter, a “Dear Parent” letter, and a guide for high school staff about the legal rights and responsibilities of students with disabilities.
 - Since January 20, 2001, has addressed more than 10,000 complaints alleging disability-based discrimination using a variety of techniques to resolve complaints.
 - Initiated more than 130 compliance reviews addressing issues of discrimination on the basis of disability.

THE PRESIDENT'S NEW FREEDOM INITIATIVE 2007 PROGRESS REPORT

CHAPTER 3

Integrating Americans with Disabilities into the Workforce

Because the unemployment rate among people with disabilities remains stubbornly high, the President and his Administration continue to work actively to establish and implement comprehensive approaches to enable persons with disabilities to enter or re-enter the workforce. The Administration has enhanced its own employment practices while providing support for employment solutions derived from the private and nonprofit sectors.

Addressing Causes for High Unemployment among People with Disabilities

Accomplishments:

- Under the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, the Department of Labor has assembled a working group to address the employment of those with psychiatric disabilities. In addition, it initiated a collaborative effort with the other departments to assist ex-offenders with psychiatric disabilities to reintegrate themselves into society and the workforce.
- The Department of Labor has launched an initiative to assist individuals with disabilities as they transition from segregated environments into the community, including the workforce.
- The Department of Labor and the Department of Housing and Urban Development have joined forces to support employment of homeless individuals with disabilities. Through a series of grants totaling \$13.5 million, this nation's Workforce Investment System is being used to reach and serve these individuals.
- The National Science Foundation's Research in Disabilities Education Program provides over \$5.3 million dollars per year in grants to institutions across the nation working to prepare people with disabilities for sustainable employment in the science and engineering workforce.

Next Steps:

- The Department of Labor will:
 - Provide on- and off-site training and technical assistance to the State Mental Health Transformation Grants Collaborating Councils for increasing employment.

- Extract policy-related information from the Transformation States activities and other national workforce investment efforts, and develop a policy handbook to focus on employment of people with mental health disabilities.

Removing the Physical, Programmatic, and Attitudinal Barriers to Employment

Recognizing that most of the barriers to employment of people with disabilities are physical, programmatic, or attitudinal, the Administration has focused on overcoming those barriers by appropriate educational and enforcement efforts. These efforts to assist public and private employers and individuals are paying off, and more people with disabilities are able to enter the workforce every day.

Accomplishments:

- The Department of Labor created the Workforce Excellence Initiative to raise awareness among employers that hiring people with disabilities is good for business.
- The Office of Civil Rights at the Department of Commerce has generated a disability newsletter that is distributed via e-mail to interested employees and managers on pertinent issues related to employment of persons with disabilities.
- The Department of Justice has worked in partnership with SSA to distribute tax incentive and other information to 7 million businesses to facilitate greater compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act through its ADA Business Connection program, and has produced technical assistance material of use to businesses.
- The EEOC has conducted free workshops tailored to small businesses, reached out to the private sector at business-focused events, and has published new technical assistance documents discussing reasonable accommodations in the restaurant industry and legal profession.
- By revising Schedule A hiring authority, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has facilitated a greater influx of qualified people with disabilities into federal employment ranks.
- GSA recently adopted the new Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standard to achieve the highest possible level of access to public buildings.
- EEOC has released its compilation of best state government practices promoting employment of people with disabilities and launched Leadership for the Employment of Americans with Disabilities (LEAD) to identify practical ways for increasing the number of individuals with disabilities employed by the federal government.

- The Department of the Interior has established the Disability Rights Coordinating Committee, which is comprised of representatives of every Departmental unit and addresses disability-related concerns both for its employees and members of the public.
- The Department of Education convened a National Employment Conference in 2006 to highlight effective practices for state vocational rehabilitation professionals as they work with private businesses.
- The Department of Homeland Security has worked to hire more individuals with disabilities by training thousands of hiring managers and establishing the Disability Employment and Awareness Council. The Council is comprised of Disability Program Managers and Selective Placement Program Coordinators from each DHS component.
- The Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency established a Disability Coordinator who will be responsible for providing guidance and coordination on emergency planning requirements and relief efforts for individuals with disabilities.
- The Department of Homeland Security trains managers and employees using the award-winning Windmills attitudinal training program. This unique training program is comprised of a series of workshops and modules designed to increase awareness of the role that attitudes may play in the employment of people with disabilities.
- The Department of Transportation has trained senior executives on effective recruitment and hiring strategies, built a curriculum for hiring supervisors, actively recruited people with disabilities at gatherings of consumer groups, distributed vacancy announcements to disability organizations, reached out to and hired disabled veterans, and made its facilities physically accessible.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs Employee Education System/VA Learning University has procedures in place to ensure that individuals with disabilities are not excluded, denied services, or segregated from educational events due to the absence of auxiliary aids and services.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs provided early intervention and outreach to 460 wounded or injured service members at eight Military Treatment Facilities since January 2006 under the Secretary's Coming Home to Work Initiative.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs initiated a new Faith-Based and Community Initiative (FBCI) that has facilitated outreach to community faith-based and non-profit agencies or organizations that identified 518 successful job placements of disabled veterans since the outreach began in 2006.

- The Department of Defense and the Department of Labor have created the REALifelines Program for disabled veterans, which provides career counseling and advocacy services to assist reentry into the workforce
- The Department of Homeland Security has reached out to disabled veterans through collaboration with local Veterans Affairs offices, vocational rehabilitation centers, military installations, and veterans organizations to recruit qualified job candidates.
- The Department of Homeland Security Headquarters sponsored an open house in 2006, in partnership with the DoD Military Severely Injured Center, to provide veterans and students with disabilities with an opportunity to meet managers and supervisors from organizations within Headquarters, and to obtain information about career opportunities.
- The Department of Homeland Security, notably through its Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS), continues to hire disabled veterans at significant levels. Within the first eight months of FY 2007, CIS hired 28 disabled veterans, or 14 % of new permanent hires.
- The Department of Homeland Security was among the first federal agencies invited to participate in a pilot program that launched Operation Warfighter (OWF), a DOD program that offers temporary assignments within federal agencies to newly disabled veterans while they undergo medical and rehabilitative treatment.
- The Department of Defense provides assistive technology to disabled veterans returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.
- The NCD hosted an event to provide disabled veterans with an opportunity to give their perspectives on program and service delivery.
- The Department of Education launched a partnership with Treasury to help families build assets, provide assistance to entrepreneurs with disabilities, and facilitate employment of members of the disability community in small businesses.
- The USDA continues to support thousands of farmers with disabilities through its “AgrAbility” Program.
- The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has published six question-and-answer documents on how Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act applies to people with specific types of disabilities.
- Office of Personnel Management is promoting employment opportunities for people with disabilities through its Career Patterns Initiative.

Next Steps:

- OPM will:
 - Establish a strategic partnership to take advantage of the Ticket to Work program at SSA, address the Schedule A excepted service hiring authority, and increase Federal employment of SSA benefit recipients with disabilities.
 - Utilize its existing employment website, USAJOBS, to link applicants with disabilities to information that will assist them in the federal hiring process.
 - Continue to disseminate information about disability employment issues through seminars and training.
 - Address disability employment issues as part of the broader Federal Human Capital initiative to expand and build a talented and diverse workforce.
 - Continue to emphasize the Career Patterns Initiative's applicability to people with disabilities.
 - Expand the information and supports to Selective Placement Program Managers through the OPM Federal employment of people with disabilities website.
 - Conduct information sessions with agencies, Human Capital Officers, and Selective Placement Program Managers to disseminate information about hiring flexibilities, how to implement greater use of Schedule A, and other employment concerns.
- SBA's Office of Entrepreneurial Development will continue to refine its database as part of ongoing improvements in its EDMISII data collection system.
- The Department of Education will:
 - Strengthen its relationship with employers through the Rehabilitation Service Administration's (RSA's) partnership with the U.S. Business Leadership Network and other business associations.
 - Produce a film that will demonstrate the value of people with disabilities to the economy with the support of America's Strength, a non-profit organization dedicated to changing the attitudes of employers and the public about people with disabilities.

- The Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy will:
 - Continue to produce quantifiable findings related to employer perspectives on people with disabilities and address employer concerns about healthcare costs, absenteeism, and productivity.
 - Continue gathering data on what employers report to be the direct and indirect costs and benefits of providing reasonable accommodations to applicants and employees with disabilities.
- The Department of Justice will expand the ADA Business Connection and develop new fact sheets, entitled “Expanding Your Market,” that address issues related to the large market of people with disabilities.
- The Department of Justice will create the “ADA Business Connection Information Exchange Toolkit,” a collection of material about the ADA that will enable business organizations, disability organizations, and others to hold their own Business Connection meetings locally.
- The Department of Labor, through its Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS) and the Office of Disability Employment Policy will work to assist states and localities to respond to the needs of returning service members who are newly disabled.
- EEOC will continue to publish user-friendly documents on the ADA for employers and individuals with disabilities.
- The Department of Health and Human Services will continue to educate Departmental human resource personnel and managers on employing persons with disabilities and addressing accessibility challenges.
- The Department of Health and Human Services is developing a civil rights technical assistance tool for all State TANF agencies, assisting them in implementing their programs in accordance with Federal law as it relates to people with disabilities.
- The Department of Homeland Security will increase permanent employment, retention, and development of individuals with disabilities within its staff.
- The Department of Labor will continue to partner with and engage members of the Secretary of Labor’s New Freedom Initiative Award Circle of Champions business group and, on the international stage, will meet with European leaders in 2008 in Brussels to advance employment policies for people with disabilities.

Improving the Service Delivery Infrastructure to Support Persons with Disabilities

The Administration has led in streamlining program operations and enhancing inclusion of individuals with disabilities seeking employment. The three most wide-reaching government

agencies providing direct service are the One-Stop Career System in the Department of Labor, the Rehabilitation Services Administration in the Department of Education, and the Committee for Purchase from People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled. These programs pave the way for employment opportunities of hundreds of thousands of individuals with all types of disabilities, and have worked to optimize service delivery. Over the past two years, significant reforms have been underway to increase quality and quantity of service delivery within these departments and agencies.

Accomplishments:

- The Department of Labor has:
 - Awarded a total of \$65 million to 113 work incentive grantees within the workforce investment system from October 2000 through June 2006.
 - Partnered with SSA to provide approximately \$22 million annually to support a Disability Program Navigator Initiative in 31 states.
 - Implemented a customized employment initiative designed to build capacity within the workforce investment system and to integrate customized employment and universal design features within the system.
- The Department of Education has successfully reorganized its Rehabilitation Services Administration, providing tailored service to individual state vocational rehabilitation agencies.
- AbilityOne conducted its first strategic plan to modernize its operations and fulfill the vision of every Program employee earning at least the minimum wage, receiving a comprehensive benefits package, having the opportunity for upward advancement, and being placed in competitive employment.

Next Steps:

- The Department of Labor will use existing benchmarks to support necessary improvements to One-Stop Career Centers in order to improve physical and programmatic accessibility.
- The Department of Labor will continue analysis of the rich data sources resulting from grant activities to produce a comprehensive report of findings and develop government-wide policy recommendations for employment of people with disabilities.
- The Committee for Purchase will continue to implement and update its strategic plan in order to pursue its vision for employment and will continue to work with NIB and NISH

in the development of business lines that create new high-level employment opportunities and management-level jobs for people who are blind or who have other disabilities.

- In 2007, NCD will undertake a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Eliminating Work Disincentives

In addition to the skills that qualify individuals with disabilities for specific jobs, removal of employment-related barriers is vital. Examples of work disincentives include an absence of accessible or reliable transportation to and from work, fear of loss of government benefits (especially medical benefits to address disability-related needs), and physical inaccessibility of various places of work. As a creative way to confront these concerns, the President and the Administration have put into place an array of supports.

Accomplishments:

- SSA has continued its successful implementation of the Ticket to Work Program by enrolling 1,377 Employment Networks into the program and increased marketing and outreach.
- SSA has refined its Work Incentives Planning and Assistance program to place more emphasis on maximizing self-sufficiency and is working in partnership with the Department of Education and the Department of Labor to improve the workforce investment system.
- The Department of Labor:
 - Funded three multi-year telework research projects to explore the full dimension of telework as a viable and sustainable employment option.
 - Provided job accommodation information to public employers, corporations, small businesses, nonprofit organizations, and individuals with disabilities.
- The Department of Health and Human Services provided support for the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Act through:
 - Medicaid Infrastructure Grants, which provided over \$125 million in grants to 47 States and the District of Columbia
 - Demonstration to Maintain Independence and Employment (DMIE) Grants that has committed to providing over \$152 million to assist States in providing health care and other services early in the progression of a disease.

- NCD is conducting a series of studies aimed at improving work incentives for people with disabilities and is taking into account the perspectives, policies, and programs of public and private employers, as well as incentives to persons with disabilities as they consider available employment options.

Next Steps:

- SSA will release regulatory guidance on the Ticket to Work program, clarifying and simplifying eligibility and application procedures.
- The Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy will continue to enhance the effectiveness and reach of services while reducing costs through use of its Searchable Online Accommodation Resource (SOAR).
- NCD will analyze existing public policies that impact the employment of people with disabilities.

Expanding the Pipeline of Prospective Employers and Business Contractors

The federal government has provided job opportunities to people with disabilities on a short-term and long-term basis. In addition, the Administration has actively supported efforts to contract with small business owners with service-connected disabilities.

Accomplishments:

- Jobseekers with disabilities gain long term employment through a series of successfully-administered programs:
 - The Department of Education sends hundreds of thousands of qualified individuals with disabilities into the workforce to fill jobs in employment – 205,791 in 2006 alone. Out of these, 96.0% were earning at or above minimum wage in an integrated setting (an increase over the 85.4% figure in 2000).
 - The Department of Veterans Affairs has hired thousands of people with disabilities and has enabled them to staff its operations at every level of leadership, totaling more than 8% of its workforce.
 - The Department of Labor continues to build its Employer Assistance and Recruiting Network (EARN), its Training and Technical Assistance for Providers (T-TAP) program, and its efforts to promote employment.
 - The Department of Homeland Security has dramatically increased the number of full-time employees with disabilities hired into its ranks,

making up 5.90% of its Headquarters component, comprising 9.09% of Headquarters senior executives and increasing the number of people with disabilities at Headquarters by 256% between February 2004 and October 2006.

- GSA continues to advance its commitment to strengthening contracting opportunities with service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses by establishing set-aside contracting opportunities.
- The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness has encouraged more than 115 cities to date to adopt the innovation of Project Homeless Connect, a one-day, one-stop, results-oriented and consumer-centric engagement strategy to end homelessness.

Next Steps:

- The Department of Labor, through the Office of Disability Employment Policy, will enhance the effectiveness of the EARN program by leveraging the project's demand-side connections, exploring partnerships with key veterans agencies, and formulating alternative approaches for reaching a broader range of job candidates.
- The Department of Labor will develop policy recommendations based on the success of its customized employment initiative and work with other federal agencies on their implementation.
- The Department of Transportation, through the Federal Railroad Administration, will continue to participate in the Microsoft Foundation/AAPD Federal Information Technology Summer Internship Program, the Minority-Serving Institutions Program, and the Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities.
- The Department of Homeland Security developed a web-based Disability training program to educate DHS managers and supervisors nationwide on recruiting, interviewing, hiring, accommodating and retaining people with disabilities. The course also provides managers with important information on emergency preparedness for individuals with disabilities, and contains a glossary and resource section.
- The Department of Education, through the Rehabilitation Services Administration, will continue to align its vocational rehabilitation and independent living state plan process with its monitoring and review process and continue to focus on program improvement.
- The Committee for Purchase, an independent Federal agency, and its two Central Nonprofit Agencies will promote telecommuting. For instance, NISH is allocating funds for grants to AbilityOne participating nonprofits that obtain federal telecommuting contracts and request assistance for training and related start-up needs.

- **THE PRESIDENT’S NEW FREEDOM INITIATIVE
2007 PROGRESS REPORT**

CHAPTER 4

Promoting Full Access to Community Life

The President is committed to promoting equal basic civil liberties for all Americans, including those with disabilities. Community integration is the hallmark of this commitment, which is why the Administration has worked to put into place the kind of infrastructure that fosters equality of opportunity and the right of every American to strive for his or her goals.

Implementing the Olmstead Decision Swiftly and Decisively

This Administration has undertaken many steps within the areas of transportation, housing, access to government programs and services, and the removal of the bias favoring institutional treatment over community-based care.

Accomplishments:

- The Department of Health and Human Services implemented the “Money Follows the Person (MFP)” program, spending \$1.75 billion on the program over five years to build Medicaid programs that enable people with disabilities to transition from institutions to the community.
- The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 allows self-direction of Medicaid services, meaning that people with disabilities have a greater say in their receipt of services.
- The Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Health and Human Services continues to investigate and resolve complaints alleging that persons with disabilities are denied the opportunity to receive services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs.
- The Department of Justice has brought enforcement of the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act to historic levels as part of its ongoing commitment to eliminate isolation of institutionalized persons in various kinds of facilities.
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development has issued guidance to Community Development Block Grant recipients to promote community living for individuals with disabilities.
- The Department of Education provides support for several programs that assist individuals with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in their communities. These programs support:

- More than 330 consumer-controlled community-based centers for independent living that give assistance to individuals with disabilities through various support services.
 - Services for those with severe visual impairments developed late in life.
 - State efforts to enhance independent living services through the operation of Statewide Independent Living Councils, outreach, capacity-building, evaluation, and training.
- The Department of Health and Human Services:
 - Funded programs and services for children and adults with developmental disabilities by supporting state Protection and Advocacy systems, University Centers for Excellence and Developmental Disabilities, and State Councils on Developmental Disabilities.
 - Empowered people with disabilities to take greater economic control of their lives by leading in the creation of the TAXFACTS Program.
 - Continued research to replicate the highly regarded Cash and Counseling Demonstration Program in ten states.
- The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, consisting of 20 Federal agencies, is dedicated to addressing the needs of homeless individuals with psychiatric disabilities.
 - The National Council on Disabilities provided guidance on ways better to serve individuals with disabilities across a wide spectrum of government programs, most recently posting new guidance in November 2006.
 - The Department of Health and Human Services awarded \$21 million to 10 States in fiscal year 2007 to develop demonstration programs that provide home- and community-based services for children and youth with serious emotional disturbances.
 - The Department of Health and Human Services convened the 9th Biennial International Congress, bringing together representatives from more than 50 countries to exchange information and ideas about community inclusion and integration.
 - The Department of Health and Human Services, through the Administration on Aging, held the “Choices for Independence” Summit in Washington, DC in December 2006 to promote specific strategies for assisting older individuals to remain in their homes.

- The Department of Health and Human Services, through CMS, held the seventh annual CMS New Freedom Initiative Conference, “Access to Community Living: Promoting Choice and Independence,” in Baltimore, Maryland, March 5-7, 2007.
- The Department of Health and Human Services completed a multi-year, 50-State review of state policies on home modification and assistive technology to gain an understanding of the scope of support that is available through Medicaid, including coordination with other funding streams such as Medicare, tax credits, and workers’ compensation.

Next Steps:

- The Department of Health and Human Services will continue to administer the \$1.75 billion Medicaid-supported “Money Follows the Person” demonstration, which began in 2007 and will last through FY 2011.
- The Department of Justice will continue to focus efforts on matters fundamental to people with disabilities, including access to core activities of community living and Olmstead implementation. These include:
 - Ensuring the ability to travel freely.
 - Ensuring access to education and childcare.
 - Providing access to the community, including health care facilities and medical equipment, access for people who use service animals, and access to consumer goods and services.
 - Ensuring that polling places nationwide are accessible under the ADA and work to ensure that the disability provisions of the Help America Vote Act are implemented.
- The Department of Health and Human Services will:
 - Continue to implement its *Effective Communication in Hospitals Initiative*. The Department is partnering with the American Hospital Association to assist hospitals in communicating with persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.
 - Continue the several projects it has underway that will help inform policy makers on methods to increase access to community life, including a Money Follows the Person project in Texas and studies of inclusion of people with intellectual or developmental disabilities in community and civic organizations.

- In 2007, NCD will release a report that identifies financial incentive factors that may influence employees and potential employees with disabilities to seek, maintain, and advance in the employment market.

Securing Voluntary Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act

Titles II and III of the ADA cover government and public accommodation standards. The Department of Justice, in addition to litigation efforts discussed elsewhere in this chapter, has engaged in a number of strategies that have resulted in significant barrier removal in every part of the country within state and local government settings and places of public accommodation. The Administration is committed to ongoing efforts to reduce barriers in Title II and III entities.

Accomplishments:

- The Department of Justice:
 - Facilitated greater compliance with Title II provisions of the ADA through Project Civic Access.
 - Continued to build its mediation program, which has had a success rate of 75 %.
 - Fielded more than 46,000 technical assistance calls to its information line and provided online information to more than 3.1 million individuals.
 - Distributed free ADA materials to more than 25,000 police departments, sheriff's offices, highway patrols, and other agencies.
 - Established a new course to train businesses on providing goods and services to customers with disabilities.
 - Made a variety of streaming video products available on-line, including the "Ten Small Business Mistakes" video and "Police Response to People with Disabilities."
 - Raised public awareness about disability rights by reaching out to more than 300,000 people in FY 2005 alone through a variety of education activities.

Next Steps:

- In the next two years, the Department of Justice will review 20 additional cities and towns nationwide under Project Civic Access. The Department will also create and disseminate the “ADA Best Practices Toolkit for State and Local Governments.”
- The Department of Justice will expand its popular ADA website to provide new information for design and construction professionals to get quick answers to ADA design questions and add interactive visual materials to explain ADA requirements.
- In 2007, NCD will release two reports on the Americans with Disabilities Act analyzing its impact and areas for improvement in implementation.

Expanding Transportation to Enhance Mobility

The Administration continues to support transportation alternatives that enable individuals with disabilities to travel independently from home to school or work and to maximize their ability to live in the community. Beyond the local community, access to transportation allows individuals with disabilities to make their way to places that would otherwise be out of reach.

Accomplishments:

- The President has increased transportation options by securing disability provisions in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act, which includes the New Freedom transportation program.
- The Department of Transportation:
 - Continues to implement Executive Order 13330, which brings together stakeholders at all levels under the banner of “United We Ride” to coordinate transportation for low-income individuals, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities.
 - Remains on track in facilitating the removal of physical barriers within the U.S. inter-city passenger rail system, with the goal of full accessibility by 2010.
 - Has continued to educate airline personnel about how to comply with the Air Carrier Access Act.
 - The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has reached out to Spanish speakers with disabilities by launching its new Spanish-language website located at <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov>.

- The Department of Veterans Affairs has continued to provide the Driver Rehabilitation Program which gives veterans with disabilities the training to drive their own vehicles, including with adaptive equipment.
- The Federal Interagency Council on Access and Mobility will fund demonstration grants for local communities to improve coordination of transportation and simplify access for consumers.
- The Federal Transit Administration has issued comprehensive guidance for the New Freedom program outlining eligible projects, strategies for developing a coordinated plan, and options for conducting competitive selections.

Creating More Housing Options

For many Americans today, community-based housing is still a dream yet unfulfilled. Physical barriers such as inaccessible rental units and common areas remain. Even more insidious are the attitudinal barriers erected by those who do not treat individuals with disabilities with the dignity and respect they deserve. President Bush is committed to creating more and better housing options for persons with disabilities through enforcement of applicable Federal laws.

Accomplishments:

- A variety of initiatives in the Department of Housing and Urban Development have increased the percentage of persons with disabilities who own their own homes from 30% in 2005 to 36% in 2006.
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development, in order to help establish higher standards for accessibility, has worked to improve standards under the Fair Housing Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Architectural Barriers Act.
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Justice have worked in close partnership to uphold the rights of persons with disabilities:
 - Fair Housing Accessibility FIRST, a Department of Housing and Urban Development initiative, provides training of architects and builders in accessible design and construction of apartments.
 - The Department of Housing and Urban Development issued Housing Choice Voucher Program guidance to help grant recipients obtain affordable housing, resulting in over 7,000 units created or modified.
 - The Department of Justice prosecuted the largest disability-related Fair Housing Act case in its history, resulting in the mandated creation of 5,000 accessible units.

Next Steps:

- The Department of Housing and Urban Development will continue its program of headquarters-led compliance reviews of major housing authorities.
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Justice will issue two additional joint statements covering Reasonable Modifications and Fair Housing Act Design and Construction Requirements.
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development will reissue its New Freedom CDP Notice, which will give guidance to HUD grantees on how CDBG, HOME, and HOPWA funds can be used to facilitate housing assistance to persons with disabilities.

Enforcing the Rights of Voters with Disabilities

The Administration takes very seriously the need for every American voter with a disability to gain access to the polling place and to vote independently. This most fundamental of American rights must be protected and cherished.

Accomplishments:

- In February 2006, the Department of Justice issued a 33-page ADA Checklist for Polling places, which helps election officials recognize and identify accessibility problems at polling places. This document offers practical, simple, and efficient solutions for eliminating barriers, including temporary measures for Election Day.
- The Department of Health and Human Services administers the Voting Access for Individuals with Disabilities (VOTE) project and funds Protection and Advocacy programs to aid implementation of the Help America Vote Act.
- Through the Help America Vote Act, the Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) has played a key role in providing technical support and guidelines to help realize nationwide improvements in the voting system.

Next Steps:

- The Department of Justice will continue to distribute its "ADA Checklist for Polling Places" and will enhance outreach to disability organizations, local and state government officials, civic groups, and others.
- The Department of Justice will continue to monitor the efforts of the states as they seek to bring themselves into full compliance with the disability provisions of HAVA and take appropriate steps as necessary to uphold the voting rights of Americans with disabilities.

Increasing Access to Healthcare, Services, and Supports

The President believes that access to quality healthcare means access to a better quality of life. Understanding that each person has his or her own unique needs, many efforts have been underway to provide appropriate support for persons with disabilities in this area.

Accomplishments:

- The Department of Health and Human Services, through the Administration on Aging and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, supported “one-stop shops” for expanding access to long-term care services. There are now over 120 demonstrations in 43 states.
- The Medicare Prescription Drug Program included targeted outreach to members of the disability community.
- The Department of Health and Human Services streamlined a process to enable funding to move from institutional care to community-based living for those with long term disability or illness.
- The Department of Health and Human Services encourages physical fitness and healthy nutrition among youth with disabilities through the “I Can Do It; You Can Do It” program; advanced a community-based model of care for children with specialized needs; and developed a total of 21 new Family-to-Family Health Information Centers to provide information, education, training, and peer support for these children, responding to more than 222,000 requests for technical assistance from FY 2004 through FY 2005 alone.
- The Department of Health and Human Services promotes greater health for older Americans through evidence-based intervention, identifying effective strategies to facilitate community-based care, and providing technical assistance and support to promote healthy aging, decreasing the impact of age-induced disability.
- In FY 2006, the Department of Health and Human Services provided a series of grants to support treatment to persons who are homeless due to psychiatric disability.
- Over the last two years, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness has encouraged more than 115 cities to adopt the implementation of Project Homeless Connect, a one-day, one-stop engagement strategy to end homelessness.

Next Steps:

- The Department of Health and Human Services will:
 - Continue to implement the health-based recommendations of the December 2005 White House Conference on Aging and promote the goal of independence, dignity, and health for older adults living with or at risk for later-life disability and chronic illnesses.
 - Implement an action plan resulting from recommendations from its 2005 National Leadership Summit on Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health. These recommendations address the challenge of healthcare for minority women with disabilities.
 - Analyze Home- and Community-Based Service waivers for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
 - Continue to work with all involved federal departments to render necessary support for children 0 to 3 years of age who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.
 - Help states develop quality improvement programs for children with specialized healthcare needs or disabilities, including health plans to improve systems of care for these children.
 - Continue to implement key health initiatives to respond to ongoing, frequently under-treated chronic health and disability-related issues among the American Indian/Alaska Native population.
 - Continue to assist states in their efforts to implement Aging and Disability Resource Center programs in accordance with the Older Americans Act.
- In 2007, NCD plans to analyze the history of federal efforts in healthcare as it relates to Americans with disabilities and to review efforts towards access to coverage and care through the private sector.
- In order to reduce healthcare-related disincentives to employment for people with disabilities, the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy will:
 - Provide information and technical assistance to the existing workforce development network to increase the level of competency and familiarity with healthcare issues.

- Work with the Department of Health and Human Services Medicaid Infrastructure Grant states to assist them in better addressing the employment-related healthcare needs of their Medicaid recipients.
- Examine personal assistance cooperatives to identify promising practices.

Implementing the Recommendations of the New Freedom Commission on Mental Health

Several mental health conditions can result in significant disability. The President believes that work remains to be done in this area, and has taken numerous steps in that direction, including the establishment of the New Freedom Commission on Mental Health in 2003. Ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have resulted in a new focus on mental health services for our returning veterans, and the President is committed to furthering that cause.

Accomplishments:

- The Department of Health and Human Services:
 - Awarded a total of \$92.5 million to seven states to transform the ways in which they each deliver mental health services.
 - Launched the National Anti-Stigma Campaign to educate the general public about mental illness, focus on recovery, and encourage individuals experiencing mental health issues to seek treatment and support.
 - Convened the 2005 Invitational Conference on Medicaid and Mental Health.
 - Supported reform of state mental health systems to treat co-occurring substance use and psychiatric disabilities.
 - Coordinated educational support and other services to children with significant psychiatric disabilities.
 - Succeeded in making mental health services further available to individuals from diverse communities.
 - Supported community-based organizations in providing mental health services to older Americans.

- Doubled funding support for national suicide prevention efforts, including college campuses and tribal communities from FY 2005 to FY 2006.
- Released materials guiding Social Security Disability and Supplemental Security Income applications, Medicaid, and mental health services.
- Hosted a National Behavioral Conference for Returning Veterans and their Families, to aid them in identification and prevention of mental health disabilities and substance abuse disorders.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs:
 - Has substantially increased mental health care capacity across the service continuum, increasing psychology, psychiatry, social work, and mental health nursing staff. VA currently employs over 9,000 mental health professionals.
 - Has integrated mental health into geriatrics. A psychologist has been funded at every Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) team nationally.
- The Department of Education is supporting efforts to identify evidence-based mental health care and to remove barriers for children and adults in obtaining effective treatment.

Next Steps:

- The Department of Health and Human Services will:
 - Continue working through its Mental Health Action Agenda to align activities, remove barriers to collaboration, and develop a systemic response to fragmented services and systems across the Federal government.
 - Support an ambitious collaborative effort to address the significant problem of youth experiencing both developmental disabilities and emotional and/or substance abuse.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs will:
 - Increase access to mental health services and eliminate disparities across geographic areas by increasing mental health care staff, as well as promoting the availability of tele-mental health care technology throughout the VA system.

- Develop programs to train VA mental health staff in the delivery of evidence-based treatments for PTSD, depression, and serious mental illness, and continue to place mental health providers in the primary care setting at VA medical centers.
 - Implement its Mental Health Strategic Plan, which supports the integration of mental health services into primary care settings and provides assessment and brief treatment for those veterans who may not require specialty mental health care, as well as coordinated referrals if a veteran requires specialty mental health services.
- The Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs will continue the Senior Oversight Council, which addresses veterans with traumatic brain injury and mental health conditions including post-traumatic stress disorder.
 - The National Council on Disabilities will complete its Mental Health consumer paper in 2007, incorporating available research findings and addressing the potential for federal policy and/or legislative actions.

Integrating Persons with Disabilities in Emergency Preparedness

The President issued Executive Order 13347, Individuals with Disabilities in Emergency Preparedness, on July 22, 2004. The purpose of this Executive Order is to ensure the safety and security of individuals with disabilities in all-hazard emergency situations. The Executive Order established an Interagency Coordinating Council on Emergency Preparedness and Individuals with Disabilities (ICC). The Secretary of Homeland Security is the chair of the ICC and he has delegated that role to the Department of Homeland Security's Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties.

The ICC is comprised of senior leadership from more than 20 federal departments and agencies. Its mission is to ensure that people with disabilities and their unique needs are fully integrated into all aspects of emergency management. The ICC has concentrated its work in eight major areas:

- Emergency Communications.
- Emergency Preparedness in the Workplace.
- Emergency Transportation.
- Health.
- Private Sector Coordination.
- Research.
- State, Local and Tribal Government Coordination.
- Technical Assistance and Outreach.

The ICC's Report to the President issued one year after the ICC's creation contains background information on disaster and emergency preparedness, needs of people with disabilities, a historical overview of efforts to integrate these needs into the nation's preparedness activities, a description of the implementation of the Executive Order, a summary of accomplishments, and recommendations. Since its inception, the ICC has achieved major accomplishments that are central to the eight core areas of the ICC's focus.

Accomplishments:

- The Department of Justice created the Disability and Emergency Preparedness Resource Center, which brings together hard-to-find information of importance to first responders, emergency managers, disability community organizations, and members of the general public.
- The Department of Labor developed and disseminated a framework of guidelines to emergency planners, managers, and employees, containing key guiding principles that help federal agencies include persons with disabilities at every stage of emergency management.
- The Department of Homeland Security provided input into integrating individuals with disabilities in simulated emergency response exercises.
- The ICC, with coordinated leadership of the Department of Transportation, developed and launched an emergency transportation website, particularly to assist with emergency evacuations. It also released and posted a new emergency transportation publication in September 2006.
- The ICC formed a partnership with the National Citizen Corps Subcommittee to foster ongoing and regular dialog with community-based national organizations within the disability field.
- The Department of Commerce organized a workshop identifying numerous recommendations for additional research concerning emergency evacuation of people with disabilities from buildings.
- The Federal Communications Commission took affirmative steps to improve emergency warning systems for persons with hearing and visual disabilities, expanded access to the Emergency Alert System, and implemented Executive Order 13407, addressing the public warning system's accessibility to persons with disabilities.
- The EEOC brought together representatives from the disability and employer communities to address emergency preparedness in the workplace and determine specific next steps for improvement.
- The Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Homeland Security co-hosted a national conference in June 2006 that addressed the emergency

preparedness needs of older individuals and persons with disabilities, integrated targeted capabilities into FEMA's Emergency Support Functions, and prioritized emergency preparedness at the state level.

- The Interagency Coordinating Council moved quickly to assist individuals with disabilities during the 2005-2006 hurricane season and supported the implementation of the Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Act of 2005.
- The Department of Homeland Security Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) office submitted recommendations to the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) volumes, calling for the addition of specific language that will ensure accessibility and inclusiveness of the DHS exercise and evaluation process.
- On behalf of FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security, CRCL led the development of Guidelines for Accommodating Individuals with Disabilities in Disasters as required by Section 689 of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act.
- FEMA senior staff met with approximately 20 representatives of disability consumer, advocacy, and service organizations regarding disaster response issues.
- A National Advisory Council was created within FEMA to “ensure effective and ongoing coordination of Federal preparedness, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation for natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.”

Next Steps:

- The Department of Homeland Security will work closely with ICC partners and stakeholders to implement the recommendations set in its first two years:
 - Direct homeland security funding to promote the full integration of people with disabilities in all aspects of emergency preparedness, response and recovery.
 - Urge federal building officials and managers to include the concerns of federal employees and visitors with disabilities in developing emergency plans and continuity of government plans.
 - Ensure that Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) personnel, Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) personnel, and captioners may travel to and from their designated facilities to provide continuity of services for persons with hearing and speech disabilities.
 - Coordinate evidence-based federal research into the effectiveness of audio, visual, and/or tactile protocols and technologies related to

emergency preparedness, alerting, warning and response for individuals with disabilities.

- Ensure comprehensive medical approaches that address the health care and medical needs of individuals with disabilities across the lifespan of an emergency event.
- The Department of Homeland Security is acting upon the recommendations of its Remediation Plan in the TOPOFF (Top Official) 3 Full Scale Exercise After-Action Report. Recommendations include the following:
 - Identify individuals with disabilities, advocacy groups, and emergency preparedness experts to assist in planning and provide actors for realistic exercises.
 - Integrate individuals with disabilities in exercise scenario and play (specifying that a school for the deaf or a nursing home is in the area affected in the scenario, for example).
 - Work with the Department of Homeland Security Section 508 Program Coordinator and Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties to ensure maximum accessibility and accommodation for observers and players in TOPOFF 4 and intermediate exercises.
 - DHS CRCL is working closely with TOPOFF 4 exercise developers to incorporate issues presented by people with disabilities and other special needs populations into exercise planning and delivery.
- The Department of Homeland Security is engaged in the revision process of the National Response Plan (NRP) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS). DHS is coordinating a diverse group of stakeholders to develop recommendations that incorporate disability and other special needs considerations into federal policy, operations, and incident command structure.
- GSA will incorporate into its existing emergency management plans (Occupancy Evacuation Plan, Shelter in Place, and Continuity of Operations Plans), exercises, and actual events the recommendations found in the recommendations of “Preparing the Workplace for Everyone: A Framework of Guidelines for Federal Agencies.”
- The Department of Health and Human Services will analyze data on the status of healthcare facilities located in areas affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and track the availability of hospitals and long-term care facilities in the Gulf Region, as part of the Office of Gulf Coast Recovery efforts.
- The Department of Health and Human Services will provide the following emergency preparedness and response supports:

- A web-based training toolkit targeting State and local emergency response managers.
 - An introductory web-based training module on disability that will be used to educate Public Health and civil service staff to be detailed for an emergency.
 - An Assessment Tool developed in collaboration with the American Red Cross (ARC) to identify specific needs of persons with disabilities, functional impairments and chronic medical conditions who present at American Red Cross Shelters and HHS Federal Medical Shelters during an emergency.
 - Public health risk communication messaging for vulnerable populations to support implementation of the Pandemic and All Hazard Preparedness Act of 2006.
- The Department of Health and Human Services will continue to collect and assess reports from state emergency management offices and disability and public health authorities that participated in the Departments of Health and Human Services and Homeland Security June 28 – 30, 2006 *Conference on Emergency Management and Individuals with Disabilities*.
 - The Department of Education’s National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research will fund research into effective solutions and strategies to address the needs of persons with disabilities in planning, response, and mitigation of disasters.
 - The Department of Housing and Urban Development will be working with the Access Board to consider amendments to the Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Guidelines to establish standards for emergency transportable housing as part of its hurricane disaster relief efforts.
 - The FCC is currently undertaking rulemaking proceedings to update regulations for Internet-based Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) with respect to calling for emergency assistance using 9-1-1 and E9-1-1 for TRS.
 - EEOC is evaluating the input it received at the October 25, 2005 Commission meeting and the June 7, 2006 Employer Roundtable to determine what strategies will most effectively integrate people with disabilities into workplace emergency preparedness procedures.
 - The Department of Transportation is acting upon the recommendations identified in its report to Congress and the President regarding lessons learned from past efforts to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities and will:

- Involve transportation agencies and operators more directly in key aspects of evacuation planning and implementation.
- Encourage state and local agencies to work with the disability community to develop systems to identify vulnerable populations prior to an evacuation.
- Develop regional mass evacuation plans with representatives of various vulnerable populations.
- Under the Homeland Security Appropriations Act for FY 2007, H.R. 5441, NCD is working directly with FEMA on nine major activities delineated by Congress to focus and strengthen emergency planning and preparation work.

Protecting the Rights of Crime Victims with Disabilities

The Department of Justice has taken a leading role in raising awareness about rights and services available to victims of crime with disabilities. It has sought input from national experts from the victim assistance, disability advocacy, and policy and research fields in this effort.

Accomplishments:

- The Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) has made progress in tracking crime victimization of individuals with disabilities. To advance the requirements of the Crime Victims with Disabilities Awareness Act, new questions are being tested for possible incorporation into the National Crime Victimization Survey, which is collected for BJS by the Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce.
- The Department of Justice:
 - Actively supports efforts to render education and technical assistance on domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking against women with disabilities.
 - Improved forensic interviewing techniques for law enforcement and medical professionals who come into contact with these victims.
 - Educated professionals in the victim/witness field by facilitating receipt of its article and companion piece to almost 10,000 victim/witness offices working in partnership with the National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC).
 - Expanded its Project Civic Access Program to include inspection of domestic violence shelters funded by cities and towns in support of their local citizens.

Next Steps:

- The Bureau of Justice Statistics, in response to the Crime Victims with Disabilities Awareness Act, will produce estimates of the number of crimes committed against people with disabilities and evaluate the relative risks for these groups. An initial release of these estimates is planned for late 2007 or early 2008.
- The Department of Justice Office on Violence against Women will host a series of focus groups and bring together experts from the criminal justice system to plan how to incorporate the new provisions under VAWA 2005 into the Disability Grant Program.
- The Department of Justice, through its Civil Rights Division, will investigate and then require specific remedial action in instances in which domestic violence shelters funded by local cities and towns are found to be inaccessible.
- The Department of Justice, NCD, and NCVC will continue to partner with one another to foster greater public awareness about crime victims with disabilities.

Improving Access to Telecommunications

The President believes that access to communications is a prerequisite to full community integration. Recognizing this, the FCC has undertaken efforts that have resulted in greater access to telecommunications than ever before.

Accomplishments:

- The FCC has:
 - Recognized new technologies, including new uses of Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS), American Sign Language, and other systems to meet the needs of specific groups.
 - Released a Declaratory Ruling to ensure that VRS consumers can place a call through any VRS providers' service and that all VRS providers may receive calls from and make calls to any VRS consumer, ensuring access in an emergency.
 - Embarked on a public awareness campaign to inform consumers about expanded communication options for persons with hearing and speech disabilities.
- In December 2006, the National Commission on Disabilities issued a report calling for legislative and regulatory safeguards to guarantee equal access by people with disabilities to evolving high speed broadband, wireless, and Internet-based technologies.

Next Steps:

- The FCC will consider an open rulemaking addressing issues that might enhance the effectiveness of the Commission's closed captioning regulations.
- The FCC has several open rulemaking proceedings designed to update regulations for Telecommunications Relay Services to keep up with advancements in technology and accessibility, and to improve financial and program management to ensure the efficient and effective provision of assistive communications technologies.
- The IRS will continue allowing deaf or hard-of-hearing customers to communicate with its staff by various methods, rather than requiring customers to effect all communications through the Federal Relay Service.

Working to Ensure that Everyone Counts

The President believes that one key to ensuring full participation by people with disabilities is ensuring that they are included in the Census Bureau results. This allows more efficient delivery of essential services, more timely evacuation in emergencies, and more equitable use of sometimes-scarce resources.

Accomplishments:

- The Census Bureau has established a Disability-Data Users Group to provide a forum for bilateral communication to share ideas, comments, research, and analysis on disability data collected at the Census Bureau.
- The Census Bureau has produced a series of reports entitled "Americans with Disabilities," which are developed using data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP).
- The Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), in cooperation with the Employment Rate Measurement Methodology Interagency Workgroup, is determining ways to modify the Current Population Survey (CPS) in order better to track employment rates of individuals with disabilities.

Next Steps:

- The Census Bureau is currently reengineering the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) to improve the accuracy, timeliness, and quality of data on economic well-being and program dynamics.
- The Census Bureau has evaluated the results of the disability questions that were tested as part of the 2006 ACS Content Test. The tested questions will be included in the Census Bureau proposal for the 2008 ACS.

- The Census Bureau will release the results of the Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement by October 2007.
- The Census Bureau expects to build upon the accomplishments from the 2000 Census and to duplicate similar partnerships with the disability population in preparation for the next decennial census in 2010.
- NCD is developing a sample national disability performance indicator system that may be considered for use by the Federal Government or any of its various components to assess the quality of life of Americans with disabilities.

Increasing Access to Federal Lands

One of the most important aspects of community life entails taking full advantage of opportunities to enjoy the great outdoors. Individuals with disabilities deserve to enjoy the rich natural treasures that America has to offer. This Administration is committed to providing increased access to these shared resources.

Accomplishments:

- The Department of the Interior has:
 - Eliminated physical and programmatic barriers which had once stood in the way of enabling individuals with disabilities to enjoy all that this nation's federal lands have to offer, making substantial improvements to its facilities each year.
 - Honored its commitment to advance access by overseeing a nationwide strategy of monitoring barrier removal efforts, coordinating remedial measures, engaging in active outreach and education, and instituting an awards program recognizing model practices.

Next Steps:

- The Department of the Interior will:
 - Continue to enhance accessibility of federal land around the country, applying the principles of universal design to achieve maximum integration in all programs, services, and activities.
 - Initiate a major focus on providing effective communication for participants who are hard-of-hearing, deaf, blind, or have developmental or learning disabilities.

- Continue to provide training to its staff and develop a core of knowledgeable and effective accessibility coordinators within its bureaus.
- Remain proactive in addressing civil rights complaints related to both the federal lands and local and state parks and recreational sites under the ADA Title II provisions.
- Continue to provide technical assistance and coordinate with the Department of Justice and the Access Board.

Broadening Access to the Arts by People with Disabilities

Theaters and museums, intended for enjoyment by everyone, serve as centers for artistic expression and enable members of the general public to experience yet another important aspect of community life. The Administration recognizes that persons with disabilities are a vital part of that community and should therefore be supported in their efforts to maximize opportunities afforded to patrons with disabilities. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has played a significant role in making this ideal a reality.

Accomplishments:

- NEA continues to provide technical assistance to arts organizations and institutions on the most effective and efficient ways to make their facilities and activities accessible and compliant with federal accessibility regulations.
- During FY 2004-2006, NEA supported six regional arts agencies to conduct a series of two-day training institutes for staff and board members of state and regional agencies across the country.
- NEA identifies and awards support annually to an exemplary project that creates greater public awareness of and demand for universally designed environments.