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Financial Well-Being for Individuals with Disabilities

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(The CART writer is standing by.)

>> LAURA GLENECK: Good afternoon or good morning depending on where you are joining us from today. We are just glad you are able to be here. During today's webinar, Financial Well-Being for Individuals with Disabilities During the Pandemic and Beyond, we're really excited to be introducing you to a new online financial toolkit. Today's webinar is hosted by the LEAD Center which stands for Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities. And for those of you who may be new to the LEAD Center we are a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act or WIOA Policy Development Center. LEAD Center is led by Social Policy Research Associates and the National Disability Institute, and it is funded by the Office of Disability Employment Policy at the US Department of Labor. So, as you will soon learn, the online financial toolkit has been developed to provide job seekers with disabilities as well as staff in the workforce system with critical financial literacy tools throughout the stages in the work-life cycle.

And that includes preparing for a job, starting a job, maintaining a job, changing or losing a job, and retiring from a job. And this has been a wonderful collaboration, a labor of love, if you will, of the US Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy and Employee Benefits Security Administration. The toolkit also includes resource contributions from other federal partners, which you will learn a little bit more about once we get started. Next slide.

So that everyone can fully participate in today's webinar we would like to take a moment to share some captioning and housekeeping tips. First, captioning. Today's webinar is live captioned. If you would like to hide captions, click the live transcript button to find the "hide captions" option. You can also adjust the caption size under the subtitle settings” option.

You also have the option to open the captioning web page in a new browser. The link has been posted in the chat box. You can adjust the background color, text color and font using the drop-down menus at the top of the browser. Position the window to sit on top of the embedded captioning. Next slide.

Second, we're going to talk about questions and technical support. If you have content questions for panelists during this webinar, and we really do encourage you to ask them, please type them into the Q and A panel and we will save time at the end for questions and answers. If your question is not content-related, for example, you need tech support, use the chat box instead. Next slide, please.

My name is Laura Gleneck, and I am delighted to be serving as the moderator for today’s webinar. As I mentioned at the opening, the creation of the financial toolkit has truly been a wonderful collaboration by the US Department of Labor with contributions of many other federal partners.

We are very honored to have three representatives from the Department of Labor joining us today to provide a welcome to help us mark the 31st anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act and to help launch the financial toolkit.

Our first welcome is from the Secretary of Labor, Martin Walsh, who is with the Office of the Secretary at the US Department of Labor. It is my pleasure to welcome Secretary Walsh.

>> MARTY WALSH: Hello everyone and thank you for tuning in for this important webinar and thank you to all the staff who put it together. The Americans with Disabilities Act was passed 31 years ago on July 26th, 1990. As you know it's a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability.

And it's one of the most significant laws ever enacted in our country. I saw that up close when I was Mayor of Boston. I worked with our disability community and drew on the ADAs to tear down barriers and increase access, equity and inclusion all across our city. It's also an important law here at the Department of Labor. The ADA prohibits discrimination in several areas including employment.

And an important goal of the ADA is to advance economic self-sufficiency. Full access to employment creates independence. It fosters full participation in the fabric of our nation, and it strengthens our economy. Economic empowerment also requires financial literacy. All of us can benefit from a better understanding of how to advance financially to be secure.

Folks with disability face challenges in getting access to information tailored to their needs and protecting their rights and interests. That's why I'm excited to launch our new resource, Secure Your Financial Future: A Toolkit for Individuals with Disabilities. The toolkit offers resources to help people answer key financial questions throughout their career journey. Anyone who relies on ADA protection can tell you, implementing this law has always been a work in progress. Coming out of the pandemic that hit people with disabilities hard, we need to build back better and do better. Each of us has a role to play in fulfilling ADA's promise. We take that seriously at the Department of Labor. It’s time to focus more than ever on economic advancement for people with disabilities. This toolkit provides resources to empower people and help make that happen. So, I want to thank you for your interest and your partnership, and I hope you enjoy the webinar.

>> LAURA GLENECK: Thank you, Secretary Walsh. Joining us now from the Employee Benefits Security Administration, I would like to welcome Ali Khawar, who serves as the Acting Assistant Secretary. Thank you for joining us today, Ali. I will turn it over to you to provide a welcome.

>> ALI KHAWAR: Thanks, Laura, And I'm delighted to be here with Secretary Walsh, and Deputy Assistant Secretary Sheehy, and all of you, because this toolkit is something that we are very excited about at EBSA and I really think it is a tremendous thing that we have been able to accomplish that's really going to make a tremendous difference in people's lives.

So maybe I will just start. For those of you that aren't familiar with EBSA, the Employee Benefits Security Administration is the agency in the Department of Labor that is charged with protecting people's employee benefits. What that means is that if you are in the private sector and you have health insurance or you have a 401(K), for example, through you employer, we are the agency that is predominantly charged with protecting those benefits. Most people probably are more familiar with some of the laws that we enforce that aren't called ERISA: the Affordable Care Act, HIPAA, COBRA, those are all part of what we do. And I mention 401(K)s in the retirement context, we are really focused on improving individual's financial security. And financial literacy is a critical part of that.

We work with a federal organization called the Financial Literacy Education Council which is really focused on improving financial literacy across the country. But for us, saving for retirement is obviously a critical focus of our work.

There are any number of reasons why it's important to save for retirement. If you have the opportunity, you have tax advantages, you have the advantage of a long period of time which means your money can grow in a very significant way.

And those long-term savings are really designed to be there for you when you reach them, the twilight of your career, and you are ready to begin that next phase of life. At the same time, retirement saving is just one part of someone's overall financial health.

And we recognize that talking about retirement savings can't really occur in a vacuum. And so there really is a fundamental need for all workers to have help in making better employment decisions and financial decisions across the board. I think the experience of COVID has reinforced that message.

At the same time, it's made some sort of fundamental changes to the economic landscape that, again, that we need to take into account. As we all know we are celebrating the anniversary of the ADA and for those of you that saw the proclamation that came out of the White House, there are four fundamental rights that that proclamation identified. The fundamental right of people with disabilities to equal opportunity, economic self-sufficiency, independent living, and equitable participation in every aspect of American life.

And really, we think that this toolkit is an important way of making sure that the promise of those rights is met. Because whether you are, as Laura mentioned, at any stage of these work-life events, preparing to start a job, starting a job, maintaining a job, changing or losing a job or retirement, your need for clear and accurate information doesn't really change.

And this toolkit provides easy-to-use information and tools that can help anyone that's dealing with any of those work-life cycle events and particularly those who have been impacted by COVID. So, we are, again, very excited about this resource. We think it has a lot of utility for people.

And we are very excited about it in part because we think the more information that people have the better prepared they are for their career and ultimately for their financial security.

There are a number of distinguished speakers that will be leading you through the slides and answering your questions. I will turn it over to Laura to introduce our speakers. Thank you again for joining and enjoy the webinar.

>> LAURA GLENECK: Thank you, Ali. Next slide, please. For our final welcome on the launch of the new online financial toolkit, I will turn it over to the Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Disability Employment Policy, Jennifer Sheehy. Thank you for joining us today, Jennifer, to share a few opening words.

>> JENNIFER SHEEHY: Thank you, Laura, and thank you for your long-term partnership with the Office of Disability Employment Policy. And I want to thank our Policy Development Center that has worked with us hand-in-hand to release many, hopefully useful, tools for Americans with disabilities. Thank you of course to our Acting Assistant Secretary, Ali Khawar, and your team for your partnership with ODEP in developing and releasing this toolkit today.

This is one of the many fruitful outcomes from our long-standing relationship with EBSA to advance economic advancement for people with disabilities and marginalized communities. We are proud to work together on behalf of Americans with disabilities. We intentionally released this toolkit today in the general area of the 31st anniversary of the ADA, which was yesterday.

Economic advancement is one of the foundational goals of the ADA and we have made advances towards that goal and towards financial freedom, but it still eludes too many people with disabilities. As our country works through and recovers from the pandemic, ODEP is implementing policies and programs that will help America “recover into inclusion,” as we put it.

We want to make sure that the recovery is inclusive from the outset, from the beginning. We are actively working to ensure that individuals with disabilities are part of that recovery and can take advantage and enjoy full economic empowerment.

We look forward to the opportunity that the toolkit will create for individuals with disabilities. And we will be releasing two new tools every quarter. In fact, we will be launching a national online dialogue on the toolkit to engage stakeholders on the different pieces of the toolkit and your experiences on October 18th.

You will learn more about it if you follow us on our Policy Development Center and we hope you can join us. Once again, thank you to EBSA, to our Policy Development Center, and to our expert Office of Disability Employment Policy staff that worked on this toolkit and the webinar. Back to you, Laura.

>> LAURA GLENECK: Thank you, Jennifer. A special thank you to Secretary Walsh, Assistant Secretary Khawar and Deputy Assistant Secretary Sheehy for opening today’s webinar and sharing such powerful messages in honor of the 31st anniversary of the ADA and really the importance of what this toolkit is founded on and the foundation of it. And not only the toolkit but what's to come in the future. You have really helped to add to the excitement and anticipation, so we are going to move into today's presentation, it's time.

This is going to feature three presenters that will include Andy Arias, Policy Advisor with the Office of Disability Employment Policy with the US Department of Labor; Nancy Boutot, Subject Matter Expert on Financial Empowerment with the LEAD WIOA Policy Development Center, and Edward Mitchell, our special guest today, who is part of the Achieving a Better Life Experience, or ABLE, Nation Resource Center Black, Indigenous or Other People of Color (BIPOC) Ambassador Program and much more as you will soon learn.

So, since Andy, Nancy, and Edward are going to introduce you to the financial toolkit through an engaging dialogue pulling from professional and personal lived experiences in this area, I thought it might be nice to have each of them share a little bit more about their background. So Andy, we are going to start with you, then turn to Nancy and end by learning a little bit more about Edward. So I will turn to you first, Andy.

>> ANDY ARIAS: Hi. Thank you, Laura, and thank you, everyone. It was such a pleasure to hear from both Secretaries, and Secretary Walsh. My name is Andy Arias. Just a visual description, I am wearing a blue polka-dot dress-shirt, sparkly background and I have gold highlights in my hair. Just so everyone knows, I am also Latinx and I identify as LGBTQ or queer as well. And I think it's really important to have those identification markers because we kept BIPOC communities in the focus of developing this toolkit.

I myself grew up in systemic poverty so all my work experience has really been pushing towards economic advancement for individuals with disabilities either through my local work and now I have the pleasure of working with the Office of Disability Employment Policy on WIOA implementation and now Economic Advancement and Financial Literacy for individuals with disabilities. And with that I am going to pass it off to Nancy Boutot.

>> NANCY BOUTOT: Thank you so much, Andy. Hi, everyone, I'm Nancy Boutot. A description of myself, I am a white woman in my mid-50s. I have straight brown hair, I wear black glasses, my pronouns are she/her and I'm sitting in my home office wearing a blue dress and a blue striped scarf.

I have been in the field of disability and employment for a very long time starting out as a job coach way back in 1991. I have lived experience with mental health that I occasionally blog about as well as speak about at conferences.

I am a benefits planner as well as a financial coach. Like Andy, I was born into poverty but was lucky enough to not grow up in poverty, but do have that experience. I'm just so happy to be here today. Thank you and with that I want to pass it along to my colleague, Edward Mitchell.

>> EDWARD MITCHELL: Good afternoon. My name is Edward Mitchell I am an African American male, I am wearing a yellow shirt, I have a small afro with glasses and my backdrop is of Lane College, an HBCU, in Jackson, Tennessee. I am currently working as an independent living specialist for a Center for Independent Living here in Jackson, Tennessee. I also am a Fans Relations Coordinator for a Double-A Minor League baseball team. I sit on two different gubernatorial boards here in Tennessee and my hit-and-run accident caused my disability. I was hit from behind by a truck in 2003 and left with a spinal cord injury. I finished my undergrad degree from Lane College at HBCU in 2009 and followed it up with an MBA. I also am an active member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated. And in 2018 I testified before a Senate special committee on ageing, and I am a recent award winner of the Jefferson award here in Jackson, Tennessee. I will look forward to presenting to you. Thank you.

>> LAURA GLENECK: Great, thank you. So you can see why we are so excited about our presenters today who bring, again, personal and professional lived experience. So we will go to the next slide, please.

In a few minutes Nancy and Edward and Andy will be introducing you to the new online financial toolkit, which we keep talking about, which was developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for people that are experiencing new levels of financial stress and unemployment.

The toolkit, as I previously mentioned, provides both job seekers with disabilities as well as staff in the workforce system with critical financial literacy considerations throughout the work-life cycle. After today's session you will understand how you can support others or yourself to prepare financially for a job, access resources to help set financial goals, maintain a job while working from home, work toward promotions, start preparing for retirement, among many other COVID-19 financial literacy related considerations. Nancy, I'm going to move to sharing the financial toolkit live and while I do, I'm going to turn it to you to get us started by providing an overview.

>> NANCY BOUTOT: Thank you so much, Laura, I appreciate that. Well, welcome everybody to the Secure Your Financial Future Toolkit for Persons with Disabilities website. Yay! We have been talking about it for 20 minutes now we get to see it.

We all know that the pandemic has disrupted the personal finances of many Americans. As a result, large numbers of people including those with disabilities are making employment-related decisions based on their new financial situation.

You may be one of those individuals or you may be serving folks in that category. To provide job seekers with disabilities and staff in the workforce development system with critical financial tools we have developed this online financial toolkit to use throughout the stages in a person's work-life cycle. And today we are going to walk you through the website, and we are going to talk about those work-life cycles in a little more depth.

I want to first take a few moments and start it off by giving you a general overview of the website and then we will go into more specifics on how we get to resources and how the categories are broken down.

There are several ways to use the website. As you can see, we are on the home page here. You see an African American woman, she looks like she is leaning against a doorjamb and she is wearing a mask, and to the left of that you see a "get started" button. If you click on that blue button, on the home screen on the left, boom, it immediately takes you to the five work-life cycle categories. As you can see here: preparing for a job, starting a job, maintaining a job, changing or losing a job and retiring from a job. Before we go on, I just want to point out that there is nothing out there like this.

This tool was developed to assist people with disabilities who need tools and resources due to the difficulties that they may be facing because of the pandemic and its focus is on financial capability and employment throughout all the stages of a person's work-life cycle. The economic journey is too often overlooked when we are working with individuals with barriers to employment.

The other thing I'm really proud of having here is the retirement bucket. This is, I think, a very overlooked part of planning, when we are assisting individuals with disabilities in terms of long-term goals. So very happy to have that here.

So I want to show you another way that you can access these five buckets. That's simply scrolling down on the home page. So you are on the home page and rather than clicking the “get started” button, you scroll down and there you are.

Then you can click any of the categories, which you're going to hear me say "buckets" because that's what we call them behind the scenes. So let's click on "preparing for a job" bucket. You will see what I mean a little bit. Once you are in your preferred area of content, you will see on the left-hand side as well as at the bottom of the page that resources are broken down by publications, tools, websites, and videos.

You know, when I say that we have done what we think everything in our power, everything that we could think of to make this a really user-friendly website, we believe it's true, but, of course, we want feedback from you all on that as well.

The thing that I really like about this part is if you're specifically looking for something, if you're specifically looking for a video or a publication, you would just click right there on whatever you are looking for. So that's one other friendly piece to the website.

The other thing is you can search by key terms. So as you scroll down, you can look at key terms that you can search for. So, again, there are so many easy ways that you can use the website. Look at those key terms.

Let's scroll back up on publications in this “preparing for a job” bucket. I will show you a little bit about how that works. In this situation you will see four publications that relate to securing a financial future as it relates to preparing for a job. So, again, really easy to navigate.

If we scroll back up you can see on the left-hand side of the screen the five work-life cycle categories there, as well, along with the option to do a search.

Let's do a search for the fun of it and put in the word "budget." Right? Because, again, this website is a financial toolkit, during a person's work-life cycle and here we see several resources that relate to creating a budget: financial planning worksheets and much more.

It's important to note here that when you do this search all of the resources that show up are located in this toolkit. Okay? So you are not going to encounter ads or firewalls or anything like that. As you can see, when you’re looking here, 38 results came up, and up top you can also refine your search in terms of what you are looking for.

So if we go back to the home screen I will show you one last feature of the toolkit. We have a wonderful frequently asked questions section in each cycle. So let me show you that now. The resources in the “preparing for a job” bucket are for people of all ages, looking for a first job, and those, who because of the COVID-19 pandemic, are also looking perhaps for a new job.

So to prepare for a job it's useful for an individual to consider important things like their budget, what level of earnings does somebody need, the impact that work will have on any public benefits that they receive. So each section has this frequently asked questions.

You see here the frequently asked questions for this specific bucket are how can I prepare for a job? Can I work and receive SSI or SSDI? And how do I connect with people who can help me find a job?

If we expand these, you will see under each FAQ we have several different resources that we can look at. So in this situation let's look at credit score. Credit score is so important, more important than we realize. In this instance the link takes you to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's website. For those of you who aren't familiar with CFPB it's a wonderful website with a tremendous amount of information. Here what we're showing you is information on credit, such as what is a credit score? How is a credit score determined by your credit report? How are credit scores calculated? Examples of how lenders may pull your credit report and actually see different scores. This can be really confusing to individuals.

So we know that some employers also do credit score checks as part of the hiring process. Really anyone can benefit from knowing more about their credit score and the importance of a good credit score. That's why I wanted to show you this specific link since it's definitely attached to helping people get employment. Let's go back now to the frequently asked questions. And with that, I will look to my colleagues, Andy, Edward, do either of you have comments on the “preparing for a job” life cycle bucket?

>> EDWARD MITCHELL: Yes, I do, Nancy. Such great buckets and just usefulness from the field would be probably something that, for example, a debit card versus a credit card because those can be very mystifying especially for those that are trying to begin their career and just kind of demystifying what’s the difference between a credit card and a debit card and how both are equally good, but one is not like the other.

>> NANCY BOUTOT: Thank you so much, Edward, I appreciate that. Alright, well then with that, I am now going to turn it over to Andy to introduce our next work-life cycle.

>> ANDY ARIAS: Thank you, Laura and thank you, Nancy. What a great kickoff and how exciting to ring in ADA 31 with such a great financial tool. I agree with Nancy's statements around building credit. Credit can successfully open doors for you that have previously been closed. Just a little story about me. Since I have been monitoring my credit and using some tools that you would find in the toolkit, the last three apartments that I have received I didn't need a co-signer because my credit score was so good, and it was building because I've utilized these tools to take advantage of that. So that's great. Having a credit score can help you in so many different ways: buying a house, getting a car or even getting your dream job.

I'm going to go over “starting a job,” but before I do that I want to mention starting a job is exciting. And earning a paycheck is great. But earning a paycheck is so much more than just paying bills. It can give you a sense of self and purpose and provide you with the stability to move forward and achieve your goals. This toolkit, like was stated before, is about your work-life cycle. That goes side-by-side with your financial health. I know, it's weird, right, how those two things come together.

But finding the right job is so important. And there are so many things to consider. That could be accommodations, that could be a work-life balance, but also setting up some financial goals to make sure that the transition for benefits and services that you have as somebody with a disability, you are able to transition nicely.

So, these are some of the things that are going to be highlighted inside this toolkit. I want to talk a little bit about setting financial goals. So to review, we're going to click on “financial goals” and it's also going to take you, again, to CFPB. They have a huge toolkit that is very useful.

But right now, we're going to talk about some of the smart goals toolkit that they have. And that has specific things that we're going to go over. It helps you prioritize your financial values, what you're looking for and has a step-by-step process so you can look at your goals, whether they be small or large.

It provides you step-by-step instructions on how to put your goals into actions and it gives you resources to achieve these goals. It also helps you develop a timeline and gives you check points for accountability. So these are just some of the things that you are able to find through the “setting SMART goals” tool.

And CFPB has been a great resource. I would have never been able to consolidate everything that CFPB and other tools that we are going to go over have to offer without the resource of this toolkit. Also, in this section you will get some information about revising your goals, because as we know, life can change on a dime and this last year has been proof of that. So we want to make sure that these financial tools speak to you. So if you have a chance, check out CFPB because they have so many other resources that can help you move forward.

I am also going to go over some items for you before I pass it over to Nancy. Job accommodations are another thing that you have to consider and we at ODEP have the pleasure of running the Job Accommodation Network. Now the Job Accommodation Network has so many resources for individuals with disabilities when you’re getting into the workforce and how to ask for an accommodation.

Now I want to be clear, you are not liable to disclose your disability to an employer at any time. Although, if you disclose your disability that may help with providing some of those accommodations that you may need. It also has lots of resources for employers to help them understand what an accommodation is and how to move forward with their employees with disabilities. So please check that out.

And then I want to say Nancy and Edward, do you have any comments on what we just covered?

>> NANCY BOUTOT: Hey Andy, I actually do. So thanks for giving me a moment here. Great information. I love that bucket, it's so exciting when people start a job for the first time. I wanted to point out, I saw it in the FAQ section that what we introduce here is resources on retirement. As you can tell I'm pretty happy about retirement. When you start a job, it's also a great time to start contributing to a retirement account.

I just love that we’ve started talking about retirement early on when we’re just talking about starting a job. Because really that's when we should start saving for retirement. I really like the way this toolkit is laid out, I just wanted to say that, thanks.

>> ANDY ARIAS: I really appreciate that and thank you for your contribution. And with that I'm going to pass it back over to you to talk about maintaining a job.

>> NANCY BOUTOT: Well, thank you. I am thrilled to talk about maintaining a job. As we all know, the longer someone works for an organization, the more likely they are to have a chance to receive a raise, pursue a promotion, maybe people start thinking about buying a home.

It could be that an individual may also be experiencing new needs for accommodations. This section of the toolkit provides resources on that specific area of maintaining a job. Here in the frequently asked questions section we have, will a raise or promotion impact my SSI, SSDI or Medicaid benefit? How can I maintain my job working from home? And can I use my ABLE account for things I buy to go to work?

So if we expand those, let’s look at a couple resources here. So first let's look at the very important question, will a raise or promotion impact my SSI, SSDI or Medicaid? And let's click on “employment supports and work incentives.”

This brings us to one of my favorite resources, the Social Security Administration Redbook. It's actually behind me, you can't see it, but if you see a plant behind me, behind the plant sits the SSA Redbook. I think it's a wonderful tool that I have been using for many, many years. It really does a great job of breaking down employment supports offered by SSA and it serves as a terrific resource and source of information about employment-related provisions regarding social security disability benefits and it's for everybody: it's for educators, it’s for advocates, it’s for rehab professionals and counselors who serve people with disabilities.

So as you can see here, it breaks things down. We see things broken down by SSDI supports and SSI supports, but what I would like to show you really quick is a guide to employment supports. I'm not going to go through all of these here, but there are close to 20 supports listed that you can look at, depending on the benefit you receive or the benefit of the person that you are assisting receives and what your employment and financial goals are.

So just a tremendous amount of information. The Redbook is really also written in a user-friendly, reader-friendly manner, so it's just a wonderful resource.

In this bucket I want to show you one more resource under “maintaining a job.” Because of the pandemic many people had to start working from their homes, so there is a resource on tips for being an effective teleworker. This is from PEAT Works and I really like these tips for being an effective teleworker. It gives you information on creating a comfortable workplace, evaluating your accommodation needs now that you may be working from home, keeping a routine, which I think some of us have struggled with during the pandemic, connecting with colleagues, something else that changed a lot when people started working from home. And then staying productive and balanced. So those last three, keeping a routine, connecting with colleagues, staying productive and balanced, that was really difficult for many so I think these are really great tips and I think all of us could have used these back in 2020. But the important part is they are still so relevant today. I really like that resource as well and I just wanted to point that out to you.

Andy or Edward, any other comments related to this bucket?

>> ANDY ARIAS: I have a comment, Nancy. Because this toolkit and these resources, as much as they have that aspect of all the things and all the information that they have inside them, there also is an important value to bringing your whole self to work and really having that balance.

And these tools can help you achieve that. I do want to mention that even though these resources are from other websites, the way we have tried to design them is so that you can use them and personalize them to your own needs and sort of see yourself mirrored in the resources and how you can use them.

>> NANCY BOUTOT: That's very true, thank you, Andy. Well, you might as well just keep your mic on Andy because I am going to turn it over to you to start talking about the next bucket “changing or losing a job.”

>> ANDY ARIAS: Thank you guys. Thank you, Laura and thank you Nancy, you're doing a great job. So I definitely want to talk about changing or losing a job. Many of us experience a time where we change or lose a job. You may be among those people that have been affected by the pandemic and have lost your job due to that or some other reason. So changing a job can happen for a variety of reasons. In this section you will find answers to some of your questions and some resources that will help you through that. I look at your career and jobs as building blocks, right, there are skills that you build with each job that carry over. And I definitely think that that also goes in hand with financial literacy.

So if you build those blocks together you can increase your experience but also increase your value to your employer and I think that these tools can help you achieve some of those goals. I definitely want to talk about a few of the FAQs. One of the FAQs says should I tell Social Security Administration if I lose my job or income? The answer here is yes.

Keeping Social Security representatives informed of what you're doing in the employment spheres is so important. And that goes for your other service providers as well. Here you will see a blog that gives you a little bit more information and provides you links to the Social Security website where they have a bunch of online tools that can help you through this transition. I would also like to mention that ODEP has a strong relationship with SSA, which is the Social Security Administration, and we're constantly working to achieve deeper career pathways for those on social security benefits to help them achieve not only a career but economic advancement as well. So that's really important.

I want to click on another FAQ. If I lost my job, what do I do about healthcare? I want to say first and foremost if you lose your job and you have a significant disability, you may qualify for Medicaid. So I want to make sure that's really important and so I will give it a moment.

And here you will see a whole list of resources that will provide you some examples of what to do if you lose your health insurance. I put Medicaid at the very top of my speaking points because we're speaking about individuals with disabilities and that's really important. Also, if you go to www.health.gov some of your states may have an open enrollment program. It really depends on how you want to structure your health benefits, but you may be able to explore that as well. Also, COBRA has temporary extended health coverage programs that you may want to look at. You can also keep your health insurance from a previous employer. I would like to say that all of these depend on your state and so it's not a national resource. So I would check with your state for your eligibility. There is also information on job loss through the Department of Labor's website. So please check those out and make sure that you get informed and things that work for you. Now I also want to ask Nancy and Edward if they have anything to contribute in this section.

>> EDWARD MITCHELL: Thank you, Andy. I certainly do. These buckets and this great website take the stigma out of losing a job. I myself am an individual with a disability and I have gone through a job change and a job loss, and exploring these different buckets and different tabs really takes the sting and stigma out of losing a job and knowing what the next steps are. Back to you, Andy.

>> ANDY ARIAS: Thank you. So now I'm going to turn it back over to Nancy to introduce you to her favorite topic, “retiring from a job.”

>> NANCY BOUTOT: Thanks, Andy. For those of you at the very beginning or if you got here a little late, I described myself as a middle-aged woman. So of course I have retiring on the brain, right? I'm sure some of you out there do too.

I love this picture, first of all, let’s just look at this picture for a second. We see an older woman of retirement age-ish, actually she looks a little young to me. She has short gray hair and she’s wearing a bright yellow sweater, but she is doing this fist pump, like "yes!"

I really like that picture. I think it would be wonderful if everybody was able to celebrate retirement the way it's shown in this picture. Honestly, planning for retirement can come with a lot of questions and I think we tend not to think about people with disabilities retiring, but yes, people with disabilities do retire and they do need to plan. If we look at the frequently asked questions in this retirement section we will see where can I learn more about my pension, 401(K) or individual retirement account, IRA? What are 401(K) plan fees and who pays for them? The third question, I'm close to retirement but I'm concerned that I have not saved enough, what can I do?

Let's look under “I’m close to retirement but I am concerned I have not saved enough, what can I do?” And let's look at “saving matters.” So here what you’re going to see is information for people nearing retirement. Lots of helpful tips on how to prepare when there is little time and I think this is important because people may be unsure if they have saved enough money for retirement. We want people to access this information so retirement can be an exciting time of new beginnings.

But to me in order for that to happen people have to start planning early. However, what I like here is even if you don't start planning early it doesn't mean that you can't retire, it just means you have to maybe put a few other things in place.

So I just want to point out the box below what we were just looking at, that Laura is highlighting. The resources in this box have wonderful, useful information, interactive worksheets, things that can help you see if your retirement savings are on track.

There’s something called “taking the mystery out of retirement planning.” I love that one, it’s got a big magnifying glass on the front cover. In addition, there is a retirement toolkit and lastly you can look at something called Saving Fitness: A Guide to Your Money and your Financial Future. These are great tools, all of them are from the Employee Benefits Security Administration, EBSA, you heard from Ali earlier. And I will tell you the honest truth, I have used every single one of these tools. So I like them, I think they're great and I think they are very useful.

So, yes, as Andy said, I'm a little happy when I talk about retirement. Andy or Edward, do either of you have any thoughts or comments on the retirement bucket?

>> ANDY ARIAS: I actually do. When I first started my career, which wasn't that long ago, I thought retirement wasn't something I would ever achieve. And I really think that looking at these resources and talking with you Nancy, and really looking at all the resources that EBSA has to offer, I've reframed that thinking, right, because retirement really helps you provide for your future.

As we know, this last year and a half has been so interesting for many of us. So I’ve really been thinking about how can I secure myself beyond my career? Because I don't want to be working when I'm over 75 or even close to 80.

So I really think that this toolkit is framing disability in a new way for the new generation of people with disabilities. I'm really excited about this. I'm going to dive into this section, so much and I appreciate it.

>> NANCY BOUTOT: Thanks, Andy, thanks for that, I appreciate it. All right. I am now going to turn the presentation over to Edward who is going to share his insights from the field.

>> EDWARD MITCHELL: Thank you, Nancy. I want to thank ODEP, the LEAD Center and ABLE for collaborating on such an intuitive website. Speaking from my own experience, I have had to reinvent myself several times, going through work-life buckets of preparing for a job, starting a job, maintaining a job and changing and/or losing a job. This website encompasses everything an individual with a disability will encounter.

This is only the beginning of this website, as it will grow, and a few things that I would love to see added would be, in one of the buckets, would be something on career planning and placement offices at colleges because sometimes these can be overlooked.

I have worked in higher ed and again referring individuals back to these career planning and placement offices can be quite beneficial. Another great thing to add in would be something on maintaining and preparing a LinkedIn. Another great useful tool would be what is a Schedule A Letter. Possibly even a link back to USAjobs.gov as well as in the different buckets, maybe a former or current employee going through those preparing a job, starting a job, maintaining a job buckets. And one of the things that’s also very helpful is having individuals relate back to joining a professional organization. Such as me, I am a member of the National Black MBA Association and it’s dedicated to the enhancement and development of educational and economic empowerment. And they have career fairs where over 300 companies come out and you can actually obtain a career or get a job offer there.

This toolkit allows individuals with disabilities a path to asset and development. Asset development is a series of strategies that provide long-term benefits and have potential to help people with disabilities improve their economic status, expand opportunities for their community participation, and positively impact their quality of life. These assets need to be defined because, again, an individual with a disability, knowing what their 401(K) is, what their IRA is, these are things that they need to know as they are going through these buckets.

And why asset development is important to people with disabilities is asset development helps create more opportunities for greater independence and financial security. Access to assets allows greater choices in the community participation and quality of life and supports inclusion and self-determination. And asset development can produce opportunities that directly impact an individual's quality of life including their mental and physical health, self-concept, as well as the level of community participation.

For me, the current asset that I have recently achieved is purchasing my 2020 Honda Oddessy Elite. The cost of the vehicle with modification is over $115,000. While I was able to get some help from vocational rehabilitation on the modification, the vehicle itself fell squarely on my shoulder and was over $55,000. I will typically hear a gasp; mini vans aren't cheap, and it stresses an individual with a disability to come up with these figures.

Individuals must be committed to these vehicles because you keep them for over 10 plus years, no matter what happens. On top of owning a wheelchair accessible vehicle comes the maintenance on it and even going beyond and obtaining an extended warranty not only on the OEM side but also the mobility conversion. And all that falls directly on the individual’s shoulders. This is a true asset because it allows me to continue to work as well as being active in the community. I couldn't have done this without the help of my ABLE account as I am on a Tennessee CHOICES waiver that helps with my nursing care at night.

I plan on obtaining an accessible home and that is the next big accomplishment. It's been a pleasure living with my parents and getting to know them more in my adult life but owning a home and being independent is where I want to be with my college friends. We all joke about the things that come along with homeownership and I want to join those ranks. With me this is a part of my asset development, saving long-term, as well as going through the career field. I want to joke around with them and say, “Hey we're starting to become our parents!” just like in those commercials. This toolkit will definitely help refine the skills that I have already picked up, but it will also help others navigate pitfalls that can be quite daunting when going through your career.

>> LAURA GLENECK: Thank you, everyone. Thank you, Edward, Nancy and Andy. I was part of helping to build this toolkit. Listening and watching as you went through it today, I just want to say, wow. All of the tools and the resources that really do touch the five different stages. Thinking about retiring, I'm with Nancy, we are around the same age and we are looking to retire together. So just thank you all for walking through, but also including your professional and personal lived experience to help us learn more about this new resource.

Edward, a special thank you to you for taking us, allowing us to learn a little bit more about your financial journey and how you are addressing financial challenges and issues that you have. The fact that this has allowed you to purchase a vehicle, very cool. So really, really appreciate that. We're going to go to the next slide, please.

So we just included another little blurb here about the financial toolkit. It includes a description along with the link to the website. We hope you obviously visit it often and please use your dissemination channels and social media to help promote it. I hope that you agree with us today that it has a lot to offer and a lot to share. We want to help get it out there. Thank you. Next slide. Well, we have a lot of questions and answers, Andy and Nancy and Edward, that we want to get to and we have some time to answer them. So we're just going to go ahead and get started. And I'm going to start with a question -- I think, Andy, I'm going to start with you and ask you how has this toolkit been designed to address the needs of marginalized individuals? I think you touched on it a bit at the beginning if you could just say a little more.

>> ANDY ARIAS: Of course, thank you, Laura, thank you, team. Edward, I'm truly inspired by your story. And I really, I hope to achieve homeownership in the very near future too, so I just need to say that. And if you guys retire, Nancy and Laura, I am glad I have your personal contact information so I can ask you questions.

We developed this toolkit through the lens of marginalized or BIPOC communities. Like I said before, I am Latinx, I grew up in systemic poverty, I actually grew up in foster care, so I really didn't know that having a job was a goal for me let alone having a career or having options for retirement. I always assumed that you needed to rely on only your social security to move forward. So within each resource we really looked at how other communities, BIPOC communities, would utilize this, whether it be translating some items in different languages which you can find on different websites. Not essentially in the toolkit, but if you go to websites there are certain items that are translated into Spanish.

But also, the lived experience of an individual from a BIPOC community and how they would interpret the resources, this was very important to me. We are also doing a blog series down the road with this toolkit, and we are going to be asking BIPOC members to really engage with us and tell us their financial story as well as having a national dialogue where stakeholders and individuals can communicate with us about their needs and their experiences with financial empowerment and how this toolkit can help them.

>> LAURA GLENECK: Thank you, Andy, certainly equity and inclusion was a big part of building this toolkit and as Andy said, helping to learn more about it as we move to the future. Thank you for that. Nancy, I'm going to direct this question to you. Some people would like to know what are some of the other tools, resources, currently under development or planned for the future? I know that Jennifer alluded to that at the beginning. Can you talk about some of what's in the works coming up?

>> NANCY BOUTOT: I sure can, thank you very much, Laura. So there’s two things that I can think of off the top of my head. The first is a tool or document that’s called Aligning My Career Path with My Earning Needs, which I really like. Because rather than helping people find emergency jobs or just a quick job, helping people who are in crisis, I think it's really important for people to start looking at where do I want to be? What type of job do I need to be in that apartment complex that's close to my job? What do I need to earn so that, you know, I can purchase that van that I have been saving for?

So, aligning a person's career path with their earning needs is one of the things that we are working on and a second one is what are my housing options? There are lots of options for folks with disabilities, lots of options for individuals with low to moderate income. So we are putting together a one- or two-page document with several resources on housing options for folks with disabilities.

>> LAURA GLENECK: Great, thank you for that, Nancy. And as Jennifer said we will be developing new resources quarterly so if you have any ideas, feel free to put them in the chat and also when you fill out the post webinar survey. And I know Edward, thank you, you had suggested quite a few as you had given some comments on the buckets.

So I have a question that I want to look to all three of you and I will start with Andy and Nancy. The question is can you suggest some ways an AJC staff person or service provider can use this toolkit? And then after Andy and Nancy have had the chance then we are going to look to you Edward as an individual who uses the toolkit. So maybe Andy I will start with you. Can you suggest some ways that an AJC staff person or service provider could use the toolkit?

>> ANDY ARIAS: I think one of the greatest options on the toolkit is the search tool, honestly. A lot of American Job Center staff know about JAN obviously and think about the accommodations aspect. But I think with the search tool itself when you are looking up healthcare or where you’re looking up other items you can easily find resources that would speak to the individual that you're serving.

The other thing I’d like to point out about this toolkit is that we really made it with universal language in mind. So nothing is cumbersome, there isn't lots of language on each page. It really breaks it down so that anyone can use this toolkit.

We can't say that for the secondary pages, but anything within the toolkit itself does have a universal language tone that makes it easy to navigate for wherever you are or whoever you are helping in the American Job Center.

>> LAURA GLENECK: Great. Thank you, Andy. Nancy, do you have something you would like to suggest for an AJC staff person or service provider using the toolkit?

>> NANCY BOUTOT: Thanks, Laura. I want to say a couple things real quick because I want to make sure we get in enough time for lots of questions that I saw in the chat and Q and A. The fact that this toolkit is geared toward financial capability I think is really important. So I think it gives another lens for AJCs to look through in terms of how they're focusing on folks with disabilities that they're serving and looking at it from that financial capability lens.

And then I don't know if I was supposed to say this here or not but we have a quick reference guide from the LEAD Center that's going to be coming out I want to say in September. What we're going to be doing is talking about how AJCs can promote financial wellness for individuals with disabilities. So kind of stay tuned for that because I think that goes really well with the toolkit.

>> LAURA GLENECK: Edward, does an individual need to use the toolkit with a service provider or could they use it on their own?

>> EDWARD MITCHELL: They are more than able to use it on their own. This toolkit was really designed to let them from the comfort of their own home and personal electronic device allow them to search and increase their knowledge and confidence of these buckets. It's very you know, useful and just, you know, hands free.

>> LAURA GLENECK: Thank you. Another question, will this toolkit be helpful to help determine or understand how working will impact benefits such as SSI or SSDI? And maybe Nancy, I will turn to you.

>> NANCY BOUTOT: Yeah, absolutely. There are several resources specifically from the Social Security Administration that talk about what will happen with someone's benefits and then one of the things that we really didn't focus a lot on because there is just so much information, great information on the toolkit, are ABLE accounts.

But that is another way that individuals who receive SSI and or SSDI can earn income and have it not necessarily affect their SSI and their Medicaid. But, yes, there are definitely several tools that they can use and again as Andy said before the search function is a great way to do that.

>> LAURA GLENECK: Great, we already have somebody say that they're very much looking forward to the new housing resource when it becomes available.

We are going to ask one more question and it's, I work with a lot of people who already have bad credit scores. Are there specific tools that they can use or implement to begin the process of repairing their credit scores? I’ll look to Andy or Nancy?

>> ANDY ARIAS: I would love to address that question.

>> LAURA GLENECK: Okay, sure.

>> ANDY ARIAS: Yes, there is. I'm going to be completely transparent with you and my credit score, I would say, seven years ago was extremely low. I have no shame in sharing that. I always had to have a co-signer with anything that I purchased, any major apartment or home or -- not home, not yet, wishful thinking, right? But a car or anything like that I needed a co-signer. So I started using the tools on CFPB website that we just went over a little bit, and it really helped me understand how my credit score impacts everything, how to raise my credit score, gradually.

It's not going to happen overnight but there are some tools on their website to help you. Also, there is some good new apps that are out there. Credit Karma has been useful for me, not endorsing them in any way, but there are some technology apps that you can use to help you build your credit score. So yes, there is a way out of the hole. I made it out and now I actually have a score of 700 plus, which as someone with a disability, I'm in a wheelchair and Latinx, I never thought I could have a high credit score, but I think there are ways to build your credit successfully through this tool.

>> LAURA GLENECK: Right, thank you. We have so many great questions and while we won't be able to get to them now, we are going to keep them. Many of them can inform the direction we take, the type of resources that we have, and also those that you asked about when we share social media we will be able to include this. So we want to thank you for all the questions and interest. If we can go to the next slide, please.

For those of you who might not be connected to the LEAD Center we do encourage you to follow us and sign up for our newsletter. This slide includes a link to the LEAD Center website where you can sign up to get information and notifications. Next slide, please.

And here are some additional ways that you can connect with us. You can follow the LEAD Center via Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. Next slide, please.

So before we close I really want to take this opportunity and thank each of you for joining us today. Beginning with our three representatives from the Department of Labor, Secretary Walsh, Acting Assistant Secretary Khawar and Deputy Assistant Secretary Sheehy for really helping to open today’s webinar and to officially launch the financial toolkit. And I can't say enough to our wonderful presenters, Edward, Nancy and Andy, for introducing and navigating us through this toolkit using both your professional and personal lived experience.

Just appreciation. Finally, to all of you for joining us today. We really hope to see you again during upcoming LEAD Center webinars and you can learn more about them if you go to our website and sign up. Thank you again, everybody, this concludes today's webinar. I hope you enjoy the rest of your day.

(End of presentation.)

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