

Employment Works Task Force

2014 Annual Report



STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA

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Authored by: Department of Human Services – Division of Rehabilitation Services



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During 2012 and 2013, as part of the National Governors Association, Governor Dugaard helped to lead an initiative to identify ways of increasing the employment rate of people with disabilities. Not only did the Governor have a professional interest in this initiative, but he also grew up in a family household where both of his parents were deaf and the primary method of communication consisted of American Sign Language. In July of 2013, Governor Dugaard created the Employment Works Task Force that consisted of employers, individuals with disabilities, legislators, and other stakeholders from across the state. The Task Force group met on three separate occasions and developed five main recommendations. The overall goal of the recommendations is focused on the promotion, inclusion, and retention of employment of people with disabilities.

This document outlines the progress that was made on the recommendations since the Employment Works Task Force report was released in January of 2014.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The first recommendation consists of finding and supporting businesses to employ people with disabilities. The representation of employers on the Task Force suggested having access to a primary point of contact for businesses within the scope of hiring people with disabilities.

Strategies:

- 1) Create a single point of contact at the state level to interact with business.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) was responsible for creating a position specifically to serve as a resource to employers, providers, and people with disabilities. This position is critical to the success of many of the strategies that are outlined throughout the report. Kimberly Hoberg began her duties as the DRS Business Specialist on July 24, 2014. Contact information for Kimberly:

Office phone number: 605-626-2398

Email address: Kimberly.hoberg@state.sd.us

Mailing address: 1707 4th Ave SE, Ste A, Aberdeen, SD 57401.

Status: completed.

- 2) Partner with business organizations to reach employers (e.g., SD Retailers Association, chambers of commerce).

Status: in progress. Projected completion date of October, 2015.

- 3) Expand the number of business-led organizations that employers can go to for technical assistance and consultation when employing people with disabilities.

In addition to the Business Resource Network in Sioux Falls, the Division of Rehabilitation Services is partnering with the Workforce Diversity Network of the Black Hills (WDBNH) in Rapid City to offer business-led technical assistance to employers. The Division will continue to evaluate and consider opportunities for supporting business-led organizations in other communities as well.

Contact information for the two business-led organizations in South Dakota:

Business Resource Network:

Julie Briggs, Director

Office phone number: 605-367-5260

Email address: jbriggs@sfbrn.org

Website: <http://www.sfbrn.org/>

Mailing address: 2900 W. 11th St Suite 101, Sioux Falls, SD 57104

Workforce Diversity Network of the Black Hills:

Catherine Greseth, Director

Office phone number: 605-787-2590

Email address: director@workforcediversitynetworkbh.org

Website: <http://www.workforcediversitynetworkbh.org/>

Mailing address: 505 Kansas City St, Rapid City, SD 57701

Status: completed.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The second recommendation consists of connecting businesses to people with disabilities. Part of this recommendation focuses on identifying the needs of businesses in reference to matching them with qualified employees, especially in respect of the current labor shortage of SD's workforce. According to the 2012 Annual Community Report obtained from Cornell University, the employment rate in SD of people with disabilities was 54.1%, while the employment rate of people without disabilities was at 83.6%.

Strategies:

- 1) Solicit employer staffing needs.
 - The Business Specialist has worked with fourteen employers in 2014 to identify their hiring needs and employee qualifications.
 - Three employers are now signed on to use the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP) in South Dakota. The TAP is a website that specifically matches people with disabilities to employers. It offers businesses the opportunity to post jobs, search candidate resumes based on skill sets and geographic

availability, capture job metrics, interview candidates, and have online job fairs. Talent Acquisition Portal website: <https://tapability.org/>

Status: in progress. Projected completion date of July, 2015.

- 2) Host events that support collaboration with employer-led organizations to solicit input from employers.

In recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), thirteen communities in South Dakota hosted events during October 2014. These events recognize employers who employ people with disabilities and facilitate the strengthening of relationships with employers across the state. 217 employers were in attendance, and total attendance was 1,430.

Status: completed.

- 3) DHS will work with the S.D. Department of Labor and Regulation to address workforce needs and labor market trends.

Status: in progress. Projected completion date of July, 2016.

- 4) Build the capacity in South Dakota state government to increase the employment rate of people with disabilities.

Governor Daugaard has challenged the state of South Dakota to become a model employer of people with disabilities, and has laid out 5 strategies that DHS and the state's Bureau of Human Resources (BHR) will achieve by July, 2015.

These strategies are:

1. Expanding Project Skills work experiences within state government,
2. Providing training to BHR and State staff (provided in Oct-Nov 2014),
3. Collecting data on current state employees with disabilities,
4. Increasing the accessibility of program and services in DHS, and
5. Reviewing state websites and hiring processes for accessibility.

BHR provided training to their staff in October, 2014, and the BHR Managers Conference in November, 2014 had an emphasis on disability. Two students have been hired for Project Skills work experiences so far in 2014, and more students are scheduled for work experiences with the State in the spring of 2015.

Status: in progress, projected completion date of July, 2015.

- 5) Develop the expertise of vocational rehabilitation staff and service providers.

- DRS made job development training webinars available at no cost to VR service providers in 2014, and agreed to continue these webinars into 2015. Sixty seven total training participants took part in these webinars in 2014.
- DRS awarded Establishment grants to Community Support Providers to expand their Supported Employment programs. Nine proposals were approved for funding, and contracts will begin in 2015.

Status: completed.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The third recommendation addresses the elimination of disincentives to employment for people with disabilities.

Strategies:

1) Address the CHOICES waiver cost-share requirement for earned income.

Effective July 8, 2014, Centers for Medicaid/Medicare (CMS) approved a request submitted by the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) to amend the CHOICES waiver. This waiver provides individualized and person-centered supports for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The amendment removed the cost-share requirements that occurred if an individual had in excess of \$400 of earned income in a month. The potential impact is great- in addition to the 104 individuals who were paying the cost-share because of earned income prior to July, 2014, there are likely many others who were limiting their earnings potential to avoid the cost-share.

Status: completed.

2) Increase the number of people in integrated employment opportunities, thereby reducing the number of people in sheltered work environments.

- In 2014 the Division of Rehabilitation Services published a Request for Proposals (RFP) to expand Supported Employment services for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Nine Community Support Providers have taken advantage of funding through these grants to expand employment services to participants with intellectual disabilities whose current primary employment occurs within a segregated setting or young adults under the age of 24 with intellectual disabilities who have limited employment experience in the community.
- A financial workgroup has been formed to address fees for integrated employment services that will incentivize the provision of those services for Community Support Providers.

Status: in progress. Projected completion date of January, 2016.

3) Provide education to beneficiaries, family members, and providers on SSI/SSDI benefits and employment.

In 2014 DRS added two Benefits Specialists for the Brookings and Yankton through contractual services. There are now six benefits specialists that are available statewide to assist SSI and SSDI recipients.

Status: completed.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The fourth recommendation addresses the development of flexible systems and promotion of promising practices. This recommendation highlights the importance of how people with disabilities may receive supports and services from more than one agency at the same time, and how interagency collaboration plays an integral role towards achieving outcomes.

Strategies:

1) **Develop services and systems to address the needs of underserved populations (e.g., Native Americans and veterans).**

- DRS, the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI), and Tribal VR agencies held a face-to-face meeting in Mobridge in April of 2014 for informational and training purposes. Another meeting was held on December 16th in Rapid City; topics for this meeting included services to Native American youth with disabilities and benefits specialist services.
- Beginning in the fall of 2014, the Business Specialist began distributing in-state and federal job announcements to Tribal VR Directors to share with their staff.
- DRS and SBVI collaborated with Tribal VR and other disability organizations to conduct a disability summit in Eagle Butte in October, 2014.
- DHS is assessing the needs of veterans with disabilities by reaching out to leaders of veteran organizations in South Dakota, and efforts will include increased outreach to veterans. 105 veterans with disabilities applied for vocational rehabilitation in 2014.

Status: in progress. Projected completion date of October, 2015.

2) **Expand person-centered career planning services.**

Person Centered Planning is an ongoing problem-solving process used to help people with disabilities plan for their future. In person centered planning, groups of people focus on a person and that person's vision of what they would like to do in the future. In August and September, 2014 DRS and SBVI provided training to staff and providers on the person-centered planning model for service provision. DHS will continue its emphasis on person centered planning into 2015 in order to become a more person-centered agency.

Status: in progress. Projected completion date of September, 2015.

3) **Expand transition services to prioritize employment at an early age.**

This strategy calls for collaboration to occur with the Office of Community Living to work with the Department of Education (DOE) and school systems to change expectations of employment for young people with disabilities and their families. The Division of Developmental Disabilities has created a resource entitled "Achieving Dreams through Employment", which is a document designed for self-

advocates, families, and employment support staff. Included in the document, readers will find:

- Information related to Social Security work incentives,
- Advantages of employment,
- Questions a person may want to consider when thinking about work,
- Examples of how earnings may impact Social Security benefits, and
- Contact information for benefits planning services.

The document can be found on the Division of Developmental Disabilities website

at: <http://stage.dhs.sd.gov/dd/documents/Achieving%20Dreams%20Through%20Employment.pdf>

Status: completed.

4) Align policy and funding to prioritize employment outcomes.

Effective June 1st, 2015, DRS and SBVI will be offering new rates for employment services to providers that are certified employment support professionals. This will further the skills of the providers and enhance the quality of employment services that are offered in the state. DRS and SBVI are partnering with the Center for Disabilities to offer training and certification opportunities to providers.

Status: in progress. Projected completion date of June, 2015.

5) Engage individuals with disabilities in policy development.

Members of the Board of VR, Board of SBVI, the Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Statewide Independent Living Council, the DDD Core Stakeholders, and the Family Support Council have ongoing opportunities to provide their feedback on program policies and procedures. These boards and councils meet quarterly, and at least 50% of the board and council composition is individuals with disabilities.

Status: completed.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The fifth and last recommendation focuses on educating the public, providers, employers, and people with disabilities. Education is the focal point of this recommendation. There are several resources available that are focused on information related to people with disabilities.

Strategies:

- 1) Plan and sponsor events that recognize outstanding efforts of employers in hiring people with disabilities.

The annual Governor's Awards for the Employment of People with Disabilities was held on October, 20, 2014 in Pierre. This is an event that recognizes employers for employing individuals with disabilities. Employer award winners in 2014 included Minerva's Restaurant in Watertown and Walmart in Pierre.

In addition to the Governor's Awards, DHS seeks out other opportunities to recognize employers. As an example, the Department lent its support to the Human Service Agency in the planning, marketing, and presentation of an Employer Recognition Event they hosted on November 19, 2014, in Watertown. It was tailored towards recognizing employers they presently work with that employ people with disabilities, but also expanding outreach and awareness to other businesses.

Status: completed.

2) **Build and promote employer champions.**

In addition to NDEAM events and the Governor's Awards, the Task Force recognized that there are employers who are willing to share their successes with employing people with disabilities. This will be an on-going effort that ties in with other strategies that are designed to promote the hiring of people with disabilities.

Status: in progress. Projected completion date of July, 2017.

3) **Promote the abilities of people with disabilities to employers.**

The Division of Rehabilitation Services is working with a marketing firm on an outreach campaign focused on the integration of people with disabilities within the workforce. Entitled "Ability For Hire", this campaign's main goal is to reach employers and provide them with the technical assistance and resources that they need to hire more people with disabilities.

Status: in progress. Projected completion date of December, 2015.

4) **Assess the current educational materials available to employers and create additional materials if needed.**

There are numerous employer resources available on disability-related topics, such as reasonable accommodations, the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), people first language, disability etiquette, business tax incentives (e.g., Work Opportunity Tax Credit/WOTC), Section 503 regulations, etc. The DRS Business Specialist is in the process of finalizing documents for an employer resource guide for educational purposes.

Status: in progress. Projected completion date of December, 2015.

For more information or comments on content found in this report:

- Send an email to infodhs@state.sd.us, or
- Contact Gloria Pearson, Department Secretary or Eric Weiss, DRS Division Director at the Department of Human Services at 605-773-5990.