



**Interview with Megan Juring**  
**Assistant Secretary of Olmstead Activities**  
**California Health and Human Services Agency**

**[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 Research in Brief, a featured podcast of the NTAR Leadership Center. I'm your host Laurie Harrington. Megan Juring has been a tremendous public policy leader in the field of disability employment policy. She currently serves as the Assistant Secretary of Olmstead Activities at the California Health and Human Services Agency and has extensive experience both in the work force field as well as in the disability field. Megan is also the co chair of the NTAR Leadership Center's technical assistance panel where her real world experience and expertise is invaluable to helping shape and direct the technical assistance that the NTAR Leadership Center provides. In her role with the State of California, she has not only been active in work force issues but also with issues surrounding the challenges of an aging population and helped develop a plan to address the unique needs of citizens with Alzheimer's disease within the state. Megan's leadership also helped to ensure success for AB 1269, a bill which expanded MediCal eligibility limits to allow more people with disabilities to earn and save without fear of lost coverage. Welcome to our podcast, Megan. Could you please describe your role and responsibilities in your state of California and also discuss your role as the co chair of the Technical Advisory Panel for the NTAR Leadership Center?

**[Megan Juring]** As an Assistant Secretary in the California Health and Human Services Agency, I help to move new policy forward to the Governor's office and I help to resolve policy issues that may come up through new legislation or changes in funding. I have a program and fiscal responsibility currently for the Department of Aging and the Department of Developmental Services and I also facilitate policy discussions across programs to support Olmstead implementation in California. Examples include the administration's commitment to developing a state Alzheimer's disease plan, our commitment to identify strategies to build supportive living and supported employment services for people with traumatic brain injury, and in building data systems that help inform policy and fiscal decisions around our long term care service system and supports. As co chair of the Technical Assistance panel I bring a prospective, I hope, from across my varied experience in non profits, departments, and university experiences. The panel itself uses a lens to focus on some specific questions like what are the services and support that people with disabilities need to maximize employment opportunities or increase self sufficiency, especially regarding jobs and of course accesses to health care. So through that lens, panel members help identify and prioritize activities that the center can do to help both policy makers and providers address those needs. As co chair, I try to support the center in connecting dots, in finding and sharing promising strategies from across states and local areas and in helping to identify what issues states are most consumed by at the present.



**[Laurie Harrington]** Could you talk about the value of peer learning or learning from other states' officials and experiences and could you describe a specific example of where you have used something in California that you have learned from another state?

**[Megan Juring]** I've been thinking that in the work force development system we promote peer learning for individuals through on the job training programs and we know that natural supports and peer supports and mentoring help youth as well as people with developmental disabilities in weathering the changes that occur in our work place settings, and we know that service providers value peer learning. There seems to be an association for every publically funded program I've worked in and what NTAR does so well is to expand our definition of peers. The State Leadership Innovation Institute and the State Peer Leaders' Network demand involvement from leadership across policy and program areas, not just within one single program area. And since work force development is impacted by the availability of transportation and affordable and accessible housing and access to health care and economic development priorities, NTAR has really helped state leaders convene peers from across the systems and I think that's of tremendous value. And it really does bring new learning to myself as a leader and to our other states. What we've learned from other states, certainly we're learning I think along with Maryland around with their housing agency, how to interact with the housing agency in framing solutions under their base relocation and realignment program. A real specific in another area is at the first Leadership Institute, I joined the Connecticut team and saw a real terrific set of short video clips highlighting workers with disabilities and at that time California was piloting our, Talent Knows No Limits, public awareness campaign as a print media campaign only and doing that in two counties. And subsequently, when I returned to California I learned that First Lady, Maria Shriver's office was very interested in developing a video to highlight workers with developmental disabilities for her We Include campaign. And so I started thinking about how that might interface with the Talent Knows No Limits campaign and so it's really picked up on that concept of short video clips that can be used in a variety of settings. So while California is an expensive market to place video or ads on TV, the use of those short video clips in multimedia on web sites in various training settings has just blossomed for us. In California we thought that a video campaign was going to be really too expensive for us to utilize and in looking at the Connecticut snippets and seeing how they can be posted on a web site and people can just watch a short segment at a time or a training provider could pick up one segment that really relates to a field that they're working in, opened some ideas for us. And we did work together with the First Lady's office to develop a video, one focusing primarily on individuals with developmental disabilities and another with a broader diversity reflected in the jobs and the people. The outcome, one outcome is the videos...for the video goal was to establish more interagency partnerships and to provide an employer outreach tool for those partners. We did establish the new relationship with the Governor and the First Lady's office and we provided an outreach tool, as well, to the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, to the California State Personnel Board, to the California chamber of Commerce, a local Mayor's Committee is using these videos, as is the Social Security Administration Regional Office, Department of Rehabilitation, Department of Developmental Services, Employment Development Department, a school district in Irvine, and San Diego State University, are all picking up these clips and using them in various ways.



**[Laurie Harrington]** What are the specific challenges you find in trying to drive change in a state that is in such a disadvantaged economic environment such as California and what advice do you have for officials in other states that are trying to be policy leaders in such tough economic times?

**[Megan Juring]** Yeah, certainly there are both the challenges and opportunities during times of severe economic stress in our states. The challenges are very real, they include within the administration a very large commitment of time and energy being devoted to budget processes and to implementing administrative strategies to downsize or otherwise achieve savings, and that also takes a toll on people's morale. It is important though for leaders to identify and shine light on accomplishments and design creative ways to advance the important goals that continue to be in front of us despite the fiscal times. It's awkward to say that it really is a good time to plan, truly, we're developing a state Alzheimer's disease plan in California through the support of four philanthropic organization partners. The current fiscal constraints and the economic challenge really shouldn't thwart a planning, planning around policy program, research or practice response for the aging of our baby boom generation and in fact planning really keeps the dialogue very real when planning during a time of economic constraint and it also demands that those involved in the planning process are thinking proactively and in that way while we're acknowledging the very real consequences to people under these economic constraints currently, it also brings people together to be working toward a future and I think that brings some hope and it helps to balance that difficult morale both in the community and within the administration. So it is very important for leaders to both acknowledge on a continuing basis the accomplishments that have been made in recent times, it is too easy to be buried by the current tragedy of having to reduce programs and services that we care so deeply about and it would be too easy to lose sight of how far we might have come during this decade, during the previous decade. So it's important to keep putting out there what accomplishments have been made. It's also important to keep planning for the future, planning during a time of economic constraint takes leadership so that you are sharing the attention and the energy both to addressing the current fiscal constraints but also planning for a future and that proactive thinking really helps to balance a very real morale challenge for folks who are only working in a reactive mode. So planning keeps people thinking about the future and planning in a time of fiscal constraint insures that, that planning process includes viable strategies.

**[Laurie Harrington]** Thank you Megan Juring for speaking with us today, I've been talking with Megan Juring, the Assistant Secretary of Olmstead Activities at the California Health and Human Services Agency and the co chair of the NTAR Leadership Center's Technical Assistance Panel. This is Laurie Harrington for Research in Brief with the NTAR Leadership Center. For more information about the NTAR Leadership Center and its research activities visit [www.ntarcenter.org](http://www.ntarcenter.org).

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