

DISABILITY RESOURCES UPDATE

New Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) Established in 2001 **(www.dol.gov/odep)**

The Government continued its focus on increasing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities by setting up a new Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) in 2001. ODEP's Mission is to provide leadership to increase employment opportunities for adults and youth with disabilities. Its 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

On the 'supply' side, ODEP works to increase opportunities by expanding access to training, education, employment support, assistive technology, integrated employment, entrepreneurial development and small business opportunities.

On the 'demand' side, ODEP fosters partnerships with employers and state and local agencies to increase awareness of the benefits of hiring people with disabilities and to facilitate effective strategies.

ODEP'S Assistant Secretary, W. Roy Grizzard, was confirmed July 26, 2002, as the first person to hold this position in the U.S. Department of Labor. He will advise the Secretary of Labor, Elaine Chow, on issues related to employing people with disabilities.

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Employer Assistance Referral Network (EARN) Now Available **(www.earnworks.com)**

The Employer Assistance Referral Network (EARN) is a free nationwide service available to employers as of March 2001. EARN connects employers with job placement professionals who can identify qualified candidates with disabilities for their job openings – **in the company's geographic area**. A database of job placement professionals/providers is being developed and employers may contact EARN with their placement needs @ 1-NOW 327.6669, or via the website, above.

EARN also provides technical assistance to employers in locating appropriate organizations and information as they seek to hire qualified candidates with disabilities.

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JOB Accommodation Network (JAN) Service

www.jan.wvu.edu

“The most comprehensive resource for job accommodations available.”

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is a toll-free, one-stop, consulting service in the Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP). JAN provides information on workplace accommodations and on employment provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Service is available via a toll-free number: 1-800-ADA-WORK (1-800-232-9675), OR 1-800-526-7234. In addition, a Searchable Online Accommodation Resource (SOAR) is available for employers who need customized approaches to specific workplace situations.

JAN’s Accommodation Toolbox

JAN Publications offers numerous publications for free. For example, learn how to approach evacuation procedures, effective communications for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, ergonomics, and disability etiquette. JAN consultants distribute accommodation idea publications that address specific disabilities and share these ideas through an ‘Accommodation Ideas’ pull down screen on JAN’s Portal for Employers.

Accommodation information is provided by JAN on a case-by-case basis. For specific information on job accommodations, email JAN at, jan@jan.icdi.wvu.edu.

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Technical Assistance Materials Available to Employers

www.dol.gov/odep

Technical and specific information on effective interviewing techniques and on recruiting and hiring workers with disabilities, for example, are available on ODEP’s website, by clicking on the ‘Technical Assistance Materials’ area. Fact Sheets, ADA Brochures, Reports, and Other Publications, on subjects such as, Accommodating Employees with Hidden Disabilities, to Tax Incentives for Business, and many other topics, can be easily downloaded for use by hiring managers and recruiters.

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Business Leadership Network (BLN)

www.dol.gov/odep/programs/business

The BLN is a national employers’ program working in concert with State Governor’s Committees that engages the participation of companies to hire candidates with disabilities. The program offers employers access to an overlooked domestic pool of applicants with disabilities by providing pertinent disability employment information at local levels.

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“NEW FREEDOM INITIATIVE” ANNOUNCED
(www.dol.gov/odep/newfreedom)

On February 1, 2001, President Bush announced the formation of a ‘New Freedom Initiative,’ a comprehensive set of proposals designed to ensure that Americans with disabilities have the opportunity to learn and develop skills, engage in productive work, make choices about their lives, and participate fully in their communities. ODEP was uniquely charged with providing a national focus on enhancing the employment of people with disabilities.

In mid-2002, the Department of Labor initiated an Inaugural New Freedom Initiative Award to recognize individuals, non-profit organizations, businesses, and corporations that have demonstrated exemplary and innovative efforts in furthering the employment of people with disabilities. The award encourages the use of public-private partnerships by recognizing programs that have demonstrated a positive and measurable impact on the employment of people with disabilities through access to assistive technologies, innovative training, hiring and retention techniques, and development of comprehensive strategies to enhance Americans with disabilities to enter and advance within the 21st Century workforce.

On October 3, 2002, Labor Secretary Elaine Chao announced \$14 million in federal grants to support the President’s New Freedom Initiative to integrate Americans with disabilities into the workforce. Grants will be awarded to organizations and individuals to develop innovative programs and technical assistance that can improve employment outcomes for adults and youth with disabilities.

Thirty-eight grants, ranging from \$83,000 to \$1 million, in five categories, have been award: Customized Employment for Adults with Disabilities, Workforce Investment Act Disability, Technical Assistance Consortia for Youth and Adults with Disabilities, Innovative Demonstration Grants for Youth with Disabilities, High School/High Tech Start-up Programs and Realignment Programs.

For more information on New Freedom Initiative Awards, visit
www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/odep

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NEW WEBSITE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES UNVEILED
(www.disabilityinfo.gov)

On October 16, 2002, Labor Secretary Elaine Chao unveiled *DisabilityInfo.gov*, a new website for individuals with disabilities, which contains information on: civil rights, education, employment, housing, health care, technology and transportation, and other subjects. Designed to be a one-stop source of government information for use by people with disabilities, their families, employers, and service providers, the site was developed

in response to an Executive Memorandum issued by President Bush, directing federal agencies to develop a website for people with disabilities within 60 days.

DisabilityInfo.gov will be managed by the Department of Labor. Website content, however, will be shared across multiple federal agencies. The Portal is part of the Administration's New Freedom Initiative.