



People with Disabilities at Work

The Newsletter about Customized Employment
For Persons With Disabilities

Sponsored by *Whatever It Takes*
A Project Funded by the US Department of Labor
Office of Disability Employment Policy

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Did you know that..... Although 22 percent of employed people with disabilities report encountering job discrimination, this is a dramatic drop from 36 percent four years ago. (Source: 2004 Harris Survey of Americans with Disabilities).

What's New?

The Whatever It Takes (WIT) staff is pleased to announce the addition of 10 new customers this past quarter. Currently, there are 45 customers receiving services through the WIT program. Approximately 30 customers are utilizing personal budgets, such as the transportation fund. Two people were placed into customized employment this past quarter: one as a Grounds Keeper and the other as an Apartment Superintendent. One customer utilized a Job Coach to help him get acclimated to the job site.

Check These Dates

July 12-14: Association for Persons in Supported Employment Annual Conference, Indianapolis, IN

July 19-22: Workforce Innovations 2004, San Antonio, TX

July 20: ODEP Topical Conference
Call: "Linking and Negotiating with Employers for Customized Employment Opportunities"
1:00p.m. – 2:30p.m. EST.

July 29: Staff Training: "Giving Consumers Feedback" 3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. at the Smeal Learning Center, Albertson, NY

July 30: Listen and Learn Series: "Workplace Retention" 2:15 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. at the Smeal Learning Center, Albertson, NY

August 5: Job Hunt Club: "Disclosure of Confidential Information" 12:00 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. HempsteadWorks, Hempstead, NY



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- ☑ **August 6:** Listen and Learn Series: “How to Stretch Your Food Dollars” 2:15 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. at the Smeal Learning Center, Albertson, NY
- ☑ **August 10:** Staff Training: “Osteogenesis Imperfecta” 3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. at the Smeal Learning Center, Albertson, NY
- ☑ **August 12:** Job Hunt Club: “Exploring Your Vocational Interests” 12:00 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. at HempsteadWorks, Hempstead, NY
- ☑ **August 19:** Job Hunt Club: “Job Applications and Resumes (Part I)” 12:00 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. at HempsteadWorks, Hempstead, NY
- ☑ **August 26:** Job Hunt Club: “Job Applications and Resumes (Part II)” 12:00 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. at HempsteadWorks, Hempstead, NY
- ☑ **September 2:** Staff Training: “Managing Challenging Behaviors and Preventing Crisis Escalation” 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at the Smeal Learning Center, Albertson, NY
- ☑ **September 2:** Job Hunt Club: “Practice Interviews (Part I)” 12:00 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. at HempsteadWorks, Hempstead, NY
- ☑ **September 9:** Job Hunt Club: “Practice Interviews (Part II)” 12:00 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. at HempsteadWorks, Hempstead, NY
- ☑ **September 14:** ODEP Administrative Conference Call: 1:00p.m. – 2:30p.m. EST.

If you are interested in attending a training program, please contact Karen Richter, Coordinator of Special Projects at (516) 465-1405 for a complete listing of the Abilities, Inc. 2004 training schedule.



Integrating Services for People with Disabilities

Historically, people with disabilities have had difficulty accessing the resources they need to achieve their employment goals.

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 helped to establish One-Stop Career Centers across the country with the goal of providing employment services to all jobseekers in the community. Since then, One-Stop Centers have been helping individuals with disabilities by increasing access to assistive technologies and resources needed to perform job search activities.

At the HempsteadWorks One-Stop Career Center individuals with disabilities often have the unique opportunity to take

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Integrating Services continued

advantage of co-enrollment in the Whatever It Takes (WIT) Customized Employment program (funded by the Office of Disability Employment Policy) and WIA-funded Intensive Services. Through collaboration and co-enrollment in both programs, individuals with disabilities have a greater chance to leverage funds and resources leading to an increased rate of success in obtaining and maintaining competitive employment. As a Case Manager of the WIT program I have seen first hand how collaboration of both programs has enhanced the services offered to customers with disabilities. One example is a customer who came to HempsteadWorks looking for assistance with job training. He enrolled with WIA and received financial assistance toward a training program in Certified Systems Administration. This customer, who is also an SSI recipient, did not have any additional money to transport himself to and from the training site. He was co-referred to the WIT program at HempsteadWorks. At that time we also recommended that he talk to a VESID counselor (NYS Vocational Rehabilitation Services) and he told us that he had a previous VESID case. We later confirmed that his VESID case was closed and determined that he would benefit from the transportation fund available through the WIT program. This is a special budget set aside for WIT customers in need of transportation assistance. Each person who becomes eligible for this fund can receive up to \$1,000 for transportation to and from activities that may lead to employment, including training. This customer is currently attending classes and is doing quite well. He is making great strides toward employment. Once he

finishes training, the Placement Specialist in the WIT program will work collaboratively with the WIA counselors to help him find a job that will suit his strengths and abilities. In addition, if there is money left in his personal budget, the WIT program will also be able to help him pay for transportation to work for up to three months after employment. This is just one story of how the Workforce Investment System is working collaboratively with government and partnering agencies to assist individuals with disabilities to find and maintain employment.

~Jennifer Sulmonte
Case Manager

Working Together

One of the customers enrolled in the Whatever It Takes Program is John (not his real name), a 23-year-old man with Cerebral Palsy who is also being treated for depression. John, who ambulates with crutches and occasionally uses a wheelchair for long distances, came to us while he was working a part-time job as a clerk in a home care supply company.

John, who was already enrolled with the HempsteadWorks One-Stop Center, was interested in the services offered by our customized employment program because he was having difficulties performing his current job tasks. In particular, John was having difficulty staying awake at his desk. This problem was so severe it resulted in a mutual agreement between John and his employer to terminate employment. So, John was enrolled in the WIT program and one of the first steps we took was to

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Working Together continued

sponsor an evaluation that would identify his vocational skills and interests. While he did well in the clerical assessments, his fatigue problem continued to be a major barrier to employment in this field.

As his Case Manager, I encouraged him to speak with his physician about his sleepiness during the day and to let him know the negative effect this had on his work performance. He was tested and his physician put him on vitamin therapy twice a week in an effort to alleviate the problem. While this therapy seemed to be effective, it was administered for only a few weeks as it was very expensive and his insurance would not cover the cost.

Since John's enrollment with the WIT program, I had been encouraging him to co-enroll with VESID, the NYS Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. After some thought, he finally completed all of the necessary paperwork to open a VESID case. He was then sent to ACLD (a community rehabilitation provider) for a three-week VESID-funded assessment to address fatigue issues and determine overall work behavior. John carried-out a number of tasks at ACLD, including assembling, merchandise processing, stock, alphabetizing CD's, etc. John showed signs of extreme fatigue when performing the more repetitive tasks. It was also noted that John needed assistance assembling and disassembling his wheelchair to put it in his four-door car.

During his post-evaluation meeting, John announced that he spoke with a former co-worker from the home care supply company who had left the business to start his own company in the same field.

His Job Developer from ACLD contacted the former co-worker and was able to set-up a work try-out with a Job Coach on-site. John did very well and has since been hired on a part-time basis. His new employer is aware of his fatigue problem and is able to accommodate John by providing more flexible and varied job tasks.

Great! John was able to find employment in a more stimulating and accommodating environment, although he still continued to have difficulty getting his wheelchair in and out of his car. So, WIT was able to use John's Employment Support Fund (a personal budget of \$2,000 for WIT customers in need of items, supplies, and /or services needed to find or maintain employment) to pay for an evaluation that would help determine if there was any assistive technology available to help with this problem. The evaluator determined that a modified van would be the most effective and independent form of transportation. His VESID counselor indicated that she would be able to help with the vehicle modifications if John purchased a reliable van. As an additional help, since John still has some money left in his Employment Support Fund, the WIT program may be able to pick up some of the cost toward the purchase of his van.

Due to the collaborative work of many different agencies, John was able to find a job that better suits his needs and abilities. He has the support and resources necessary to succeed. Our best wishes to John!

~Sue Quinn
Case Manager

Bridging the Gap: A Work in Progress

Helping to connect eligible customers with the available resources can prove to be a daunting task. However, for many of our customers, dealing with daily life is, in itself, quite daunting. So when a Career Counselor from HempsteadWorks' Youth Services Unit asked for assistance to help support a customer through training, we had to "think outside the box".

The customer, a young single mother of two who is recovering from eye surgery and cancer, has innate talent as a hair stylist and has free-lanced in this capacity with production companies involved with music videos and MTV. However, without a license she has had to turn down opportunities for full-time employment, and therefore would like to go to school to get the necessary credentials. Since the school of choice, the Learning Institute for Beauty Sciences (LIBS), will cost approximately \$10,000, it will be necessary for her to explore all potential resources available.

For starters, LIBS, which is accredited by the National Accrediting Commission of Cosmetology Arts and Sciences (NACCAS) and licensed by New York State, has a number of financial aid options including payment plans and educational loans through [SallieMae Financial Services](#). In addition, I recommended that she complete the FAFSA application for a government student loan (Free Application for Student Aid) that includes applications for the PELL grant and TAP award to help her finance her goal.

Since the customer also has low vision, I also suggested that she contact the Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped to see if she is eligible for services. If she does not meet the criteria for services through CBVH, the next consideration is to apply to VESID (NYS Vocational Rehabilitation Services) since she has been diagnosed with cancer. Both these organizations are able to provide training dollars if it is determined that there is a high probability of a positive outcome.

In addition, I suggested that the customer turn to the WIA (Workforce Investment Act) Intensive Services Unit to see if she is eligible for WIA training money. Even though WIA as a cap of \$1,000 per customer for training purposes, the program might be able to help with the cost of childcare and transportation.

In addition, the customer was referred to the Department of Social Services to apply for public assistance, which includes food stamps. The Family and Children's Association at 1 Helen Keller Way here in Hempstead will help her fill out the appropriate application forms and accompany her down to the DSS office. We will also investigate the WIC program (Women, Infants and Children's Nutritional Program) to make sure that she can provide for her children. By providing resources from a number of organizations, the customer is offered the possibility of obtaining support from both governmental and non-profit agencies while at the same time empowering her to invest in her own future.

~Peggy Christman
Disability Program Navigator

