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MassWorks: Massachusetts Launches the Disability Program Navigator Initiative

Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston

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MassWorks

Focusing on the integration of disability, workforce development, & employment services

From the Editor

Welcome to MassWorks, our newsletter for disability, workforce development, and employment professionals in Massachusetts. All too often, it seems, we work towards the same goals from different sides. With the many day-to-day demands of our jobs, it's easy to miss opportunities to share ideas and resources across agencies. The aim of MassWorks is to bring information to workforce and disability professionals who have the goal of improving employment outcomes for Mass. residents with disabilities.

Future issues of this newsletter will highlight new, interesting resources for workforce and disability professionals. Please feel free to contact us with your suggestions, success stories, and events that may be of interest to our readers.

—Cindy Thomas
Project Coordinator
Institute for Community Inclusion

RESOURCES

Find your local One-Stop Career Center:

www.detma.org/DETOfficeList.asp

U.S. Department of Labor fact sheet on the Disability Program Navigator initiative:

www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/whatsnew/navigator-fact-sheet.pdf

ICI publications on One-Stops and disability:

www.onestops.info

Visit

www.communityinclusion.org

to read this newsletter online;
find other publications on this topic; or
sign up for ICI's email announcement list

Massachusetts Launches the Disability Program Navigator Initiative

In July 2003 Massachusetts was one of fourteen states awarded funds to hire Disability Program Navigators to work in the state's 32 One-Stop Career Centers. Funded jointly by the U.S. Department of Labor and the Social Security Administration, this initiative is designed to help individuals with disabilities access the services and supports they need to reach their employment goals within the One-Stop system.

"We must do whatever we can to level the playing field to ensure that individuals with disabilities can access One-Stop Career Center services," said Jane C. Edmonds, Director of the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development. Founded on a principle of universal access, One-Stop Career Centers are required to serve all job seekers, including people with disabilities. One-Stop Career Centers also help employers with their recruitment needs.

The Disability Program Navigator initiative is designed to strengthen connections between disability resources and Career Centers. "The Navigator is a valuable position for our center," says Rosemary Chandler, Director of the Career Center of North Central Massachusetts. "Our Navigator, Donna, is cultivating and solidifying relationships with the key disability partners while promoting our services and resources."

The Mass. Department of Workforce Development/Division of Career Services is awarding funds to local workforce boards, which hire the Navigators. As of January 2004, 12 Navigators had come on board.

Working within Career Centers, Navigators will:

- ▶ Assist individuals with disabilities to access the services that can help them find, return to, or keep a job
- ▶ Develop links with employers to aid job placement
- ▶ Conduct outreach to organizations that serve people with disabilities
- ▶ Serve as a resource on Social Security Work Incentives and assist people with disabilities to access benefits planning and related services
- ▶ Serve as a resource to the workforce development community for information about federal, state, and local programs that impact the ability of individuals with disabilities to work
- ▶ Ease the transition of in- and out-of-school youth with disabilities into employment

EVENTS

3/9: Social Security Work Incentives training.

Boston Center for Independent Living. RSVP to aforman@bostoncil.org or 617/338-6665 x217

4/1: "Working Connections"

Massachusetts Association for Persons in Supported Employment conference. Marlborough, MA, www.mapse.org

4/7: MassHealth information session.

Boston Center for Independent Living. RSVP to aforman@bostoncil.org or 617/338-6665 x217

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Disability Program NAVIGATORS

We encourage you to contact your area Navigator to learn more about how you can work together to improve employment outcomes for the individuals with disabilities in your community.

Sharon Tulchinsky
617-338-0809
stulchinsky@detma.org
JobNet, Boston

Jamie Robinson
508-730-5063
JRobinson@Bristolwib.org
Taunton Career Center
Attleboro Career Center
Fall River Career Center

Liza Tobojka
508-990-4000
Gr. New Bedford Career Ctr
Wareham Career Center

Dariel Meehan
508-786-0928
Emp. & Training Resources
• Marlborough
• Norwood
• Newtonville

Beverly Stopyra
978-722-7000
ValleyWorks Career Center
• Lawrence
• Haverhill

Jennifer Hinde
781-932-5500
jhinde@detma.org
Career Place, Woburn
Career Source, Cambridge

Dennis Gonsalves
508-862-6600
dgonsalves@detma.org
Career Opportunities Hyannis
Career Opportunities Orleans

Thelma Williams
617-745-4000
twilliams@southcoastalwib.org
Plymouth Career Center
Quincy Career Center

Sandra Efstratiou
978-825-7200
seftstratiou@detma.org
North Shore Career Center
• Salem
• Gloucester
• Lynn

Bruce Wright
508-513-3400
Career Works, Brockton

Dawn Beati
978-458-2503
Career Center of Lowell

Donna Thibault
978-534-1481
Career Center of North
Central Massachusetts
• Leominster
• Gardner

For job seekers, the Navigator will be an additional support person within the workforce development system who can help them to access services and overcome barriers. The Navigator will collaborate with disability agencies and providers, working to strengthen the link between that network and the Career Centers. The Navigator will be an important resource for Career Center staff as well. Says Rosemary, "Donna is a mentor for Career Center staff. She is developing a series of trainings for staff to improve their comfort level when working with customers who have disabilities. Our Navigator works full-time at the center so she is available to answer staff questions as they arise."

With all segments of the workforce, employment, and disability systems experiencing demands for more services with fewer resources, the Navigator initiative provides an exciting opportunity to improve coordination and help individuals achieve better employment outcomes. **D**

NEW PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES:

The Mass. Department of Workforce Development has been awarded the **Massachusetts Partnership for Youth in Employment** State Alignment grant by the Office of Disability and Employment Policy (U.S. Department of Labor). The project will conduct statewide resource mapping and help local areas access resources for youth with disabilities to succeed in postsecondary education or employment. Contact Deb Hart at ICI for information.

The Center for Health Policy Research/UMass Medical School and the Institute for Community Inclusion/UMass Boston in collaboration with the Mass. Executive Office of Health and Human Services has been awarded the **Medicaid and Comprehensive Employment Opportunities Infrastructure** grant from the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The grant will focus on state services and employment for people with disabilities.

For more information, contact:

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This newsletter will be made available in alternate formats upon request.

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