

The background of the entire image is a close-up, slightly blurred view of the American flag, showing the stars and stripes in shades of blue, white, and red.

# action

Department of Labor

Independence through Employment

New Freedom Initiative 2002



*Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao  
ADA Anniversary Celebration, July 26, 2001*

# A MESSAGE....

## A Message from the Secretary of Labor

**O**n July 26, 1990, former President George Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), declaring, "let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down." With the signing of the ADA, our nation took an unprecedented step forward toward ensuring the full integration of people with disabilities into American society.

Because of the ADA, millions of Americans today are able to compete for jobs once denied them, enter buildings once closed to them, access information once unavailable to them, and travel on buses and trains once unequipped for them. Progress has been made since the enactment of the ADA, but significant barriers still exist for the more than 54 million Americans with disabilities.

In today's global economy, America must be able to draw on the talents and creativity of all its people. In

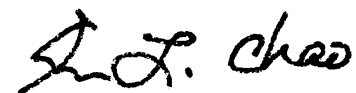
recognition of this, on February 1, 2001, President George W. Bush announced his plan to tear down the barriers to equality that remain for Americans with disabilities through the New Freedom Initiative. This Administration is committed to ensuring that the ADA's promises of equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency become a reality.

Founded upon the spirit of the ADA, the New Freedom Initiative is a comprehensive plan designed to give Americans with disabilities increased access to innovative new technologies and expanded educational opportunities. It will also help people with disabilities integrate into the workforce, and promote their full access to community life.

The proposals detailed inside are designed to further the President's New Freedom Initiative by building

a work environment that truly opens the door of opportunity to all people, including those with disabilities. As Secretary of Labor, I stand committed to ensuring that the Department of Labor's programs and services are available to and accessible by all people with disabilities. Through our new Office of Disability Employment Policy, we will facilitate changes in policies and practices across the Department of Labor and will work with our colleagues across the Federal government to ensure that Americans with disabilities are given the opportunity to move from spectators to participants in the world of work.

Sincerely,



Elaine L. Chao



# ODEP

## Mission of the Office of Disability Employment Policy

**I**n the FY 2001 Department of Labor appropriation, Congress provided funding for the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) within the U.S. Department of Labor, to be headed by an Assistant Secretary. ODEP's mission is to provide leadership to increase employment opportunities for adults and youth with disa-

bilities. ODEP's customers include individuals with disabilities and their families; private employers and their employees; federal, state, and local government agencies; educational and training institutions; disability advocates; providers of services and government employers.

ODEP focuses on both the supply and demand sides of the labor market as they relate to employment of people with disabilities. On the supply side, ODEP works to increase opportunities by expanding access to training, education, employment supports, assistive technology, integrated employment, entrepreneurial development, and small business opportunities. On the demand side, ODEP builds partnerships with employers and state and local agencies to increase awareness of the benefits of hiring people with disabilities, and to facilitate the use of effective strategies to address retention and accommodation issues.

**This information is accurate at the time of publication. Readers should check the Office of Disability Employment Policy's website at [www.dol.gov/dol/odep](http://www.dol.gov/dol/odep) for new developments.**

**This publication is available in alternate formats.**

**July 2002**

**Office of Disability Employment Policy  
Department of Labor, Washington, DC 20210  
[www.dol.gov/odep](http://www.dol.gov/odep)**



# NEW FREEDOM



## The New Freedom Initiative

**O**n February 1, 2001, within two weeks of taking office, President Bush announced his New Freedom Initiative and laid out a bold plan to tear down the stubborn barriers to equality that confront many of the 54 million Americans with disabilities. He did so with the knowledge that:

- Students with disabilities graduate at far lower rates than other students. Early access to support services and an accessible and appropriate education can give America's more than 6 million students

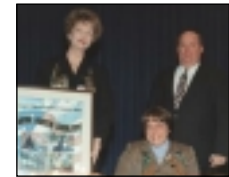
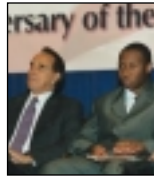
with disabilities an equal chance to succeed and a path to greater independence.

- Employment remains one of the greatest barriers for people with disabilities. Of the 7.5 million people with disabilities on the Social Security rolls, fewer than 1 percent ever leave those rolls to return to work. People with disabilities deserve the chance to engage in meaningful work and to contribute to America's economy.
- Inaccessible transportation continues to inhibit the ability

of people with disabilities to take advantage of job training, employment, and recreational opportunities. The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) reports that more than 100 million low-income, older Americans and people with disabilities are at risk of being unable to provide or afford their own transportation. They are also more likely to be dependent upon others for their mobility. CTAA also notes that almost 40 percent of rural counties throughout the U.S. have no public transportation.



## NEW FREEDOM



- Safe, stable, and accessible housing is necessary before people with disabilities can enjoy neighborhood activities or explore job options. However, according to a 2001 report issued by the Technical Assistance Collaborative and the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Task Force, over 3 million non-elderly people with disabilities who receive Supplemental Security Income cannot afford decent housing in the U.S. without government housing assistance.

- Under *Olmstead v. L.C.*, 527 U.S. 581 (1999), the Supreme Court required states to place qualified individuals with mental disabilities in community settings, rather than in institutions, whenever treatment professionals determine that such placement is appropriate, the affected persons do not oppose such placement, and the state can reasonably accommodate the

placement, taking into account the resources available to the state and the needs of others with disabilities. However, far too many people with disabilities who would exercise the choice to live in the community are forced to remain in institutions because of a lack of community-based services available in their states and hometowns.

The New Freedom Initiative is a commitment to address these barriers and others through programs and proposals that increase development of and access to assistive and universally designed technologies, expand educational opportunities, further integrate Americans with disabilities into the workforce, and help remove barriers to full participation in community life.

In the past 15 months, the Administration has taken many steps toward fulfillment of New Freedom Initiative goals. The

President secured funding for many of the New Freedom Initiative's important programs in the FY 2002 budget process.

Among the highlights is the President's Executive Order 13217, *Community-based Alternatives for Individuals with Disabilities*, directing his agencies to swiftly implement the Supreme Court's *Olmstead* decision. The Executive Order charged six agencies — the Departments of Justice, Health and Human Services, Education, Labor, and Housing and Urban Development, and the Social Security Administration — with evaluating their agency policies and programs to determine whether any should be revised to improve the availability of community-based services for qualified individuals with disabilities.

In December 2001, these agencies, joined by the Departments of Transportation and Veterans Affairs and the Office of Personnel Management, presented a





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preliminary report, "Delivering on the Promise." The agencies released the complete reports in March 2002, outlining over 400 solutions in areas such as housing, education, personal attendant services, employment, health care structure and financing, caregiver support, and technology to make community living possible.

Following the February 2001 New Freedom Initiative announcement, numerous Cabinet members and agency heads embraced the New Freedom Initiative mission, introducing additional activities that helped to advance the objectives of the Initiative. For example, Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson announced a series of grants to promote community living. Department of Labor Secretary Elaine Chao established a Youth Advisory Committee to improve employment for youth with disabilities. Department of Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta and

Project Action hosted a dialogue with transit industry executives and disability leaders to increase accessible transportation. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Chair Cari Dominguez created a series of workshops to assist small businesses in recruiting and hiring people with disabilities. When the President voiced his strong support of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which requires that electronic and information technology purchased by the government be usable by people with disabilities, many agencies quickly formalized plans to institute the standards and expedite implementation.

More work remains to be done. Breaking down persistent barriers in employment, transportation, housing, and community access requires sustained, aggressive, coordinated measures — nothing short of, in the President's words, a "revolution of independence." With the commitment and resources of

the Cabinet, and through new agency and private sector partnerships, the President will continue the campaign to advance the full and equal participation of people with disabilities.

The President proposed increases in the FY 2002 budget totaling \$1.38 billion to fund New Freedom Initiative programs. Congress supported the President's priorities by funding his initiatives. For FY 2003, the President has proposed increases of \$1.39 billion for New Freedom Initiative funding. The Administration will continue to work with Congress to see that the New Freedom Initiative commitments are implemented and that its proposals are realized.

— An excerpt from  
*"A Progress Report on Fulfilling America's Promise to Americans with Disabilities"*  
May 2002



# INTRODUCTION

## Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy: New Freedom Initiative Announcements

The Department of Labor (DOL) is charged with preparing the American workforce of the 21st century for new and better jobs. It is responsible for the administration and enforcement of numerous federal statutes, covering a wide variety of workplace activities for employers and workers. The programs, services, and benefits afforded through these programs are intended for all employers and workers across the nation, including individuals with disabilities. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao is committed to ensuring that DOL's programs and services are available to and accessible by all people with disabilities, including those transitioning to the community, or at risk of institutionalization or segregation from their communities. The DOL is committed to the actions and recommendations contained herein. Bold and innovative initiatives are vital to changing negative attitudes, providing appropriate customized training and employment services, and building a work environment that truly opens the door of opportunity to all people. Secretary Chao is working on the front lines to move Americans with disabilities from spectators to participants in the world of work. She has directed each DOL agency to aggressively implement the policies and programs outlined in this brochure.







# EMPLOYMENT



**T**he Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) will expand its customized employment initiative to increase employment choices and earnings opportunities for people with disabilities. This initiative provides the opportunity to bring together in a local area multiple cutting-edge strategies and promising practices to increase employment for people with significant disabilities and promote systemic change within the states through the workforce investment system. Customizing employment is one of many proven options for increasing employment opportunities for people with

disabilities. Choice-based strategies, forms of person-directed financing, access to personal budgets, leveraging expertise across multiple systems, and mobilizing resources in states and local communities are all elements to increasing these opportunities. As part of this initiative, ODEP will expand its Customized Employment Grant Initiative which awarded grants to seven states in FY 2001 to additional states in FY 2002.

The Department of Labor will work to increase participation of faith-based and community-based

organizations in providing customized employment services and opportunities to individuals with disabilities, and encourage their role in partnerships with other providers at the local level. ODEP will work in conjunction with DOL's Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), and the Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration to develop technical assistance and training to help these organizations to increase their capacity, improve their knowledge and use of best practices, and



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expand their programs relating to the employment of people with disabilities. ODEP and ETA will provide information about conversion from segregated to integrated employment services for organizations that wish to incorporate such practices. ETA and ODEP will also provide information on effective grant writing, methods for responding to requests for proposals and solicitations, and accessing funding opportunities related to employment of people with disabilities.

ODEP will initiate an *Olmstead* Community Employment Initiative. ODEP will develop and implement a coordinated strategy to ensure that all DOL policies and activities fully address the employment and training needs of people with disabilities who are at risk of institutionalization, or who are transitioning from institutions into the workplace and the community. As part of this initiative, ODEP will award *Olmstead* Coordination and Action Grants. These grants will



be awarded to states that (1) develop an employment focus for persons with disabilities in their *Olmstead* state implementation plans and activities, and (2) incorporate activities coordinating employment and related supports at the state and local level.

Recipients will be a consortia of nonprofit advocacy or service agencies and Local Workforce Investment Boards (Local Boards), which will conduct aggressive and intensive outreach to persons with significant disabilities who are leaving or have already left institutions, who are currently in segregated environments, and/or who are at risk of segregation.

ODEP, working within DOL and with other Federal agencies, will develop and implement an action plan to promote self-employment and small business development among people with disabilities, particularly those with the most significant disabilities. Ten years post-passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, entrepreneurship provides a key next step in the full participation of individuals with disabilities in America's communities. As part of this plan, ODEP will work with other relevant agencies, including the Small Business Administration, the Social Security Administration, the Treasury Department, and the Department of Education's



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Rehabilitation Services Administration to educate lenders about the viability of small business ownership for people with disabilities. In addition, the Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP) will conduct bimonthly vendor outreach sessions, periodically targeted to veterans with service-connected and nonservice-connected disabilities. PRO-Net will be employed to identify small businesses that are owned by disabled persons and service-disabled veterans for existing procurement opportunities.

ETA awarded \$20 million in Work Incentive Grants. Designed to enhance the employability, employment, and career advancement of people with disabilities through enhanced service delivery in the One-Stop delivery system established under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), the Work Incentive Grant program will fund consortia and/or partnerships of public and private non-profit entities working in coordination

with the One-Stop delivery system to augment existing programs and services and ensure programmatic access and streamlined, seamless service delivery for people with disabilities.

ETA awarded \$5.6 million to multi-state employment and training projects serving people with disabilities. This skill-training grant program is funded using Workforce Investment Act Title I, Section 171 funds and targets projects providing multi-site training and other employment services to individuals with disabilities that result in long-term, unsubsidized employment.

ETA developed a Training and Employment Notice (TEN) on the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act. This TEN provides the workforce investment system with information on how to prepare for the introduction of the Ticket by explaining how tickets work generally, and provides guidance for the early

implementation states on what to do when presented with a Ticket.

ODEP, ETA, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management's (OASAM's) Civil Rights Center (CRC), will conduct disability-focused reviews and evaluations of implementation of Section 188 of WIA, the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity obligations. Under the leadership of the CRC, these evaluations will enable the Department of Labor to identify further areas in which federal training and technical assistance activities are needed to eliminate barriers and to prevent disability discrimination in the WIA programs.

The Assistant Secretary of ODEP will participate as a member of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)-Led Federal Partners Working Group on the implementation of the Workforce Investment Act. The involvement of the ODEP will help to ensure that the



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employment-related needs of people with disabilities are addressed within the context of the generic workforce system.

ODEP, along with our federal agency partners, will promote teleworking by identifying current positions that can be relocated or restructured to provide possible home-based or other off-site working opportunities. Harnessing the power and potential of new communications and information technologies, teleworking will allow more people with disabilities to enter the American workforce. Jobs under consideration for restructuring include those appropriate for call center operations, and "contact center" work such as claims processing, loan processing, debt collection, audit resolution, and a variety of miscellaneous financial transactions and grant/contract management activity. In addition, ODEP will sponsor three telework pilot projects.

**"THE TRUTH  
IS THAT  
EMPLOYMENT  
HAS EVERYTHING  
TO DO WITH  
A SUCCESSFUL  
LIFE IN THE  
COMMUNITY."**

— Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao,  
*National Summit on Employment  
and Transportation for People with  
Disabilities, June 26, 2002*

ODEP will launch a comprehensive and coordinated public awareness and education campaign to decrease stigma, eliminate attitudinal barriers, and increase employment opportunities for adults and youth with disabilities. This multi-faceted campaign will

target business and industry, lenders, small businesses, families, and others. The campaign will also focus on making people with disabilities aware of mainstream employment-related services available to them and providing highly-visible role models. Successful entrepreneurs who have disabilities will also be profiled through a variety of mainstream media outlets to increase awareness about the self-employment potential of people with disabilities

ETA and ODEP will release *Building Employment Success for Persons with Disabilities Under Welfare Reform*. This technical assistance guide will assist the workforce investment system in better serving and working with individuals who have hidden disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities, mental retardation, psychiatric disabilities, and addictive disorders).

The Pension and Welfare Benefits Administration (PWBA) will



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expand its education campaigns and programs to provide more education and outreach directed toward Americans with disabilities who are entering the workplace. Building on its current materials, PWBA will develop new materials addressing the importance of health benefits coverage and the important choices to be made about health benefits when entering the workforce, and specific information/questions relevant to Americans with disabilities. PWBA will also expand its materials addressing the importance of saving for a secure future and will provide information on retirement benefit plan rights to assist American workers with disabilities.

ODEP and PWBA are conducting research on issues related to retirement savings and asset development for people with disabilities. Among other things, this research will focus on issues of specific concern to people with disabilities who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI)



*President George H.W. Bush signing the Americans with Disabilities Act, July 26, 1990*

disability benefits, such as asset exclusions and limits; the potential of Individual Development Accounts and other savings/asset development tools; information and ideas for entrepreneurs and small business owners with disabilities; and ideas for creating new partnerships with public and private sector organizations.

ODEP will collaborate with the Employment Standards Administration's (ESA's) Wage and Hour Division to provide technical assistance to employers certified under 14(c). ODEP will work with

the Wage and Hour Division at ESA to distribute training and technical assistance materials – especially to employers certified under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act to pay commensurate wages – on successful strategies for increasing customized employment and productivity of workers with significant disabilities. The Wage and Hour Division will also monitor compliance with Section 14(c) requirements by conducting investigation-based compliance surveys of employers who hold Section 14(c) certificates.





# EMPLOYMENT



ODEP will work in collaboration with ESA's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) to explore mutual partnerships with employer organizations like the National Industry Liaison Group (NILG), the Business Leadership Networks (BLNs), and other employer groups to effectively promote the employment of people with disabilities. This collaborative effort with representatives from business, industry, and education may include the development of combined technical assistance materials, training seminars, joint conferences and the development of additional public/private partnerships to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities among Federal contractors.

ODEP, in conjunction with other appropriate agencies and departments, will convene a key group of foundation leaders for a foundation summit. The purpose of the summit will be to examine how

government agencies, businesses, and the foundation sector can work together to facilitate employment for young people and adults with disabilities. The summit will provide an opportunity to elevate understanding of the issues related to employment of people with disabilities, as well as the role that the foundation community could play in addressing barriers. In addition, it will provide the opportunity for foundation leaders to integrate initiatives relating to employment for people with disabilities into existing foundation initiatives and ensure that such initiatives are accessible to people with disabilities.

ODEP will work with other federal agencies to promote the full inclusion of veterans with disabilities in the programs and services governed by Local Workforce Investment Boards. ODEP will consult with internal DOL agencies, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Small Business Administration, the Office of Personnel

Management, and other relevant agencies, as well as stakeholders.

ODEP will collaborate with the Department of Labor's International Labor Affairs Bureau (ILAB), on a variety of mutually agreed-upon efforts to help ensure that those international labor policies, programs, and projects over which the ILAB has administrative authority will take into account the employment-related concerns of people with disabilities. The ODEP will serve as a technical assistance resource to ILAB in areas such as international child labor, briefings and tours for foreign labor delegations, immigration studies, and U.S. labor affairs representation at meetings and workgroups sponsored/hosted by the International Labor Organization (ILO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Employment and Social Affairs Directorate of the European Commission, and other international organizations.





# YOUTH

## Expanding Opportunities for Youth With Disabilities

**D**OL will consider recommendations submitted from the Youth Advisory Committee. Composed of 15 young people (ages 14 to 28) with diverse disabilities and backgrounds, the Committee's role is to advise the Secretary of Labor and her designees (which include the Office of the 21st Century Workforce and the Office of Disability Employment Policy) on education, transition, employment, health, rehabilitation, and independent living issues affecting young people with disabilities.

DOL will promote work-based learning opportunities for young people with disabilities. ODEP will work in collaboration with the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives to promote mentoring activities at the federal, state and local levels for young people with disabilities. Moreover, ODEP will expand the Workforce Recruitment Program, which provides internships for young people with disabilities in the Federal Government, to a public-private partnership with large and small businesses so that young people with disabilities get the

work experience they need to be successful in their adult lives.

ODEP will expand the Youth-To-Work Grant Program in 2002. This program provides capacity building to workforce investment-assisted youth programs and the High School/High Tech Programs to prepare more young people with disabilities for employment and independence by helping them earn a high school diploma, allowing more young people with disabilities to participate in vocational training or education,

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and to learn daily skills such as budgeting, career planning, and securing housing and employment. The Youth-To-Work Grant Program ensures that more young workers with disabilities have adequate access to the training and education opportunities needed to maintain and upgrade their skills.

DOL will continue to promote leadership by young people with disabilities through the Youth Leadership Network. DOL will continue to participate as a Federal interagency sponsor of the National Youth Leadership Network. The National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN) is dedicated to advancing the next generation of disability leaders. Led by a 20-member Youth Leadership Council, the NYLN currently includes 250 youth leaders with diverse disabilities.

DOL will work to increase successful transitions to employment and post-secondary activities for young people with disabilities.



*Disability Mentoring Day, October 24, 2001*

ODEP will work with other DOL agencies, the Department of Education (ED), and other appropriate federal departments on activities to promote the transition of young people with disabilities from school to post-secondary opportunities and/or employment. Actions will include research and disseminating successful strategies for transitioning young adults with significant disabilities into employment.

ETA will implement the June 20, 2001 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between

DOL and the Department of Education. The purpose of this MOU is the development of a coordinated, interagency initiative to raise educational attainment and improve basic skills among current and future workers. The initiative is focused on improving basic skills in the current workforce through collaboration between the Workforce Investment System and literacy providers and on increasing Job Corps students' access to high school diplomas by promoting joint activities between Job Corps Centers and public schools.



# TECHNOLOGY

## Access Through Technology

**O**DEP will expand its DisAbilityDirect.gov website to better serve the needs of people with disabilities. In recognition that people with disabilities, and their families, employers, and service providers need access to the multitude of resources that the New Freedom Initiative represents in a centralized location, ODEP will partner with other federal agencies to expand its DisAbilityDirect.gov website to encompass all facets of the New Freedom Initiative.

ODEP will establish an online

registry, similar to America's Job Bank, where local or community-based organizations that help locate personal assistants can be identified. This registry will be located on the DisAbilityDirect.gov website, our nation's One-Stop resource on the New Freedom Initiative.

The Women's Bureau will hold a series of virtual conference calls on technology-related topics. The calls are intended to: (1) increase the number of girls and women, including those with disabilities, who participate in technology-related education and training

programs; and (2) increase the number of women who choose to stay in technology-related careers or who wish to advance in their fields.

The Women's Bureau, in collaboration with ODEP, will develop an online community resource guide. This guide, which will be available on DisAbilitydirect.gov, will provide consumers and workforce professionals with a listing of community and faith-based services for women available in their local communities.



# COMMUNITY

## Community Living

**O**DEP will use part of its \$8.3 million allocation for *Olmstead*-related employment activities to work within DOL and with other federal agencies to identify and propose options for increasing the availability of, and providing some path of career progression for personal assistants and other direct care staff. There is an urgent need to increase the employment status and labor supply of personal assistants and other direct care staff and community service workers. Working with other federal agencies, including the Departments of Education and Health & Human Services, the overarching goal is to develop a cross-agency/cross-department plan to increase the

availability and quality of personal assistants and other direct care staff, and identify options for their education, training, and career progression.

ODEP will support collaboration with DOL's ETA, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Department of Transportation (DOT), to develop strategies to encourage integration of housing and transportation services for people with disabilities within One-Stop Career Centers. A lack of available, affordable transportation and housing are two of the most often cited barriers to employment, particularly for people with disabili-

ties. The incorporation of housing and transportation services such as hiring mobility managers, developing individual transportation plans, conducting travel training, working cooperatively with transit and public housing authorities, creating transportation and housing information centers and inventories, and creating linkages with local housing and transit providers and advocacy organizations would make the One-Stop Centers more responsive to the employment support needs of people with disabilities. As part of this effort, on July 26 and July 27, 2002, DOL and the Department of Transportation co-sponsored a two-day summit.





## For More Information, Please Contact:

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