



LEAD CENTER

LEAD On! Quarterly Newsletter - March

## 2018 Newsletter

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Issue

March 28, 2018

### In This Issue

- [WIOA State Plan Modifications from a Disability Perspective: Recommendations for Ensuring Inclusion and Equal Opportunity in State Plan Updates](#)
  - [ABLE Update: Social Security Administration's Updated Guidance for SSI Beneficiaries](#)
  - [Guided Group Discovery Youth Pilot Kicks Off in Oregon](#)
  - [Adding Self-Guided Discovery to Your Toolkit: An Additional Resource to Promote Employment Outcomes for People with Barriers to Employment](#)
  - [Three-Part Webinar Series: AJC Certification & Section 188: A Window of Opportunity to Impact Equal Opportunity Policy & Practice for People with Disabilities](#)
  - [LEAD Center Releases Policy Briefs on Guided Group Discovery and ABLE Accounts and Employment](#)
  - [LEAD Partner: Virginia's Accessibility Taskforce](#)
  - [LEAD Person: Constance M. Green](#)
  - [Important New Resources](#)
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### **WIOA State Plan Modifications from a Disability Perspective: Recommendations for Ensuring Inclusion and Equal Opportunity in State Plan Updates**

On February 21, 2018, LEAD Center hosted a webinar on *WIOA State Plan Modifications from a Disability Perspective: Recommendations for Ensuring Inclusion and Equal Opportunity in State Plan Updates*. This webinar was in response to the Two-Year Modification Requirements for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified and Combined State Plans issued by the Department of Education's (ED) Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) in a Technical Assistance Circular (RSA-TAC-18-01) and the Department of Labor's (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) in a Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL No. 06-17). WIOA required that each state submit a Unified or Combined State Plan by April 1, 2016 and to submit a two-year modification, which was due on March 15, 2018.

Participants heard from DOL's ETA and the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), a representative from the Workforce Innovation and Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC), and people from different systems at the state level who were engaged in updating and revising their State Plans. Specifically, attendees learned about how States are using this requirement as an opportunity to modify plans and activities to ensure equal opportunity and the inclusion of youth and adults with disabilities in services provided by WIOA partners. The webinar and related materials are [archived on the LEAD Center website](#).

[Back to Top](#)

## **ABLE Update: Social Security Administration's Updated Guidance for SSI Beneficiaries**

On March 8, 2018, the Social Security Administration (SSA) published an updated version of its Program Operations Manual System (POMS) regarding the ABLE Act and ABLE accounts. POMS is an operational policy reference used by SSA's staff to conduct SSA business. Highlights include:

- **Partnerships that States can use to administer ABLE accounts.** The partnerships identified include:

- (1) a consortium where the State has their own ABLE program, but joins other States so that it can provide lower administrative costs and better investment options than they could provide on their own;

- (2) States with their own ABLE program, but contract with private companies or with other States to manage their ABLE program; and

- (3) States that do not operate their own ABLE program, but partner with another State to offer the other State's ABLE program to their residents.

- **Treatment of duplicate ABLE accounts.** If there is more than one ABLE account administered by a qualified ABLE program, the guidance discusses treatment of the account as a resource except for cases of a rollover or program-to-program transfer.

- **Clarification of excluded contributions.** The guidance clarifies the exclusion of contributions made into an ABLE account as income to the beneficiary and explains what income is countable when deposited into an ABLE account via direct deposit or otherwise. It discusses transfer of funds from a trust and when an ABLE contribution will be treated as a gift.

- **Simplification of examples of Qualified Disability Expense (QDE) to make them more general (at the request of the Internal Revenue Service).** The references to qualified disability expenses (QDEs) were changed to be consistent with the IRS ABLE law\*.

- **Data exchange.** Guidance explains when the States began reporting monthly data to SSA and includes a list of the shared data.

- **Usage of debit cards.** Guidance provides details of the information that SSA will receive via data exchange about distributions made through an ABLE prepaid debit card. Monies

distributed onto an ABLE prepaid debit card are considered a qualified distribution unless determined otherwise.

\*Final IRS regulations have not been published. Therefore, the IRS position could change when the regulations are finalized. If this happens, SSA ABLE policy will be updated accordingly.

For more detailed information about the POMS and other ABLE-related questions, we encourage you to visit the ABLE National Resource Center at [www.ablenrc.org](http://www.ablenrc.org).

Read the [updated guidance document released by SSA](#).

[Back to Top](#)

## **Guided Group Discovery Youth Pilot Kicks Off in Oregon**

On February 28, 2018, Oregon's statewide Guided Group Discovery (GGD) Youth Pilot kicked off with a full-day Train-the-Trainer for 31 Transition Network Facilitators, Youth Transition Program staff, and teachers from across the state. Participants were provided with youth-focused materials, including the Field Test version of the GGD Youth Facilitator Guide, Youth Participant Workbook, PowerPoint presentations and videos of a young woman practicing her networking pitch. For the next 10-12 weeks, each of the six pilot sites will implement GGD with high school juniors and seniors with disabilities who are interested in self-exploration in order to take control of their job search.

The six pilot sites include a mix of rural and urban locations throughout Oregon. Some of the sites have already included vocational rehabilitation (VR) and American Job Center (AJC) staff into some of the sessions. Others plan to visit an AJC as one of their activities. Sites are meeting once or twice a week, depending on the length of class periods and the number of students. Sites range from working with a handful of students to much larger cohorts. One site in southern Oregon is assigning specific partners to specific sessions and running each session seven times throughout the day, so that roughly 70 students will experience the GGD process!

In addition to the Train-the-Trainer, LEAD Center staff were also able to present GGD at the *2nd Annual Oregon Statewide Transition Conference: Investing in the Future*. Attendees were able to learn more about GGD, as well as where the pilot sites were located, in case they wanted to partner with one of the sites. LEAD Center staff were also hosted by VR to provide a two-hour session on GGD for AJC and VR staff who were not able to attend the Train-the-Trainer or conference session.

Students will learn the benefits of GGD and the role of American Job Centers (AJCs), Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), and community providers through a process in which both teachers and invited partners co-facilitate the GGD process in classroom settings. Students will get to know each other and will learn how to identify their own personal employment networks; their skills, interests and talents and; what types of employers may need what they have to offer; which can help focus their job searches. Students will also learn how to identify the positive aspects of their

personality, their conditions for employment, and possible job accommodations needed for success. As the students progress, they will develop interests and identify vocational themes. At the end of the pilot, students will have a Blueprint for Employment that they can use with school and agency staff assisting them with their job development process.

LEAD Center will collect outcome data, including whether the Blueprint for Employment is being used for planning in Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs) and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Additional data collection for individuals who secure employment will include whether the jobs match their interests/vocational themes and conditions for employment, as well as what agencies students connected with (e.g., VR, WorkSource - Oregon's AJC system, the Community Developmental Disability/Brokerage program in Oregon, Ticket to Work, Mental Health, etc.). Data will also be collected on which GGD tools were used to assist in obtaining employment (e.g., using their networking pitch, requesting accommodations, engaging in informational interviews, etc.).

Please visit the LEAD Center website to access its [Guided Group Discovery Tools: Introduction and Course, Participant Workbook, and Facilitator Guide](#).

[Back to Top](#)

## **Adding Self-Guided Discovery to Your Toolkit: An Additional Resource to Promote Employment Outcomes for People with Barriers to Employment**

LEAD Center and the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) were excited to release the *Self-Guided Discovery Facilitator's Guide: Helping People Discover Their Own Path to Employment* as part of their March 28, 2018 webinar on this topic. For many years, ODEP has worked to strengthen the capacity of the nation's workforce development system to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities using Customized Employment (CE) approaches as a universal strategy. With the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and ongoing systems change efforts like Employment First, formal adoption and implementation of CE policies and practices are increasingly occurring in State and local agencies to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities and other significant barriers to employment. Discovery, which is a cornerstone of CE, is an effective strategy for any job seeker with barriers to employment.

The Facilitator's Guide, developed in collaboration with Griffin-Hammis Associates/Center for Social Capital, is a user-friendly tool designed to train facilitators to guide job seekers through the Self-Guided Discovery process.

This *Self-Guided Discovery Facilitator's Guide* can be downloaded from LEAD Center's website. We encourage you to visit the website, where you will find extensive additional resources on [Customized Employment](#). There also are [archived webinars](#) on Customized Employment and Guided Group Discovery.

[Back to Top](#)

## Three-Part Webinar Series: AJC Certification & Section 188: A Window of Opportunity to Impact Equal Opportunity Policy & Practice for People with Disabilities

LEAD Center has joined forces with the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) to host a three-part webinar series on AJC Certification & Section 188: A Window of Opportunity to Impact Equal Opportunity Policy & Practice for People with Disabilities. The overall objective is to increase foundational knowledge of the intersection between Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) disability-related provisions, Section 188 Equal Opportunity regulations and American Job Center (AJC) Certification, especially related to programmatic accessibility. Participants in the series are learning about the need to update and align State/local Section 188 compliance procedures and AJC Certification processes to reflect the expanded role of AJC Core Partners under WIOA. The series also offers participants the opportunity to learn about replicable strategies and action steps from multiple States to support effective AJC Certification processes, with Section 188 as the framework. Finally, attendees will learn about key roles of cross-systems partners in Section 188 and AJC Certification, including Equal Opportunity Officers and Vocational Rehabilitation.

The three-part webinar series kicked off on March 7 with an overview of disability-related provisions in WIOA. Section 188 was highlighted as the framework for expanding access to individuals with disabilities, especially as it relates to the AJC Certification. The webinar highlights the expanded roles of WIOA Core Partners (Title I, II, III, and IV) in complying with WIOA provisions as a part of their shared responsibility for administering aspects of AJC service delivery. Participants also learned about critical resources and key partners that play a major role in supporting the workforce system to evaluate and improve programmatic access, leading to employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities. Access a recording of the Part I webinar, [\*WIOA from a Disability Perspective & Section 188: A Powerful Foundation for Access\*](#).

Part II of the webinar series, [\*State Workforce Systems that Are Making Equal Opportunity a Priority: Missouri, Virginia, California\*](#), will take place on April 4. Presenters from the three States will share their motivations, strategies, challenges, and actions in implementing effective AJC Certification procedures. Missouri's commitment to Section 188 implementation is emphasized through the State's increased funding, strengthened partnerships, and statewide training efforts, all designed to ensure equal opportunities for all customers. Virginia's diverse, action-oriented WIOA taskforce is influencing policy, clarifying roles of partners, and leveraging promising practices from the State's DEI to improve programmatic access and outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Finally, California is employing two levels of AJC Certification that motivate AJCs to more strategically evaluate programmatic accessibility and develop continuous improvement plans that demonstrate ongoing priorities and progress. [Register for the April 4 webinar](#).

The final webinar in the series, [\*Achieving 188 Compliance & AJC Certification: Key Strategies & Actions from Policy to Procedures\*](#), will take place on April 30 from 3:00-4:00 EDT. It will offer a

snapshot of the foundation set by WIOA's disability-related provisions and Section 188. The most impactful strategies across all three States will be highlighted, including which partners have been essential to each region's Section 188 implementation and AJC Certification. Action steps will be identified to help States assess where they fall along the spectrum of implementing Section 188 as a part of AJC Certification, as well as the steps they may take to improve physical and programmatic accessibility, build partnerships, and increase employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities. [Register for the April 30 webinar.](#)

All LEAD Center webinars are captioned and presentation materials are sent to participants in advance of the webinar. For any other reasonable accommodation requests, please contact Aramide Awosika at [aawosika@ndi-inc.org](mailto:aawosika@ndi-inc.org).

[Back to Top](#)

## **LEAD Center Releases Policy Briefs on Guided Group Discovery and ABLE Accounts and Employment**

LEAD Center recently published two policy briefs: *Improving Employment Outcomes with ABLE Accounts* and *Customized Employment and Guided Group Discovery*.

The purpose of the Improving Employment Outcomes with ABLE Accounts policy brief is to help people with disabilities, their families, government agencies and departments, and all other ABLE stakeholders to understand how having an ABLE account can help account owners gain employment and improve their overall financial stability.

The Customized Employment and Guided Group Discovery Information Brief provides a summary of the process and how to access the Discovery materials on the LEAD Center website. LEAD Center recently released comprehensive [Guided Group Discovery materials](#), designed to enable youth and adults with disabilities and others to find a job that is a good fit with an employer who values and needs the talents they have to offer.

[Back to Top](#)

## **LEAD Partner: Virginia's Accessibility Taskforce**

LEAD Center has been participating in and offering technical assistance to Virginia's Accessibility Taskforce, which was created in 2016 as recommended in the State's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined State Plan. The goal of this cross-partner group is to enhance accessibility of the Virginia One-Stop delivery system and the customer's experience. WIOA's Title I Administrator at the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) has taken on the lead role alongside Vocational Rehabilitation. The group is composed of staff across 14 workforce programs and partners. For the first time, Virginia is convening a widely diverse representation of State agencies to focus on accessibility. This includes Departments for the Blind and Vision Impaired, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and the Centers for Independent Living. It is also the first time the state Equal Opportunity Officers for WIOA Title I and Title III have been invited to the

table for this type of planning.

To help this diverse Taskforce get on the same level of understanding, all members participated in training by LEAD Center on *WIOA from a Disability Perspective: Implementing Section 188's Equal Opportunity Provisions*, which focused on key provisions of WIOA, many of which are different from provisions in the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), which preceded WIOA. In addition, Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) staff were invited to share promising practices that support effective programmatic accessibility that leads to better employment outcomes for people with disabilities. This Taskforce has developed a shared vision and mission focused solely on accessibility, with input from workforce partners. They are committed to working together as a team to focus on priority areas that include Universal Access for ALL Workforce System Facilities, Policies and Procedures, Training for ALL Workforce Partners, and Communication and Outreach.

[Back to Top](#)

### **LEAD Person: Constance M. Green**



Constance serves as Virginia's State Coordinator for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs. In this capacity, she develops program policy and guidance, provides technical assistance to Local Workforce Development Areas throughout Virginia, and works with partner agencies to effectively implement WIOA through Virginia's One-Stop System. Constance also serves as the project lead for Virginia's One-Stop Certification Process and is a member of the Virginia WIOA Accessibility Taskforce, representing a Title I policy perspective. She

has worked to leverage cross-agency partnerships to ensure that the policy and guidance regarding the One-Stop Certification reflects a progressive, forward-leaning approach to implementing physical and programmatic accessibility in their One-Stops. With more than 15 years of experience in state and local government, Constance continues to be passionate about improving government in ways that are both meaningful and impactful for people with disabilities.

[Back to Top](#)

### **Important New Resources**

#### **Customized Employment: Stories and Lessons from the Field**

<http://leadcenter.org/resources/tool-manual/customized-employment-stories-and-lessons-field>

#### **Disability Benefits Counseling Services: Free Resources for Social Security Administration Disability Beneficiaries Returning to Work**

<http://leadcenter.org/resources/tool-manual/disability-benefits-counseling-services-free-resource>

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### **Information Brief: Customized Employment and Guided Group Discovery**

<http://leadcenter.org/resources/report-brief/information-brief-customized-employment-and-guided-group-discovery>

### **Information Brief: Improving Employment Outcomes with ABLÉ Accounts**

<http://leadcenter.org/resources/report-brief/information-brief-improving-employment-outcomes-able-accounts>

### **Policy Brief: Reviewing and Updating Your WIOA Unified or Combined State Plan from a Disability Perspective**

<http://leadcenter.org/resources/report-brief/policy-brief-reviewing-and-updating-your-wioa-unified-or-combined-state-plan-disability-perspective>

### **Financial Empowerment Resources**

#### **Five Key Strategies to Achieve Financial Well-being**

<http://www.leadcenter.org/resources/tool-manual/five-key-strategies-achieve-financial-well-being>

#### **Financial Literacy Education Frequently Asked Questions under WIOA**

<http://www.leadcenter.org/resources/tool-manual/financial-literacy-education-frequently-asked-questions-under-wioa>

#### **Federal Regulations That Support the Integration of Economic Advancement Strategies within Disability Employment Services**

<http://www.leadcenter.org/resources/tool-manual/federal-regulations-support-integration-economic-advancement-strategies-within-disability-employment-services>

#### **Financial Education Disability Supplemental Guides**

<http://leadcenter.org/resources/tool-manual/financial-education-disability-supplemental-guides>

#### **Financial Education Quick Reference Guides**

<http://leadcenter.org/resources/tool-manual/financial-education-quick-reference-guides>

#### **Employment and Economic Advancement Resource Map**

<http://leadcenter.org/resources/tool-manual/employment-and-economic-advancement-resource-map>

#### **[Back to Top](#)**

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