



**LEAD CENTER**

**LEAD On! Quarterly Newsletter -**

## September 2017 Newsletter

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Issue

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### LEAD Center's Top 10 Accomplishments in Year 5

LEAD Center is just finishing its fifth year and is proud of its many accomplishments. LEAD Center's activities are all designed to improve competitive integrated employment and economic self-sufficiency for youth and adults with disabilities. Read on to learn about resources and support to states in implementing the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and creating partnerships that lead to outcomes for people with disabilities.

**1. Launched a Redesigned LEAD Center Website.** LEAD Center's website has up-to-date robust resources, organized in four areas: (1) WIOA/Workforce Development, (2) Customized Employment, (3) Financial Literacy and Capability, and (4) Cross-System Collaboration. Its advanced search function makes it easy to access briefs, archived webinars, system-specific information, and state-specific information. Visit

[www.leadcenter.org](http://www.leadcenter.org).

**2. Released Guided Group Discovery (GGD) Materials.** LEAD Center released Guided Group Discovery materials, which include a comprehensive [PowerPoint, Facilitator Manual and Participant Workbook](#). These can all be downloaded from the website along with an archived descriptive informational webinar, [Guided Group Discovery: Paving the Way to Employment](#), which provides an overview of the materials and features the experiences of implementers and people who have benefited from the process.

**3. Initiated Guided Group Discovery Pilot Projects.** LEAD Center staff and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) supported pilot projects to field test the GGD materials in Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee. Through these pilot projects, LEAD Center trained GGD facilitators to implement GGD with adults in the workforce system, people receiving support from vocational rehabilitation, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, in-school and out-of-school youth with disabilities, people who are homeless, veterans and more.

**4. Released ABLE and Employment Brief, and Held National Dialogue and Webinar.** LEAD Center released a brief, [The ABLE Act and Employment: Strategies for Maximizing the Effectiveness of the Achieving a Better Life Experience \(ABLE\) Act as a Tool for Financial Stability and Employment Outcomes of People with Disabilities](#), which was created in collaboration with the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network (ASAN); held a webinar on [The ABLE Act: A Tool for Financial Stability and Employment Outcomes](#); and facilitated an online National Dialogue on [The ABLE Act: A Tool for Financial Stability and Employment Outcomes](#), to gain perspectives and ideas from broad stakeholders.

**5. Supported Systemic Equal Opportunity Activities in the Workforce Systems in Missouri and Virginia, and with Their Partners.** LEAD Center has supported Equal Opportunity Practice Networks in Missouri and Virginia that are focused on implementing the Equal Opportunity provisions of WIOA (Section 188), to improve physical, programmatic, and communication accessibility within the workforce and career pathways systems.

**6. Provided Knowledge Translation through State and National Organizations.** LEAD Center presented and/or exhibited at 18 national conferences and regional meetings on topics related to WIOA implementation from a disability perspective: promoting inclusive career pathways; promoting equal opportunity in the workforce system using the [Promising Practices in Achieving Universal Access and Equal Opportunity: A Section 188 Disability Reference Guide](#); implementing the HCBS Settings Rule related to control of personal resources; and financial literacy and financial capability. Conferences included the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP), National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA), National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB), National Council on Independent Living (NCIL), Association of People

Supporting Employment First (APSE); DOL's WIOA Convenings; and more.

**7. Supported Financial Inclusion and Economic Advancement.** Provided support to the multi-state Financial Integration Team (FIT) sites. FIT brings together partners from 11 sites in nine cities. This year, FIT began using Financial Health Assessment and launched LifeCents pilots to support financial literacy and financial planning for people who interact with the workforce system and their partners. LEAD also supported extensive strategic planning in Louisville, Ky. through their long-term LADDER coalition, which stands for the Louisville Alliance for Development through Diversity, Empowerment, and Resources, led by the City of Louisville. LADDER is a collaborative of community-based organizations, workforce services, and financial institutions, designed to identify opportunities for universally designed services and supports that advance financial capability related to employment goals, and to improve positive financial behavior for individuals with disabilities.

**8. Collaborated with DEI and WINTAC to Promote Inclusive Career Pathways.** LEAD Center worked closely with the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Technical Assistance Center and the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) to leverage each other's resources as we individually and collaboratively develop materials and approaches to increase employment outcomes for youth and adults with disabilities.

**9. Supported a Statewide Collaboration in Kansas to Promote Employment Outcomes for Youth and Adults.** LEAD Center supported a broad-based Kansas Sub-Cabinet on Disability that is working to enhance their cross-agency capacity to serve job seekers with disabilities. As part of their work, members have engaged in a review of their Employment First policies and the funding that can be leveraged across systems to promote employment for youth and adults.

**10. Collaborated with the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) on Financial Education and Economic Inclusion.** LEAD Center staff provided input into a new set of FDIC materials designed to support financial literacy and capability for people with disabilities. LEAD also collaborated with FDIC on the webinar mentioned previously on the ABLE Act and Employment and presented at FDIC Regional Economic Inclusion meetings.

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## **Oregon Guided Group Discovery Project**

[Guided Group Discovery \(GGD\) curriculum materials](#), developed by the LEAD Center, offer American Job Centers (AJC) and partner agencies a tool to assist job seekers with disabilities to obtain customized employment through a collaborative model. Guided Group Discovery is a set of strategies that can benefit any job seeker who faces barriers to employment. Typically, GGD consists of five to six weekly one-to-two hour sessions, co-facilitated by AJC staff and partner

agencies to assist job seekers in developing a “Blueprint for Employment.” The Employment Blueprint, developed over the five to six week course, helps job seekers identify their interests, skills and contributions, conditions for success, support network, potential employers who need what they have to offer, and next steps. The Blueprint information is used to target specific job opportunities that “fit” the job seeker and also benefit the employer. Job seekers are encouraged to use their support team and take responsibility for action steps throughout the process.

In Oregon, the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services held its first Train the Trainer workshop to train statewide Transition Network Facilitators (TNF) on the Guided Group Discovery process in order to meet some of the Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The Oregon Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services Transition Network Facilitators play an important role in supporting teams involved in transition services throughout Oregon. Through this project, TNF will learn to facilitate GGD and, as a result, will recruit and train teams in their respective regions, consisting of Youth Transition Program (YTP) Specialists, Transition Specialists, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, and Workforce Talent Development Specialists, with the goal of supporting them to implement GGD with small groups of transition-age youth.

Keith Ozols, Workforce Youth Manager at the Oregon Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, said they are “excited to be a part of this.” The LEAD Center will support teams during the implementation phase through on-site and off-site technical assistance, providing materials, assisting with compiling data and success stories, and developing strategies for capacity building and scaling GGD implementation throughout the state.

Transition Network Facilitators (TNFs) participating in the training will also assist the LEAD Center in adapting the Guided Group Discovery exercises to be more youth-oriented (e.g., changing examples to be relevant to youth with little or no work history or experience). Recommendations from the Transition Network Facilitators will be incorporated into the pilot GGD sessions during the 2017-2018 school year and made available to others through electronic links posted on the LEAD Center website. Mr. Ozols said the two-day training workshop, held in August, was, “Well received by the staff that are going to be trainers. They think it can work well in both rural and urban settings.”

Expectations for teams and participants implementing Guided Group Discovery will include:

1. Co-facilitation of GGD sessions between schools, Workforce, Vocational Rehabilitation, and other agencies as needed (e.g., Community Rehabilitation Programs, Corrections, Mental Health).
2. Development of an agreed-upon process for data sharing. (The State of Oregon is working on an MOU, but teams may need a local interagency agreement and consents for release of information.)
3. Enrolling or co-enrolling participants of GGD sessions in key programs (school, Workforce,

Vocational Rehabilitation via Pre-ETS data tracking).

4. Asking youth for their voluntary agreement to participate in follow-up so that TNFs can follow up directly with participants (if under age 18, will need parent permission).
5. Transition Network Facilitators collecting data on outcomes for participants of Guided Group Discovery.

Guided Group Discovery materials include a [Facilitator Manual](#), an accompanying [PowerPoint slide deck](#) (Introduction and Course), and a [Participant Workbook](#). Please visit the [LEAD Center website](#) to download the materials and for additional information.

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## **Section 188 and AJC Certification: Achieving Compliance, Expanding Access, and Increasing Outcomes**

The LEAD Center has been providing training nationwide on how all programs and activities that are part of the One-Stop delivery system, including workforce partners, must comply with [Section 188, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act's](#) (WIOA's) equal opportunity and non-discrimination provisions. Section 188 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, political affiliation or belief, among other bases, and requires reasonable accommodations be provided to people with disabilities. Under WIOA, all core programs in Titles I, II, III, and IV are working to align and coordinate their services. This is reflected in each state's four-year plan, which includes all four titles and establishes a common performance accountability system, with efforts to coordinate activities like intake, case management, and reporting systems.

Each state submitted Certification Criteria in July 2017 that identifies benchmarks for developing a certification process to address overall effectiveness of the workforce delivery system. As part of the criteria, states must evaluate and improve physical, communication, and programmatic access within job centers. With technical assistance and support from the LEAD Center, many states have begun to assess physical accessibility by deploying ADA surveying teams using trusted partners, such as state/local Centers for Independent Living, vocational rehabilitation, or Regional ADA Centers.

In Virginia, ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) are often used by ADA subject matter teams to assess physical access of workforce centers in parking, entrances, buildings, bathrooms, internal space, and other essential areas outlined in the guidelines. For communication access, LEAD recommends that workforce coordinate with potential service users, such as deaf and hard of hearing partners. This level of coordination is currently taking place in Virginia, Missouri, and other states. States are encouraged to ensure AJCs are implementing effective policies and procedures for communication access, including awareness and use of assistive technology, support to increase staff knowledge, information about accommodating diverse communication needs, and knowing when/how to hire sign language interpreters or other who can support

someone's ability to communicate.

The third major area of accessibility, outlined in AJC/One-Stop Certification, is programmatic access. Under WIOA Section 188, One-Stops must assess programmatic accessibility for which, *"policies, practices, and procedures must provide effective and meaningful opportunity for persons with disabilities to participate in or benefit from aid, benefit, service, and training."* LEAD Center staff are providing training across the country to clarify how this definition is different from "program accessibility" in ADA Title II, which refers to accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. The Section 188 definition is more encompassing, requiring workforce centers to ensure full and meaningful participation of people with disabilities in all of their services. In order to assess programmatic access in Virginia, LEAD is working with their cross-agency taskforce to examine procedures and policies, as well as learning about experiences of customers and overall job center culture. Both states are using the [Promising Practices in Achieving Universal Access and Equal Opportunity: A Section 188 Disability Reference Guide](#), developed through the LEAD Center with the Department of Labor's Civil Rights Center, Employment and Training Administration (ETA), and Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP).

LEAD is also learning from others states, like California and Iowa, about how cross-Title and cross-partner action committees are critical in setting standards and implementing procedures and strategies around Section 188, as part of the AJC certification process.

LEAD continues to support collaborations that include both workforce and disability partners. In Missouri, the State Equal Opportunity Officer works hand-in-hand with the State Vocational Rehabilitation Director. In Virginia, the WIOA Policy Administrators are at the table to ensure that language within policies across workforce programs, titles, and partners are consistent around ADA and Section 188. In Iowa, California, and other states, there is active representation across all WIOA Titles, as well as across the spectrum of disabilities.

The foundation of cross-partner taskforces is their diverse representation of both workforce and disability partners, shared leadership, and a commitment to action. Representation from all WIOA Titles, state/local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), WIOA Administrators, Policy Administrators, and Equal Opportunity Officers are all critical to coordinated efforts, as well as leadership from Vocational Rehabilitation, Deaf & Hard of Hearing Agencies, Blind & Visually Impaired Agencies, Centers for Independent Living, and other key partners. The varying perspectives and vast subject matter expertise of these taskforces has led states to take on challenging areas of access in their workforce systems. Critical recommendations are being made to state WDBs in all areas of physical, communication, and programmatic accessibility, including the need for statewide training using Section 188 and the ADA as the framework.

Additionally, LEAD Center staff are partnering with [Disability Employment Initiative](#) (DEI) staff to support activities related to AJC certification in Virginia.

For more information on Section 188, visit the [LEAD Center website](#).

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## **Updates from the Louisville Alliance for Development through Diversity, Empowerment, and Resources (LADDER)**

The LEAD Center continues to support the expanding work of the [Louisville Alliance for Development through Diversity, Empowerment, and Resources \(LADDER\)](#), led by Louisville Metro Government's Office of Resilience and Community Services. LADDER is a collaborative of community-based organizations, workforce services, and financial institutions, designed to identify opportunities for universally designed services and supports that advance financial capability related to employment goals, and to improve positive financial behavior for individuals with disabilities, particularly those who use the public workforce system. With a mission to *"create a community-wide culture of financial inclusiveness and accessibility that serves the diverse Louisville metro population, LADDER offers a range of financial capability resources for both service providers and the individuals they serve."*

Recently, LADDER alliance members from the Office of Resilience and Community Services, Center for Accessible Living, Goodwill Industries of Kentucky, and the KY Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) launched a new matched savings and loan program pilot for Louisvillians with disabilities. Seventeen participants have enrolled in the matched savings and/or loan program and completed a financial health assessment, which they used to set their own savings goals. Each participant has the option to receive guidance from a financial coach, is matched with one of four peer mentors, and receives a subscription to LifeCents (an online personal financial education program designed to understand and improve financial health and well-being). As participants move through the program, they improve their own savings habits and make more informed decisions about their finances.

In addition to the new pilot, the LADDER Alliance continues to expand the reach of their financial empowerment curriculum and tools. LADDER is a member of the [Financial Integration Team \(FIT\)](#), a community of practice of organizations around the nation that share common goals and practices, individual experiences, innovative ideas, and experiential knowledge on integrated economic advancement services to support people with disabilities.

Staff at the LEAD Center would like to acknowledge the leadership and accomplishments of one of the key partners in the LEAD Center's effort to improve employment and economic advancement opportunities for all people with disabilities. Since 1998, Tina Lentz served Louisville Metro Government's Office of Resilience and Community Services. She recently retired from her position as Executive Administrator of the Office of Financial Empowerment. Ms. Lentz has extensive experience in creating and leading financial empowerment initiatives, including LADDER, in an effort to transform the social service delivery system in order to increase opportunities for financial advancement for families at risk. LADDER was created from her vision

and ability to bring people together around its common goals. Countless people have benefitted and will continue to benefit from Ms. Lentz's contributions.

For more information on the LADDER initiative, visit the [LouisvilleKy.gov](http://LouisvilleKy.gov) website.

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## **October Is National Disability Employment Awareness Month**

The official theme of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), [Office of Disability Employment Policy's](#) (ODEP) National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) this October is "Inclusion Drives Innovation."

National Disability Employment Awareness Month is a nationwide campaign observed each October that raises awareness about disability employment issues, celebrates the skills and talents of workers with disabilities, and educates about the value of a diverse workforce.

ODEP offers a range of [resources](#) to help organizations plan NDEAM observances, including official posters in English and Spanish, as well as sample articles, a press release, proclamation, and social media content.

NDEAM dates back to 1945, when Congress declared the first week in October "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." The word "physically" was deleted in 1962 to acknowledge individuals across the spectrum of disabilities. The week was expanded to a month by Congress in 1988 and its name changed to National Disability Employment Awareness Month. When ODEP was created in 2001, it was given responsibility for NDEAM, including the selection of its annual theme.

"Americans of all abilities must have access to good, safe jobs," said U.S. Secretary of Labor Alexander Acosta. "Smart employers know that including different perspectives in problem-solving situations leads to better solutions. Hiring employees with diverse abilities strengthens their business, increases competition, and drives innovation."

NDEAM can and should continue beyond October. The Department of Labor lists 10 activities in which employers can engage to advance disability inclusion throughout the year. Visit the [DOL webpage](#) and learn how to keep the momentum going.

For more information about NDEAM, and specific ideas on how different types of organizations can participate in the month-long observance, visit the [National Disability Employment Awareness Month 2017 webpage](#).

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## **ABLE Accounts Give People with Disabilities the Power to Save**

This summer, the [ABLE National Resource Center](#) (ANRC) launched a month-long public awareness campaign called "[#ABLEtoSave](#)." The national grassroots campaign began on July 31 and ran throughout the month of August. The purpose of the campaign was to educate and

inform the general public about Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) accounts, with the purpose of accelerating the use of this new saving tool for people with disabilities and their families.

ABLE accounts are tax-advantaged savings accounts that have the potential to significantly increase the health, independence, and quality of life of individuals with disabilities without jeopardizing benefits such as Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Additionally, as noted in the recently published LEAD Center brief, [“The ABLE Act and Employment: Strategies for Maximizing the Effectiveness of the Achieving a Better Life Experience \(ABLE\) Act as a Tool for Financial Stability and Employment Outcomes of People with Disabilities,”](#) ABLE accounts can be used to help an individual with disabilities gain and maintain employment by helping offset employment-related expenses.

During each of the five weeks in August, ANRC provided a detailed calendar of messaging, social media posts, and other resources to campaign participants. Informational and marketing videos were also developed, and [webinars on ABLE-related topics](#) were held on Wednesday of each week.

Currently, 28 states have ABLE account programs. To learn more about the #ABLEtoSave campaign and ABLE accounts, visit the [ABLE National Resource Center website](#).

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## **LEAD Center Knowledge Translation Activities**

LEAD Center staff presented and/or exhibited at a number of conferences during the past quarter on strategies and practices to promote employment and economic advancement of youth and adults with disabilities. This included the national Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) Conference, the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) Conference, the National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASAUD) Conference, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Directors’ National Conference, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) Regional Economic Inclusion Conferences, the California Workforce Association Annual Conference, the Virginia Supported Employment Conference, and more. All of the LEAD Center presentations for these conferences focused on promoting and supporting the successful inclusion of people with disabilities in workforce services, career pathways programs, financial capability strategies, customized employment strategies, braiding and leveraging resources, and cross-system partnerships. These national, statewide, and regional meetings have been exciting ways to share LEAD Center resources and strategies, and to create new partnerships.

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## **LEAD PARTNER: Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation**

Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is embracing the new Workforce Innovation and

Opportunity Act (WIOA) legislation to deepen partnerships with education and workforce partners throughout the state. Oregon VR is participating with every Local Workforce Development Board in the state and sits on their Local Leadership Teams to create services that meet the local areas needs of employers. Simultaneously, Oregon VR is working with local school districts to address transitional needs of students with disabilities through VR's Youth Transition Program (YTP), an internationally recognized best practice in transition services for students with disabilities. The Oregon Department of Education and VR are co-funding Transition Network Facilitators, who are disability navigators working with staff from VR, schools, and developmental disabilities services to build teams to meet student employment needs before they exit the school system. The Oregon VR staff that are collocated at the American Job Centers (AJCs) are pulling in all of these connections to create greater access for individuals with disabilities that result in greater employment outcomes. VR assists individuals with disabilities to get and keep a job that matches their skills, interests, and abilities. Oregon VR staff work in partnership with the community and businesses to provide services that are individualized to help each eligible person receive services that are essential to their employment success. Learn more about [Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation](#).

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## **LEAD PEOPLE: Nancy Boutot**

Nancy Boutot is the Manager of Integrated Systems and Cross System Integration for the LEAD Center and Project Manager for Ticket to Work Outreach Support through National Disability Institute (NDI) Consulting.

Her work focuses on promoting employment and economic self-sufficiency for youth and adults with significant disabilities. Ms. Boutot has more than 20 years of experience in running both nonprofit and state government programs focused on competitive employment for individuals with disabilities. She specializes in customized employment, Social Security work incentives, benefits planning and work supports, Discovery, service integration, and financial strategies to empower individuals through person-centered planning to maximize their employment and financial outcomes.



Prior to joining NDI, Ms. Boutot spent eight years with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities in Florida and 14 years directing nonprofit community-based employment programs in Florida and New Jersey. She earned her bachelor's degree from Northeastern University, a Master of Science from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, and is also a certified Community Work Incentives Coordinator (CWIC) through Virginia Commonwealth University's National Training Center. In her free time, she enjoys traveling extensively through the United States and Europe.

Ms. Boutot recently wrote a [blog](#) about her own experience of living with a disability.

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## Important Additional Resources

[Employment, Health Care, and Policy Update: August 2017](#)

[The Essential Elements of Customized Employment for Universal Application](#)

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