



**Interview with Gwen Ivory, Disability Program Navigator Manager,
Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services
And Sharon Reynolds, Director, CSE ABLE Resource Center**

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the NTAR Leadership Center, helping state leaders help adults with disabilities to employment and better economic opportunities through collaboration, innovation, and change.

[Laurie Harrington] Welcome to Lead.State.Gov, a feature podcast of the NTAR Leadership Center. I'm your host, Laurie Harrington. I'm joined today by two guests. First is Gwen Ivory, the Disability Program Navigator Manager in the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services of the Office of Workforce Development, and Sharon Reynolds, the director of the CSE ABLE Resource Center, at Edward Steven Center for the Study of Development of Literacy and Language. Thank you Gwen and Sharon for being here today. My first question is to you, Gwen. Could you please describe universal design and comment on what it means for something to be universally designed?

[Gwen Ivory] Well, for me, universal design really is an intentional process or a way to design buildings, programs, activities, and services that the largest group of people can benefit from those buildings, programs, and activities. And although that's my general description of what universal design is, I think in order for something to truly be called universally designed, it should at least adhere to the seven principles developed by the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University. And I would like to mention those seven principles, and at the same time that I mention each of them, I'd also like to provide an example of how the Institute for Community Inclusion has given examples of how one-stop career centers can apply that particular principle.

So I want to start with the first principle, which is equitable use. And what that means is that something is useful and marketed to people of diverse abilities. Now, an example of how one-stop centers can meet this particular principle is to make sure that information on all services available to all customers and avoid assuming that certain customer groups or customers may not be interested in that particular information or service.

The second principle is flexibility in use, and this means that that particular product, service, or building can be used by a wide range of individuals by their own preference and ability. An example for one-stops would be providing a range of options for individuals to input information into computers, like having keyboards, a trackball, or mouse.

The third principle is simple and intuitive. It simply means it's easy for individuals to understand -- individuals from different backgrounds can easily understand that product, that service, that activity. And example for a one-stop would be providing information in multiple languages.

The fourth principle is perceptible information. That is information is communicated in a manner to be understood by all users. Now, this is really very -- a good example for a one-stop in that for the training classes and workshops, information should be presented verbally and in writing, and



where possible, they should incorporate graphics to illustrate the information so that individuals can have a choice of how they want to receive the information.

The fifth principle is tolerance for error, and that means that efforts are taken, through universal design, to minimize hazards or adverse consequences where it involved unintended actions. In this case, one-stops could make sure that they have computer procedures set up to ensure that information is automatically backed up, like job seeker's resumes, cover letters, job listings. The ideas is that you don't want that information to be accidentally deleted.

And the sixth principle involves low physical effort, and this means that individuals can use the product, service, activity efficiently and comfortably without a lot of fatigue. And for one-stops, this means providing adjustable chairs, desks, and tables for workstations and classrooms.

And the final principle is size and space for approach and use. And this means that you make sure that you have appropriate space available for individuals to maneuver, say for example, inside the building, inside the classroom, regardless of the height of the person or their mobility or immobility. And for one-stops, this means making sure that in the resource rooms, that the resource material is available in places and at heights that is easily accessible. I know for me, I'm about 5'2", and that's a problem for me. So those are the principles, and I believe that if an organization wants to ensure that the activity, service, program, or building is accessible, they certainly would adhere to those seven principles.

[Laurie Harrington] This next question is for you, Sharon. What does it mean for curricula to be developed in compliance with universal design principles?

[Sharon Reynolds] So in education, we've taken the principles of universal design and have applied them to educational context, and it's called "universal design for learning." And traditionally in education, and special education specifically has been focused on fixing the student to work within a constrained classroom or within a constrained curriculum. So you work from a perspective of universal design for learning, or UDL, we start to see the learners from a perspective of strength as opposed to deficit and change aspects of the learning process instead of trying to change the learner. So from an instructional point of view, we make these changes proactively while designing the learning environment and planning our instruction to ensure that the material is accessible to all learners, regardless of their ability.

[Laurie Harrington] Can you give specific examples of how curricula can be adapted to be in compliance with the principles of universal design?

[Sharon Reynolds] My job is to provide professional development to the instructors who are out in the field delivering instruction to adult students. And a lot of the curriculum is available curriculum that's out there, commercially available. Our instructors are very good at intuitively using universal design with different types of curriculum materials. They will take what they're given and adjust the material to be more flexible. Maybe they'll change the text. They'll provide audio versions of the material. They'll provide large print material for students that might have



visual impairments. They may provide note takers. They may provide peer tutoring. They'll make those adjustments to a curriculum that may not be universally designed.

[Laurie Harrington] Sharon, how is universal design applied to adult learners and job seekers?

[Sharon Reynolds] So universal design for learning is made up of three principles based on the way that the brain learns and processes information. Those three principles are providing multiple means of presentation, providing multiple means of expression, and providing multiple means of engagement. So in a classroom, the UDL teacher is conscious of the varying learning styles of the students that are in the classroom and presents the material via multiple channels: visual, auditory, tactile kinesthetic. For example, the teacher may use an overhead projector and have written handouts. She may read through the directions, make sure that the students can have different materials available to them based on what their preferences are. The teacher will also provide opportunities for the students to engage with the material in different ways, whether it's group work or paired discussion or individual projects or written essays or very direct instruction, you know, varying that depending on what's appropriate for that particular student. And the students -- for example, another example might be writing a poem or producing a song or a poster to show their knowledge, to express their knowledge of the content. Maybe instead of writing an essay, a student might construct a diagram or a flow chart to show relationships between ideas. We're all familiar with graphic organizers. It's a really good way of showing those connections. So those are some examples of things that you might see happening in a classroom where universal design for learning is evident.

[Laurie Harrington] Along those lines, Gwen, could you comment on how one-stops could apply universal design in serving today's job seekers?

[Gwen Ivory] Today, one-stops are really faced with a wide range of job seekers. We have youths, adults, older adults, individuals with disabilities, ex-offenders, veterans, and I should say individuals with disabilities can cross all those groups that I've mentioned. And these different groups of individuals bring different -- come to the one-stops with different backgrounds, learning styles, as Sharon was talking about earlier, abilities, and disabilities. I think that universal design is an approach that can help job seekers better access workforce services based upon their needs and preferences. And universal design -- therefore, universal design should be applied from -- through the entire service delivery system in the one-stop center. For example, starting with registration and orientation, screening and assessment, and employment and training programs. If universal design is applied throughout, it really has great benefits for job seekers. It actually helps more individuals to access and utilize the services and resources in the one-stops. It gives individuals an opportunity to self-direct. They don't really need a lot of help from the staff in the one-stops; therefore, freeing up staff to do other things. Also, universal design will help job seekers to better utilize workshops, trainings because they have a better understanding because we've applied some of those things that Sharon mentioned earlier in terms of really designing the workshops and trainings for a diverse group of individual learners. And then, I think really, it's very important that when we do apply universal design that this will help reduce that job search time for individuals, thereby really getting them attached to the workforce



a lot quicker. And I think that's how universal design is going to be very helpful and is very helpful to job seekers.

[Laurie Harrington] And finally, Gwen, my last question is for you. Where should an organization start if they're interested in applying universal design principles to their organizations?

[Gwen Ivory] I really, really think that an organization should start first with education themselves about what universal design is and how it can benefit the organization and its customers. And I think Sharon and I talked about this before. Sharon, you had made a point about a resource for information, I believe.

[Sharon Reynolds] Yeah, there's a -- we've done some research here within our system because this is a fairly new, even though we've been probably doing this for a long time, the concept of it and the framework of universal design is a new thing for our system, so we did a lot of research on our own, and a good resource was the CAST website, which is the -- it's at www.cast.org. And they have modules, online modules, where you can go and work through those modules and learn about the aspects of universal design for learning. So I found that to be a very good resource.

[Gwen Ivory] And I really do believe education, educating the organization, the staff is very important as a first step. And I also found that the Institute for Community Inclusion, along with the National Center on Workforce and Disability for Adults have made several really great suggestions about actions that organizations should consider in implementing universal design. And the first one that they suggested is that the organization should form a universal design workgroup, of both internal and external to stakeholders because when you're talking about universal design, it's kind of like a system change, if you will. So you want to get everyone in to have a say in this and a stake in this as well. Another suggestion was evaluating where universal design is needed by looking at information that is readily available to a lot of organizations like looking at customer satisfaction survey results and mystery shops just to find out where areas are where people are indicating dissatisfaction so that you can see how you can take and apply universal design there. And then once you gather all that information, organizations should develop a long and short-term plan about how to institute some universal design strategies. But I also think -- I mean, I think they give some great suggestions, but I think you will only be successful in implementing universal design if you have -- you must have what I call a champion in the organization, someone who really believes in universal design and how it can improve customer service and satisfaction, and ultimately, how it really helps your organization to meet its mission goals and objectives. And a good example of that is the State of Maryland, I believe, where the Governor of the State of Maryland issued a universal design resolution ensuring that all Marylanders have equal access to the one-stop system services programs and activities. And I think if an organization is really interested, if they follow some or all of those steps, I think it would take them a long way in applying universal design in a part or all of their system. And I think -- Sharon and I talked about this at an earlier point, and I believe she can really give some good, concrete examples of how they are attempting to apply universal design in the ABLE program in Ohio.



[Sharon Reynolds] Yeah, I think that you said a couple of really important things, Gwen. You need to have a champion, and I think in addition to having a champion, I think you need to have buy-in from people at the top, and of course the Governor is about as high as you can go in a state. So in ABLE, we are trying to -- we're starting with the professional development state leadership. And we did an initial orientation workshop for our professional developers and got them on board. And I think what they recognized is that the concept makes sense. It's something that, you know, we do naturally, but now we have a framework, and we have guidelines, and we have, you know, something to help us move forward with our ABLE administrators, which is our next step is to try to now infuse this with the concept of Universal Design for Learning throughout all of our professional development activities. So it's not you come to a one-day workshop on this and you learn it, but it's infused throughout all of the offerings and trainings that we provide through our systems, so it will become more of a natural part of what we do and accepted as a natural part of what we do. We haven't gotten to the point where it is necessarily mandated or required, but we're hoping that through this infusion throughout all of our professional development that the administrators will see the value in this and buy-in. And then that will -- it'll hopefully follow through throughout all the rest of their programming, things -- and you start see this in their classrooms.

[Laurie Harrington] Thank you Gwen and Sharon for spending time with us today. I've been speaking with Gwen Ivory, the Disability Program Navigator Manager at the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, and Sharon Reynolds, the director of the CSE ABLE Resource Center at the Edward Stevens Center for the Development of Literacy and Language. This is Laurie Harrington for Lead.State.Gov with the NTAR Leadership Center. For more information about the NTAR leadership center and its research activities visit www.ntarcenter.org.

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