



News Release

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7 states receive \$20.7 million in Disability Employment Initiative funding from US Labor Department for education, training, employment projects

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Labor today announced \$20,654,352 for seven states under the Disability Employment Initiative to improve education, training, and employment opportunities and outcomes for youth and adults with disabilities who are unemployed, underemployed and/or receiving Social Security disability benefits. The initiative is jointly funded and administered by the department’s Employment and Training Administration and its Office of Disability Employment Policy.

“This program represents our strong commitment to assisting people with disabilities in securing good jobs and providing career pathways,” said Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. “These Employment and Training Administration grants will expand the capacity of the public workforce system to provide training and employment services to people with disabilities.”

This round of funding is the third under the Disability Employment Initiative, which currently supports 16 state projects. The new grants are being awarded to Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota and Rhode Island, and will implement exemplary employment services for individuals with disabilities in the public workforce system. The states with continuing grants under the initiative are Alaska, Arkansas, California, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin.

All projects under this initiative build upon previous department initiatives by hiring staff with expertise in disability and workforce issues. The grants support extensive collaboration across multiple workforce and disability service systems in each state, including vocational rehabilitation, mental health, intellectual/developmental disability agencies, independent living centers, business leadership networks, and other community and nonprofit organizations.

“Everyone should have the opportunity to contribute to today’s workforce,” said Kathy Martinez, assistant secretary of labor for disability employment policy. “Enhancing the workforce system’s ability to provide effective coordinated and collaborative service delivery will help to ensure that people with disabilities have access to the employment training and supports they need to achieve self-sufficiency.”

The department’s priority is to serve individuals with disabilities and those who are receiving Social Security disability benefits, and it is working on early intervention strategies to assist people with disabilities before they become disability beneficiaries.

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The Disability Employment Initiative expands the public workforce system's participation in the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work Program by requiring participating state workforce agencies or local workforce investment boards to become active employment networks. Many Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance beneficiaries use the mainstream workforce system to seek employment opportunities. By serving as employment networks, grantees will expand the capacity of the department's American Job Center network to serve Social Security beneficiaries with disabilities.

Editor's note: A chart listing the grant recipients follows this release.

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Disability Employment Initiative Grants Recipients	Amount
State of Florida Department of Economic Development	\$3,291,410
Iowa Workforce Development	\$1,883,230
Indiana Department of Workforce Development Employment	\$2,277,748
Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development	\$4,788,892
Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development	\$2,797,093
Louisiana Workforce Commission	\$2,271,102
Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training	\$3,344,877