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Tools for Inclusion

family and consumer series

One-Stop Centers: A Guide for Job Seekers with Disabilities

by Sheila Fesko, David Hof f, Melanie Jordan, Kristin Fichera, & Cynthia Thomas

Introduction

One-Stop Centers were developed to bring together employment and training services that work with all people into one place and make it easier for job seekers and employers to use these services.

One-Stop Centers first began in the early 1990's as demonstration projects, and have expanded so there are now One-Stop Centers opening in all areas of the country. Services available through the One-Stop system include such things as: information about job vacancies, career options, and relevant employment trends; instruction on how to conduct a job search, write a resume, or interview with an employer; referral to training programs and unemployment insurance claim processing.

The One-Stop system is designed and required to meet the needs of all job seekers who want to use the system. This includes people with disabilities. The establishment of the One-Stop system across the country provides a wonderful opportunity for people with disabilities to receive services in new and different ways, right alongside everyone else. This brief is designed to help you use the One-Stop system. It includes information on what services are available, how to make the best use of those services, and how to advocate to get the services you want and need. The brief describes general information about the One-Stop system and then answers specific questions individuals with disabilities may have about these services.

One-Stop Centers are part of America's Workforce Network, the new federally-sponsored nationwide employment and training system. The expansion of the One-Stop Centers was authorized in a law called the Workforce Investment Act that was signed in 1998. This law has several main principles that influence services.

- **Universal Access** Any individual should be able to go into a One-Stop and receive services called core services, to assist in making decisions about what career to pursue and in the actual job search.
- **Streamlining services** Employment and training programs for all people should be brought together, and be easily accessible via One-Stop Centers.
- **Increased accountability** The One-Stop system is being evaluated based on how many people get jobs and the satisfaction of the customers.
- **Empowering individuals** Customers should be given more information about services in order to make informed choices and have more control of their services.
- **State and local flexibility** Local One-Stop systems can set up services in different ways to respond to the needs of their local community.

The Workforce Investment Act is a new law and, in many areas, the One-Stop system is just beginning. All of the goals of the law may not be achieved yet, but Centers are working toward achieving these principles. Individual states are developing plans for how they will implement the Workforce Investment Act. (The deadline for submission of all state plans was April of 2000, and implementation must have begun by July of 2000.)

Who is eligible to receive services from the One-Stop system?

Everyone can use services provided by the One-Stop system. Even if you receive services from another agency, you have the right to access One-Stop services.

Three Categories of Services Available through One-Stop Centers

Core Services

Core services are those services that are available at no cost to everyone. Individual One-Stops determine how their core services are provided. An individual may receive core services as part of a large group, or service may be provided one-to-one. The following is a sampling of the types of core services that may be available:

Sample Core Services:

- intake and orientation
- work skills exploration
- resource library which includes access to computers, telephones, fax and copy machines
- searches for jobs and training
- access to job banks or listings of available jobs
- Internet access
- resume development
- job search skills training
- networking skills workshops
- interview techniques workshops
- referral to an employer with current job openings
- customer satisfaction follow-up
- determination of eligibility for additional services

You should ask the One-Stop staff to help you create a plan or list of ideas on how you can get the most out of the services of the One-Stop Center at no cost and without having to apply for additional services. Making a plan or list like this will allow you to get the most out of the core services.

Intensive Services

Intensive services are available to individuals who are unable to obtain employment by using core services, and who meet specific eligibility criteria. These services are free to individuals who meet eligibility criteria. One-Stops may have projects or services that are targeted toward specific groups such as teenagers, veterans, people with disabilities and people with limited incomes. Funding for intensive services and special projects comes from a wide variety of sources including state and federal funds, employers, unions and other places. In some cases, Centers may allow individuals to pay for intensive services from their own funds. Talk to staff at the One-Stop about various options for funding these services.

Sample Intensive Services:

- comprehensive assessments of skills and service needs
- development of an individual employment and career plan
- customized screening and assessment
- reference/background checks
- intensive career counseling
- in-depth interviewing skills development
- computer workshops
- one-to-one assistance with updating your resume, cover letters and thank you letters
- case management

Training

Referral for training services may be available to individuals who have used core and intensive services and have not become successfully employed, and meet eligibility criteria. The type of training that is offered varies between local One-Stop systems and is based on the employment needs of the local economy. Individuals eligible for training services use what are known as Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). You can use an ITA to freely choose training services from any eligible organization that provides training. Listed below are some of the types of training services available from the One-Stop system. Talk with staff at your local One-Stop Center about what is available.

Sample Training Services:

- occupational skills training
- on-the job training
- up to date work skills
- job readiness training
- adult education and literacy
- customized training for an employer who commits to hiring

What kinds of services are available through the One-Stop System?

There are three levels of services available through the One-Stop system and adults typically move from one level of service to the next depending on their needs. Each level of service is described on the table to the left. The first level of service is called core services and they are usually self-directed in nature. For individuals who try core services but have not become employed, intensive services may be available, if the One-Stop Center determines that core services are not sufficient to obtain employment. Training services are available to individuals who meet eligibility criteria, and have used core and intensive services, but still are not successfully employed. In addition support services may be provided by a One-Stop to people receiving any service, so that the services an individual receives are effective.

How do I find out about One-Stop Centers and where they are located?

One-Stop Centers go by a variety of names depending on the state. Some states use the same name for all centers throughout the state (for example in Connecticut, all centers are called "Connecticut Works"), while in other states (such as Massachusetts), the name is different in each local area. Centers are not typically listed in the phone book as "One-Stop Centers." You can find the location of your local One-Stop by contacting America's Service Locator from the U.S. Department of Labor, on the Web at: www.servicelocator.org, or toll-free by phone at (877) US2-JOBS [877-872-5627]. You can also contact your state, county, or local department of labor or employment listed in the government section of the phone book. You should be able to find out where your local One-Stop Centers are located through these sources.

If there is more than one One-Stop Center in my area, can I use more than one?

You may use the services of more than one One-Stop if you want. Find out which Center has the types of free services that you want to use, and the Center where you are most comfortable.

How do I start using the services of a One-Stop Center?

One-Stop Centers vary in how you initially begin to use the services. It is probably a good idea to call your local Center and find out the steps involved. At some One-Stops you can simply walk in the door and start using many of the core services, while others require registration and orientation before using any of the services - and may offer orientation only at certain times, or on certain days. Remember, it costs nothing to use the core services. (Please note that some Centers do charge small fees for incidental expenses associated with core services such as faxing, using the photocopy machine, etc. This varies from Center to Center.)

What should I expect on my first visit to the Center?

On your first visit to the One-Stop, you may attend some type of orientation session and receive a tour of the facility, or at least be able to sign up for orientation (all Centers are required to provide orientation). You may be asked to fill out some type of registration form. At some Centers, you will receive a card, which you need to present each time you attend, while at other centers you only need to sign your name on an attendance sheet, or can just walk in. No matter what the procedures are at your local Center, you should be made to feel welcome!

Once you have completed any requirements of the One-Stop to use the services such as initial registration and orientation (and remember, this varies from Center to Center), you may begin to use the services and resources that are available.

Case Study 1

Jen, who has a visual impairment, was looking for a job and decided to register at a One-Stop Center. She chose to go to Boston Career Link because it was conveniently located. When Jen joined the Center, she felt welcomed. During the orientation, she learned that although the Center was designed to be generally self-directed, people were extremely helpful to her when she asked for help. For example when she asked a staff member to help her fill out some of the forms, the staff member was very respectful and also very helpful in completing the forms.

The variety of different services available in one place was important to Jen. For example, she was able to use the resource library, attend workshops (some of which were paid for by the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind), attend job fairs, and fax her resume to employers all from one location. Center staff were good at getting information to her in formats which she could read. Staff members would regularly e-mail to her home the monthly calendars, announcements of current events, and other notices that were available at the One-Stop Center.

The counselor Jen worked with helped her to clarify her work goals. He helped her to direct her own job search, and encouraged her to make cold calls to employers. The counselor met with her weekly and gave her job leads regularly. He also brought her resume to places of employment in order to market her skills and abilities to various organizations.

Jen found it very helpful to make connections with the leaders of those workshops she attended at the One-Stop. She got better at making connections with people as she became more comfortable at the Center. Making good connections with people was very important to her because it became easier for her to ask those people for help when she needed it. She recommends that individuals pay attention to networking opportunities with the Center staff since they can direct you to job leads. She left the One-Stop Center with a lot of good information that will continue to be helpful to her in the future. One last tip that Jen shares with others who are using One-Stops, is that the more effort you put into your job search, the clearer you can be about your career goals, and the more you can recognize areas where you may need help and areas you can be more self-directed, the more you can get out of using a One-Stop Center.

Jen gives credit to the One-Stop Center counselor for assisting her with obtaining the job she currently holds. When asked if she would consider using the Center again for her job search, she said she definitely would. She also said that she often recommends the One-Stop to others who are participating in a job search.

How do I go about using One-Stop Center services?

- Find out what the core services are at the Center you are using. Find out about any incidental fees that may be charged (such as faxing and copying) and make a plan to maximize your use of services without having to spend money or obtain funding for services.
- Sign up for workshops that you want to attend
- Review the One-Stop Center's monthly activity calendar to see if there are activities you want to attend (i.e., peer support groups, workshops, etc.); you should check the monthly calendars often
- Explore resources in the Resource Library
- Use computers and the Internet to look up job openings, to create a resume, and to write cover letters
- Look through career exploration books
- Post your resume on the resume bank (a set of resumes that employers can look at on a computer and will help them to find potential applicants)
- Participate in any on-site recruiting activities that occur at the center (i.e., an employer might go to a Center and interview job applicants there)

What should I expect from the services I receive at the One-Stop Centers?

Most of the core services of the Centers are designed to be fairly self-directed. This means that you should not expect to receive a lot of one-to-one assistance from One-Stop staff (although you should never hesitate to ask for help if you need it). You can bring someone with you to help if you would like. You will possibly be making a lot of decisions on your own concerning what services to use. For example, Center staff usually do not provide people using only core services direct help in finding a job; however, Center staff do have contacts with a great deal of local employers. If you get to know some staff at the One-Stop and build relationships with them, you may be able to use them as part of your personal network through which you find a job. If you receive intensive services from the One-Stop system, you will get more intensive personalized services.

Should I tell staff at the One-Stop Center about my disability?

It is your personal decision whether to tell staff about your disability. There may be advantages and disadvantages so you need to decide what is best for you.

Under the ADA, One-Stop Centers can ask if you have a disability to determine if you are eligible for certain services. However, disclosing your disability and information about it, is strictly voluntary. (This should not be confused with the employment provisions of the ADA under Title I, which prohibit employers or potential employers from asking about the presence of a disability prior to making a conditional offer of employment.)

However, if the Center asks about disability, these questions should be asked of every customer of the One-Stop, not just in cases where the Center staff feel a customer may have a disability.

If the One-Stop asks about disability, they must have a good reason to ask (i.e., they are trying to identify individuals who might qualify for special programs and services for people with disabilities).

Disclosing your disability can have some real benefits. By doing so, you can receive the accommodations and assistance you need and are entitled to, to fully benefit from the services of the One-Stop Center. By disclosing, you may also become eligible for special programs available for people with disabilities.

As a person with a disability, how can I advocate for myself to get the services I want from a One-Stop Center?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a law that was passed in 1990 to assure that people with disabilities have the same opportunities for meaningful participation in our society as everyone else. Under the ADA, as someone with a disability, you are entitled to request accommodations and assistance in order for you to understand, use and benefit from the services that a One-Stop Center has to offer. It should be expected that the Center will work with you to make your involvement there successful. Here are some tips to help you get the most from your One-Stop Center experiences.

- During your initial visit at the Center ask for any assistance you need to help you understand the range of services the One-Stop can provide. Some accommodations that might be helpful include:
 - an individual meeting rather than group orientation
 - help with filling out any registration forms
 - brochures, flyers, and other information in an alternative format such as a different language, Braille, or large print
 - sign language interpretation
 - using a tape recorder to remember information
- Bring a friend or family member with you to help you use the books and computers in the resource library in order to check job openings, compose your resume and cover letters, fax applications, etc. You can also bring a staff person from another agency with which you are working.
- Gain an understanding of all of the Core services, classes, and other free resources and activities (such as computer lab) that are part of using at a One-Stop.
- Request an individual meeting with Center staff to develop a plan or a list of ideas that can help you make the best use of the services and opportunities available at the One-Stop.
- Stay informed about ongoing activities such as employer interviews or presentations held at the Center, as well as workshops and “hot job” leads. Look for flyers, posters, newsletters, etc.
- Get to know the front desk staff. You will then feel comfortable asking them for helpful general information including what current events and activities are happening or coming soon.
- Other important people to get to know are the library staff. They can be extremely useful in answering your questions as you use the resource library (career books, magazines, newspapers, job postings, fax and copy machine) and the computers and Internet.
- As you settle into using the One-Stop Center, be sure to ask for any accommodations you may need such as:
 - a larger/accessible work station at the computer
 - resources in a different language
 - Braille, large print, TTY, interpreter services, etc.
 - assistance using information you don't understand
 - adaptive equipment to use computers and phones

What can I do if I feel that the One-Stop Center staff are not making the accommodations I need?

Information concerning non-discrimination including what to do if you feel you have been discriminated against, must be posted in each Center, and also reviewed during orientation sessions. If you have tried to ask for help and feel that the Center is not making a reasonable effort to meet your needs, you should bring the matter to the attention of the staff member involved, as well as the management of the One-Stop Center, in an effort to get your needs met. In most cases, by calmly and clearly clarifying your needs with Center staff, issues can be resolved fairly easily. With the implementation of WIA, each Center is required to have an Equal Opportunity Officer, and if you feel it is necessary, you should ask to speak to this individual to discuss the issue. However, in cases where your efforts to resolve the situation with a Center have not been successful, you can contact the U.S. Department of Labor's Civil Rights Center (CRC), which is responsible for ensuring that One-Stop Centers do not discriminate. Contact information for the CRC is listed in the resource section of this brief. Other information concerning your legal rights may be available from your state's Protection and Advocacy Organization and other legal advocates. You should also feel free to contact the local Workforce Investment Board, which is the local board that oversees One-Stop Centers, or your state Workforce Investment Board.

Can I use a One-Stop Center if I am already receiving services from another agency?

Yes. If you are receiving employment services from another agency you can also utilize core services of the One-Stop system. In fact the core services may be helpful to you and your current service provider. In addition, you can utilize core services any time in your career. If your employment services provider helps you become familiar with how to use the One-Stop now, you may be able to use the Center on your own in the future if you want to change jobs. You may also want to speak with your counselor at the other agency about whether you are eligible for some of the special projects at One-Stop Centers. They could refer you to the Center and help you get these services.

How would services through the One-Stop system supplement what I am getting from another agency?

- **Access to computers.** Using a computer can help you develop a professional looking resume and cover letters. In addition you can use the Internet at One-Stop Centers to help you find out about job openings, to submit your resume to a number of different resume banks, and to learn more about companies where you would like to work.
- **Workshops.** Many One-Stops offer some workshops as part of the core services. Workshop topics may include resume writing, interview skills, introduction to the Internet, job search skills and information about industries that have a demand for new employees. While the agency helping you find a job may also offer support in these areas, you may want to review the workshop calendar for the Center you are using to determine if any offering would be useful in your job search. Participating in the workshops may also allow you to meet fellow job seekers who can provide support and advice.
- **Job Referral.** The staff at the Centers work with employers to help them find qualified applicants for job openings. While they will not provide individualized job development as part of the core services, they may have job leads that you will not learn about through other sources. If you find out about a job through the One-Stop, the Center staff and your employment service provider can work together to make sure you receive the individualized assistance you need to follow-up on the job lead.

Should I let my counselor know that I am working with the One-Stop Center?

Yes. If you are also working with a Vocational Rehabilitation agency and/or with a private employment program to help you with your job search, let them know about your involvement with the One-Stop Center. Everyone can then be working together to best meet your employment goal.

Case Study 2

Jim had been working for many years in a job he disliked. His efforts to find a new job on his own were unsuccessful. Jim's counselor from the vocational rehabilitation agency referred Jim to a community rehabilitation provider (CRP) for individualized job placement services. Jim and his employment specialist worked together to develop a career plan and to update his resume. In addition to providing job development services, the employment specialist went with Jim to the local One-Stop. She attended the orientation session with him and, together with a career counselor at the One-Stop, they identified core services that would complement the work that she was doing with Jim. Jim decided to post his resume on a number of resume banks and signed up to attend an industry briefing session. Jim was looking for a job in human services and an industry briefing at the One-Stop, conducted by a number of large local human service providers, gave him more specific information about the types of jobs available in his community. Jim and his Employment Specialist then worked together to contact these employers. Jim recently obtained a new job. In addition to accomplishing his primary goal of finding a new job, he has become familiar with a local resource, available to the general public, that can be used in the future as he progresses through his career.

Conclusion

The One-Stop system expands the resources available to individuals with disabilities looking to work and provides an opportunity to receive services side-by-side with the general public. We hope the information in this publication will help you to make most effective use of these services. As you are using the services of a One-Stop Center, keep the following in mind:

- Centers have a wide array of resources that help you to obtain and succeed in employment.
- You have the absolute right to use these services, and to be treated in a welcoming and respectful manner.
- Recognize that this is a new system, and that One-Stops are still learning how to best provide quality services for all people, including people with disabilities.
- While hopefully your experience will be a completely positive one, if you have concerns about how the services of a One-Stop are being provided, remember that it's your responsibility to make the Center aware of your concerns, and to educate and advocate in a positive and effective manner, so that your needs, and the needs of all people with disabilities are met.

The most effective way that One-Stop Centers can learn how to meet the needs of people with disabilities is by people with disabilities going out and actually using the services of a One-Stop. We encourage you to go visit your local One-Stop Center, and find out what it has to offer. The use of One-Stops by people with disabilities, combined with education and advocacy, will ensure that this new service system is able to fully deliver on its potential for helping people with disabilities succeed in employment.

RESOURCES

To find out the location of One-Stop Centers in your area, contact America's Service Locator:

On the Web:
www.servicelocator.org

By phone (Toll-Free Helpline)
(877) US2-JOBS [877-872-5627]

You can also contact your state or county department of labor or employment listed in the government pages of your local phone book. Most state One-Stop systems also have their own web sites.

Information on non-discrimination policies and One-Stop Centers:

The Director
Civil Rights Center (CRC)
US Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue NW, Room N-4123
Washington, D.C. 20210
Phone: (202) 219-8927
e-mail: CRC-WIA@dol.gov

For addition information on One-Stop Centers and the Workforce Investment Act:

United States Department of Labor
Employment and Training Administration
Division of One-Stop Operations
200 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room S4231
Washington, DC 20210
Voice: (202) 219-8395
Fax: (202) 219-0323
E-mail: wia98tf@doleta.gov

The Employment and Training Administration (USDOL/ETA) is the federal agency overseeing the establishment of the One-Stop Career Center system nationwide. Contact this agency to obtain copies of various WIA regulations, and information on the implementation of WIA.

USDOL/ETA has One-Stop Disability Coordinators in each region of the country. A listing is available by contacting your local USDOL office (listed in the federal government pages of the phone book) or on the Web at: www.wdsc.org/disability/htmldocs/onestop_coord.html

Additional useful web sites

Dept. of Labor Employment and Training Administration
www.doleta.gov

WIA Information
www.usworkforce.org

ETA: disAbility Online
www.wdsc.org/disability

ETA: disAbility Online – One-Stop
www.wdsc.org/disability/htmldocs/onestop.html

Message Board on One-Stop Disability Issues

The ICI has a message board on One-Stops and WIA to answer questions, provide information and share ideas & experiences concerning One-Stop Centers and people with disabilities. Check out the message board at:

www.childrenshospital.org/ici/wiaforum



www.childrenshospital.org/ici

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