



**LEAD CENTER**

**LEAD On! Quarterly Newsletter - December**

## **2020 Newsletter**

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Issue

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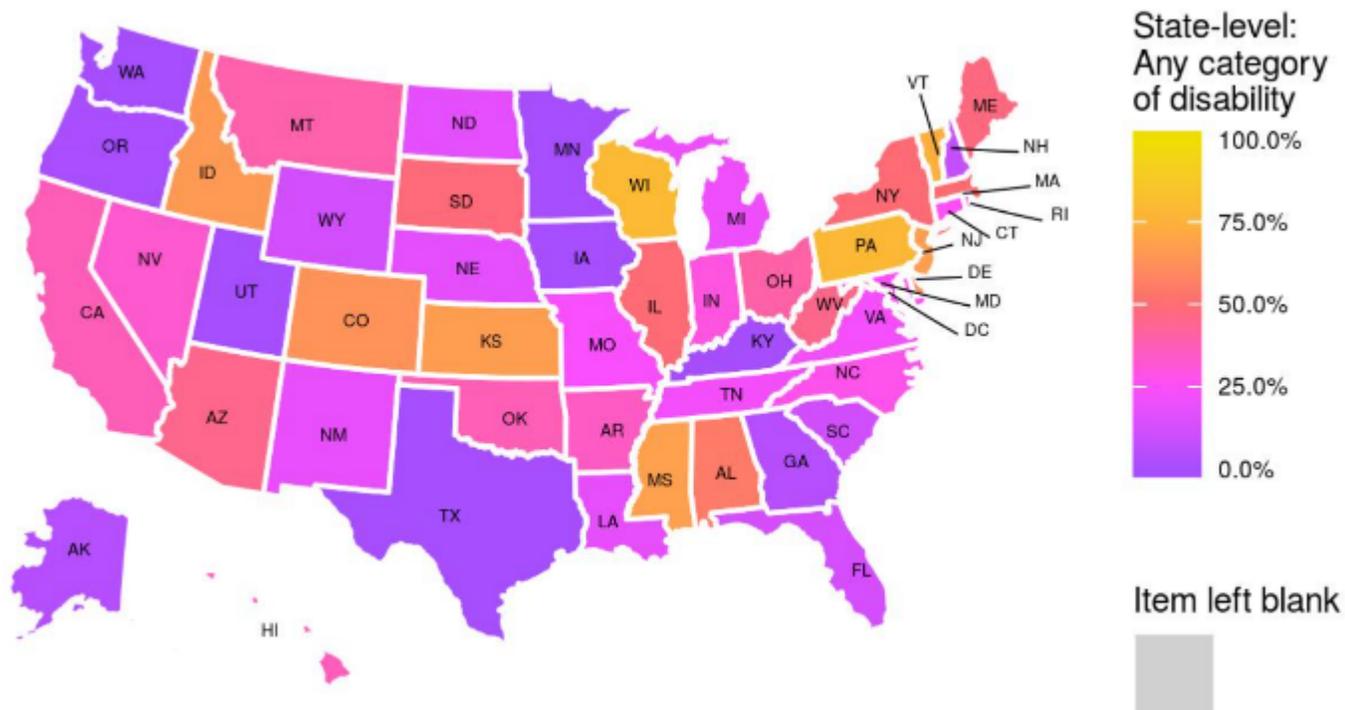
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### **LEAD Center 2020 Top Activities**

The LEAD Center brings together Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners at the national, state, and local level to expand policy, employment, leadership, and economic advancement opportunities and outcomes for all people with disabilities. Below are highlights of some of the LEAD Center’s activities during 2020 related to WIOA Performance Reporting, Equal Opportunity Regulations and Policy, Promoting Work and Financial Literacy, and Inclusive Career Pathways.

#### **WIOA Performance Reporting**

Making it easier to use data to drive system improvements, the LEAD team developed an interactive online data visualization tool which allows the exploration of all WIOA disability-related data elements by state, county, and region, in addition to other variables such as type of participant and services received. The LEAD Center works in partnership with DOL's Employment and Training Administration and Office of Disability Employment Policy to encourage the use of quality data to drive system improvements for people with disabilities.



## Webinars

- [Understanding WIOA Disability-Related Reporting: Tools for Data Visualization](#) (September 17, 2020). Introduction to a new online interactive data visualization tool which helps states and local areas better understand their disability-related reporting and how it benefits programs, employers, and participants with disabilities.
- [WIOA Disability-Related Reporting: A Deep Dive into the Participant Individual Record Layout \(PIRL\)](#) (September 24, 2020). Access to quality data makes good policy possible and workforce services accessible for everyone. This webinar showcased leading practices.

## Conference Presentation

- [NAWB Workshop: Using Data to DRIVE System Improvements for Individuals with Disabilities](#) (June 29, 2020). This session, from the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) Conference, provided attendees with tools and strategies related to performance reporting requirements under WIOA, with a focus on promoting positive outcomes for people with disabilities

## Understanding Equal Employment Opportunity Regulations & Policy

The LEAD Center provides knowledge translation on the use of effective strategies to increase employment and economic advancement through implementing nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of WIOA Section 188.

## Webinars

- [Statewide Cross-System Training on WIOA Section 188: Broadening Access for People with Disabilities & other Barriers to Employment](#) (May 21, 2020). Representatives from Virginia’s Equal Opportunity Office, WIOA Adult & Dislocated Worker Programs and Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services share approaches in how to effectively engage workforce staff and partners across all four WIOA Titles (Title I, II, III, IV) to implement equal opportunity practices.
- [Equal Opportunity and Accessibility for WIOA Partners during COVID-19 and Beyond](#) (June 18, 2020). During COVID-19, many American Job Centers and core workforce system partners have shifted to virtual services. COVID-19 has highlighted new accommodation needs for people with disabilities and the workforce staff who support them.

### **Policy 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](#) (March 2020). This brief discusses how provisions of the ABLE Act (Public Law 113-295) can be combined with federal benefit services and other federal programs and initiatives to further employment for people with disabilities.

### **Other Activities:**

- Virginia Accessibility Training Pilot: Training hundreds of staff statewide across all four WIOA titles and their partners. (To learn more, see article later in this newsletter.)

### **Promoting Work and Financial Literacy**

The LEAD Center provides knowledge translation on the use of effective strategies to increase employment and economic advancement through integrating financial literacy strategies, including Social Security work incentives, ABLE accounts, and asset development to promote economic empowerment.

### **Webinars**

- [Get Empowered: Make the Most of Your Job and Improve Your Financial Security Building Financial Solutions for People with Disabilities](#) (February 27, 2020). National experts joined the U.S. Department of Labor, America Saves, and the LEAD Center for this webinar to provide information and resources to help people with disabilities achieve their financial goals.
- [Financial Strategies for Workers with Disabilities During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#) (April 22, 2020). The LEAD team was joined by experts from the Federal Emergency

Management Agency, the New York Legal Assistance group, and National Disability Institute to share strategies that workers with disabilities could implement immediately to increase their financial stability.

- [How WIOA Can Support Workers Facing Economic Challenges](#) (April 29, 2020). The COVID-19 emergency presents a time of significant health and economic uncertainty for individuals with disabilities, as well as their families and communities. In this webinar, several workforce board representatives highlighted the key ways WIOA and workforce professionals can support workers facing economic challenges today and in the future.

### **Other Activities:**

- Curation of a Financial Toolkit with DOL's Employee Benefits Security Administration, Employment and Training Administration and Office of Disability Employment Policy (in development).

### **Promoting Inclusive Career Pathways**

The LEAD Center provides knowledge translation on the use of effective strategies to increase employment and economic advancement through creating Inclusive Career Pathways to leverage resources across systems that promote employment for people with disabilities.

#### **Webinars**

- [Strategic Partnerships to Create Inclusive Career Pathways](#) (March 10, 2020). This webinar explored the strategic partnerships that can lead to improved employment and career outcomes for youth and adults with disabilities.

#### **Conference Presentation**

- Virtual 2020 National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) Veterans Conference: [Discovering Your Purpose After Transitioning: Tools for Finding the Right Career Match Post-Discharge](#) (August 13, 2020). This interactive session provided participants with: (1) tools specifically developed to assist in the “discovery” process, which is especially useful for war-wounded Veterans seeking employment or apprenticeships, and (2) tools to assist Veterans in envisioning how their military training, discipline, and mission-focus can benefit an employer and how to make that connection.

### **Other Activities:**

- Training series to increase registered apprenticeship for Veterans, in partnership with DOL's Veterans' Employment & Training Service, Office of Apprenticeship, Office of Disability Employment Policy, and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Veteran

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## **COVID-19 Resources from our Knowledge Translation Consortium Partners**

In September, the [LEAD Center's Knowledge Translation Consortium](#) met virtually to discuss how National Training and Technical Assistance Centers are providing technical assistance and/or developing resources to support employment for youth and adults with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Access the [KT Consortium members' COVID-19 related disability employment resources](#) document to learn more.

There are currently more than 30 federally-funded research, training and technical assistance centers in our Knowledge Translation Consortium.

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## **Virginia Equal Opportunity Pilot - COVID-19 Related Learnings**

The LEAD Center works in partnership with DOL's Civil Rights Center and Office of Disability Employment Policy on equal opportunity and nondiscrimination projects. COVID-19 has required services to shift to a virtual format across the country, which is impacting how providers serve people with disabilities. The LEAD team is conducting statewide, cross-system replicable training on effective Section 188 implementation in the Virginia workforce system that engages all Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs and their partners. The three-part training series aims to help Virginia build the capacity of their 15 workforce regions to broaden access to services and employment for people with disabilities and other challenges to employment through the implementation of WIOA Section 188 equal opportunity and non-discrimination provisions.

In addition to providing Section 188 and U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidance during the COVID-19 pandemic, the training emphasizes a wide range of promising practices and action planning strategies from the [Section 188 Disability Reference Guide](#). Specifically, the trainings highlight effective strategies for discussing disability, implementing accommodation processes, strengthening workforce partnerships to collaboratively serve customers with disabilities and other challenges to employment, and increasing knowledge of key national/state/local resources to provide more effective workforce services to individuals with disabilities.

### **What have we learned? It is essential to:**

- Have strong, committed leadership across workforce-related systems and initiatives, which has ensured high attendance at trainings and is a reflection of the cross-agency trust that has been built.
- Meet people where they are in terms of their knowledge of Section 188 requirements, best

practices, and the impact of the pandemic on their own lives and the lives of job seekers with disabilities.

- Teach staff how to use existing resources and scenarios to ground the content. Resources include the Job Accommodation Network, their Equal Employment Officer, disability partners such as Centers for Independent Living, and more.
- Learn information directly from Equal Employment Officers. This allows the information shared to include real and current examples they are addressing, requests for accommodations they are implementing, and how they can support managers and staff to address issues as they come up.

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## **LEAD Webinar: Registered Apprenticeship: Job Seekers with Disabilities Please Apply!**

Apprenticeship is an industry-driven, high-quality career pathway. Employers develop and prepare their future workforce, and individuals can obtain paid work experience, classroom instruction, mentorship, and a portable credential. For job seekers with disabilities, apprenticeship offers a model that promotes on-the-job learning and program supports that can offer a viable pathway to a well-paying career.

This LEAD Center December 3rd webinar, [Registered Apprenticeship: Job Seekers with Disabilities Please Apply!](#) offered an introduction to registered apprenticeship. Participants learned how registered apprenticeship benefits individuals, employers, and programs; what comprises the essential components of an apprenticeship program; how to differentiate apprenticeship from other work-based learning models; and how to locate apprenticeship programs available in their region and make referrals. Inclusive apprenticeship best practices were highlighted from Trident Technical College and Able-Disabled Advocacy.

[Presentation Slides](#)

[Webinar Transcript](#)

[Webinar Recording](#)

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## **On The Horizon**

### **Financial Toolkit Based on Work Lifecycle:**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, people with disabilities are experiencing new levels of financial stress and unemployment. During these challenging times, it can be difficult to find clear and accurate guidance for how to manage finances. The LEAD Center Financial Toolkit will offer people with disabilities clear and accurate suggestions on how to manage finances no matter where they are in the work lifecycle.

The LEAD Center is working with DOL's Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA), Employment and Training Administration, and Office of Disability Employment Policy to create an online Financial Toolkit, scheduled to be available to the public in early 2021. The toolkit will be hosted on the EBSA website.

The Financial Toolkit will focus on obtaining and maintaining employment, including an emphasis on the financial decisions an individual needs to make along the lifecycle of employment: (1) preparing for a job; (2) starting a job; (3) maintaining a job; (4) losing a job or changing a job; and (5) or retiring. Each section of the Toolkit will offer users tools and resources to help think about and address financial questions related to each of the five stages of the work lifecycle.

### **Upcoming Webinar:**

Using Individual Placement and Support to Assist Job Seekers and Workers with Mental Health Disabilities - Date TBD

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