
NTAR Leadership Center

National Technical Assistance and Research Center to Promote Leadership for Increasing the Employment and Economic Independence of Adults with Disabilities

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Center for Workers with Disabilities, American Public Human Services Association

National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities, University of Delaware

Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey

Community Solutions Group, LLC

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

NTAR Leadership Center

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NTAR Leadership Center to Promote Employment for Adults with Disabilities Announces Pilot States for State Leaders Innovation Institute

Connecticut, Maryland and Minnesota Selected

New Brunswick, New Jersey. April 24, 2008. The National Technical Assistance and Research Leadership Center to Promote Employment and Economic Independence for Adults with Disabilities (**NTAR Leadership Center**) announced today that it has selected the States of Connecticut, Maryland and Minnesota to participate in its first State Leaders Innovation Institute.

The State Leaders Innovation Institute is part of the NTAR Leadership Center's national efforts to improve employment for adults with disabilities by connecting state workforce policies to state and local economic growth and development goals. Several demographic and workforce trends — including the aging of the workforce — reinforce the need for states and employers to develop stronger partnerships that result in making employment available to adults with disabilities in states' high-growth industries. Despite multiple government efforts and compelling reasons for hiring people with disabilities, they remain disproportionately out of the workforce. According to Census Bureau data, only 38% of Americans with disabilities aged 21-64 were employed in 2005, compared to 78% of Americans without disabilities.

Through participation in the 15-month State Leaders Innovation Institute, teams of high-level state policymakers from Connecticut, Maryland and Minnesota — representing economic development, workforce development, and disability employment — will receive

specialized technical assistance, leadership support and other resources as they work to pioneer innovative approaches to improve employment for adults with disabilities.

“We are excited to work closely with such progressive state leaders as they look to break new ground in ensuring that their state economic and workforce development activities include enhanced opportunities for adults with disabilities,” said Kathy Krepcio, Director of the NTAR Leadership Center. “Each state has pulled together an outstanding team of government officials, private employers, educational institutions and community organizations. I commend Connecticut Governor Rell, Maryland Governor O’Malley and Minnesota Governor Pawlenty for stepping up to the challenge to lead the nation.”

The three states selected already are seen as leading the nation in workforce participation for adults with disabilities. Through participation in the State Leaders Innovation Institute, they will work to further improve economic and employment opportunities through the development of sustainable partnerships among the states’ workforce development, economic development, disability programs and employers in key state industries.

“Connecticut is very pleased to be selected for this program, which will help us build on our existing commitment to improve services and care for persons with disabilities,” commented **Connecticut Governor M. Jodi Rell**. “By tapping the talent of this group, we hope to expand employment opportunities for individuals while fulfilling the workforce needs of employers across the state.” Under the State Leaders Innovation Institute, the Connecticut team plans to develop strategic actions that leverage the services of multiple government agencies to build a more integrated continuum of career development supports for adults with disabilities, as well as create stronger alliances with workforce and employer needs. The state will focus specific high-growth, industry-related building efforts in southwestern Connecticut through The Workplace Inc., the state’s southwest regional Workforce Investment Board.

Maryland’s team will develop strategic actions that result in stronger coordination with the state’s economic development, workforce development and disability employment systems to better integrate training and preparation programs for adults with disabilities. **Governor Martin O’Malley** welcomed his state’s recognition, saying, “We are extremely pleased that Maryland was chosen for the State Leaders Innovation Institute. Guided by the principle that there is no such thing as a spare Marylander, I have made workforce creation a priority of this Administration.” Governor O’Malley added, “Maryland’s selection for this program reinforces our commitment to ensure that economic and workforce development activities include opportunities for individuals with disabilities.” The state will focus on identifying and linking job seekers with disabilities to anticipated job growth in and around Prince George’s, Harford and Anne Arundel counties as a result of military base expansion plans.

“We believe it is important to develop and nurture our state’s human resources and provide opportunities for all Minnesotans to participate in and contribute to our economy,” **Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty** said. “We are looking forward to working with the NTAR Leadership Center to enhance our plans to achieve meaningful, long-term integration of adults with disabilities into the workforce.” The Minnesota team will build on important recent work taking place in the state to integrate adults with disabilities into the design and implementation of state economic growth activities. The state will look to build on existing models that work to move youth with disabilities into jobs in the manufacturing sector by adapting these models to adults, and expanding the model to other high-growth sectors in the state.

For an overview of the NTAR Leadership Center and the State Leaders Innovation Institute, please visit www.ntarcenter.org.

About the NTAR Leadership Center

Established by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, the National Technical Assistance and Research Center to Promote Leadership for Increasing the Employment and Economic Independence of Adults with Disabilities (NTAR Leadership Center) is located in the **John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey**, an organization whose mission is strengthening the nation's workforce and building workforce and economic development partnerships. The NTAR Leadership Center is operated through a consortium of partners including:

- The American Public Human Services Association, Center for Workers with Disabilities, Washington, DC;
- National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities, University of Delaware, Newark, DE;
- Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities at The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, New Brunswick, NJ;
- The Community Solutions Group, LLC, Alexandria, VA; and
- The Program for Disability Research, School of Management and Labor Relations at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, NJ.

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For more information on the NTAR Leadership Center, please visit www.ntarcenter.org.