



National Center on Leadership for the Employment
and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities

From Collaboration to Action: State Initiatives Advancing Disability Employment

March 25, 2026
LEAD Center

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Facilitator

[Yvonne Wright](#)

Co-Project Director
(Facilitator)

LEAD Center

National Disability Institute

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Webinar Archive – This webinar is being recorded and the archive and supporting materials will be placed on the LEAD Center website under [Recent & Upcoming Events](#) within 10 business days.

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ODEP

Office of Disability
Employment Policy

ODEP is the only non-regulatory Federal agency that promotes policies and coordinates with employers and all levels of government to increase workplace success for people with disabilities.



ODEP

Office of Disability
Employment Policy

ODEP's mission is to develop and influence policies and practices that increase the number and quality of employment opportunities for people with disabilities, that meet the needs of America's employers.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Ben Cheriyan
Policy Advisor
Office of Disability
Employment Policy
U.S. Department of
Labor





Today's Presenters

- [Yvonne Wright](#), Facilitator, LEAD Center
- [Ben Cheriyan](#), Policy Advisor, Office of Disability Employment Policy
- [Dallas Oberlee](#), LEAD Center SME, Social Policy Research Associates
- [Jason Bennington](#), Employment Support Services Specialist, Utah
- [Stephanie Beckhorn](#), Director, Office of Employment & Training, Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity
- [Jeff La Montia](#), Job Development Unit Coordinator, Rehabilitative Services for the Blind, Missouri Department of Social Services

Learning Objectives



Through this webinar, participants will:

- Learn how cross-agency partnerships were formed and sustained.
- Explore strategies that align service delivery across systems.
- Understand how states are measuring progress and outcomes.
- Identify how lessons learned can inform similar efforts in other states.

Cross Systems Collaboration



Dallas Oberlee

Senior Associate

LEAD Center Subject Matter Expert

Social Policy Research Associates



Why Collaborate?

- Allows job seekers to access training and employment opportunities and eliminates the need to navigate multiple government agencies.
 - Creates a “No Wrong Door” approach
- Leverages funding to provide services to participants more efficiently and effectively without duplicating services.
- Coordinates resources within the community.

WIOA Coordination

- Coordination involves aligning services between:
 - **Required Partners** (those mandated to provide access to services through the American Job Center network)
 - **Non-Required or Optional Partners** (entities that contribute to regional, sectoral, or specialized strategies)
- Supports WIOA's purpose by creating a streamlined and job-driven system with shared cross-program planning.

Approaches to Collaboration

Different Approaches to Collaboration:

1. State and Local Policy to Support Collaboration
2. Formal Public and Nonprofit Partnerships
3. Blending, Braiding, and Sequencing of Funds
4. Integrated Systems



State and Local Policy Alignment

- States enact legislation, policy, and/or guidance that promote coordination and collaboration.
 - Employment First Policies: Focus on enabling better coordination, collaboration, and planning among community rehabilitation agencies.

Formal Public and Nonprofit Partnerships

- Partnerships that connect public sector agencies with each other, and often with nonprofit partners in the field:
 - formalized by agreements that lay out responsibilities of the partners,
 - offer support for implementing those partnerships, and
 - codify other arrangements that support job seekers with disabilities—including co-location of programs and services.
- Strong partnerships depend on clear expectations of roles and responsibilities of all partners, the creation of strong performance goals, and mechanisms to address performance challenges.

Aligning resources via Blending, Braiding, and Sequencing

- **Blending:** combining dollars from multiple funding streams into one pot of funding for activities.
- **Braiding:** simultaneous use of different funds to serve individuals with disabilities in the public workforce system.
- **Sequencing:** sequential use of funds to serve individuals with disabilities in the public workforce system.
 - Example: one source of resources funds a program or activity, and upon completion of that activity another source of funds is used to fund complementary activities to support that individual.

Integrated Systems

- A unified workforce system ensures participants can easily navigate services and receive high-quality, efficient support.
- Keys to effective system integration include:
 - Shared minimum eligibility standards across programs.
 - Streamlined intake processes to reduce duplication and shorten wait times.
 - Clear referral and co-enrollment pathways to guide participants smoothly between programs and services.
 - Frontline navigation tools that help staff quickly match individuals to the right programs and supports.

Real World Examples: Utah



Jason Bennington

MRC, CRC, ACMHC, SSW

Employment Support Services Specialist

Utah Department of Workforce Services

Rehabilitation Division



DEPARTMENT OF
**Workforce
Services**

Financial Literacy in Utah



- Emphasized as a unique service beginning in 2021.
- Considered to be an essential part of Job Readiness Training from Vocational Rehabilitation (VR).
- Provided by Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs).
- Increased service provision statewide.

Emphasis and Implementation



- Appropriate curriculum researched and selected:
 - Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) “Money Smart for Adults.”
- Training and Orientation
 - Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) Certified Employment Specialists
 - First session held November 29, 2021
 - Initially delivered monthly, now conducted on a regular, ongoing schedule
 - 27 orientations delivered to date
 - 116 Certificates issued
 - Across 35 unique, active CRPs
- VR Staff education
 - Initial training November 4, 2021
 - Ongoing training



Ongoing Support for CRPs



- Utah State Office of Rehabilitation (USOR)s Employment Support Services Specialist
- Subject Matter Experts
- Technical Support
- VR Staff Support
- Client Services Manual
- Specific Tracking Form



New Pre-Employment Transition Services Instructor Position

- USOR created a position (Transition Self-Advocacy and Financial Literacy Instructor).
- This position works with students on increasing self-advocacy and financial literacy.
- This position is housed with our Work Incentive Planners.





DEPARTMENT OF
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SERVICES**



Real World Examples: Michigan



Stephanie Beckhorn

Director, Office of Employment & Training

Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity



From Collaboration to Action: The Michigan Approach

March 25, 2026

Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Opportunity
Employment & Training



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF
**LABOR & ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITY**

**EMPLOYMENT
& TRAINING**

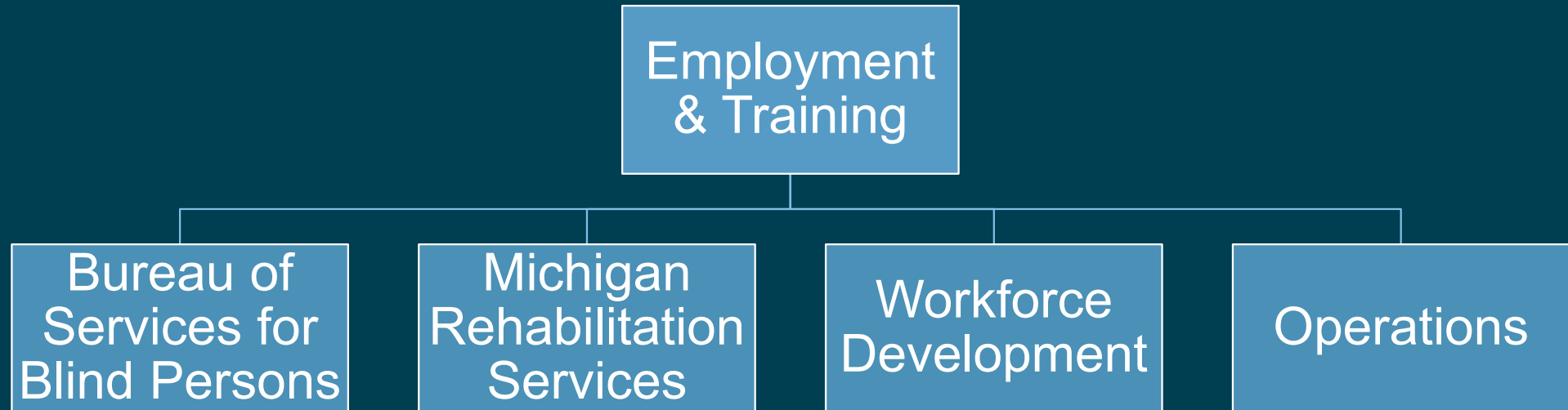


Michigan's Structure

- All WIOA Titles under single umbrella agency: Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity's Office of Employment and Training.
- Co-location supports relationship development and drives program integration.
 - Example: Vocational Rehabilitation discussing potential partnership with our Michigan Works! Agencies to provide some Title IV services.



Office of Employment and Training



Local Co-Location: Michigan Rehabilitation Services with Michigan Works! Agencies

- Ensures true one-stop system for customers
 - Supports co-enrollment, joint case management, braided funding
- Support from State Workforce Board



TANF/SNAP E&T Services

- Monthly meetings – Employment and Training, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (state and local), Michigan Works! Agencies.
- Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO)- Employment and Training (E&T) administers employment and training component of TANF program.



Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS)/TANF Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Training

- Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI) CNA training through its main campus and two extension campuses in partnership with local board – all participants must qualify for MRS services.
 - Benton Harbor
 - Most participants receive SNAP benefits and/or Medicaid.
 - Majority are single mothers with dependents and living below the poverty line.
 - Kalamazoo
 - Targets individuals living in low-income neighborhoods, addressing barriers related to disability, transportation, childcare and generational poverty.



Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS)/TANF Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Training, cont.

- Combined Results (last two years)
 - 60 students enrolled
 - 100% graduation rate
 - 97% licensing rate
 - 74% employed in the trade



Collaboration: MRS, Apprenticeship Expansion & Torch 180

- Unique partnership:
 - U.S. Department of Labor's Michigan Office of Apprenticeship
 - Workforce Development's State Apprenticeship Expansion Team
 - Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI) – Title IV WIOA
 - Torch 180 – a non-profit organization providing food-industry training for adults with disabilities
- Created competency-based Professional Cook Registered Apprenticeship
 - The first program of its kind in the nation
- First cohort of apprentices graduated in 2025



Connecting Youth with VR Services

- Link to VR contacts now included in Workforce Development policy issuances

Policy Issuance language:

“Leveraging Funding and Services Braiding funding allows WIOA programs to provide more comprehensive services to participants while maximizing partner resources available to best serve young adults. **WD strongly encourages partnering with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) to provide inclusive, accommodating experiences for youth with disabilities.** MRS partners may be found by using the MRS Office Locator and may be able to provide assistive technology and support for individuals with disabilities. **Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP) contacts are located throughout the state and are equipped to provide assistive technology and support for individuals who are visually impaired.** Further, partners such as MRS, BSBP, and Jobs for Michigan’s Graduates may be able to provide preexisting curriculums.”



MRS' Role in Talent Attraction

- VR Business Services team participates in statewide talent attraction efforts
 - Provide assessments, reasonable accommodations, etc.
 - Support federal contractors and subcontractors subject to:
 - Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act



Disability Awareness & Etiquette Training for LEO-E&T Staff

- **Stage 1: Foundational Knowledge**
 - “Focus on Ability”
 - Ergonomic Training
- **Stage 2: Virtual Disability Awareness & Etiquette Training**
 - Three, one-hour sessions
 - One session per quarter



VR Accessibility Training for Michigan Works! Agencies

- Co-location drives accessibility awareness
- Informal agreement with Michigan Works! Association to provide accessibility training during October's National Disability Employment Awareness Month
 - VR staff conduct local training sessions
 - Develop internally before statewide rollout





MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF
**LABOR & ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITY**

**EMPLOYMENT
& TRAINING**

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Real World Examples: Missouri



Jeff La Montia

Job Development Unit Coordinator,
Rehabilitative Services for the Blind
Missouri Department of Social Services

A Collaboration Between Missouri Agencies and Businesses



NEXUS is...



**“A RELATIONSHIP OR CONNECTION BETWEEN PEOPLE OR THINGS”
(MERRIAM-WEBSTER DICTIONARY)**

**AN OPPORTUNITY TO FOCUS ON THE WORKFORCE NEEDS OF
BUSINESS**

**A PLACE FOR COLLABORATION AND SHARING OF IDEAS,
RESOURCES, & INFORMATION**

Why...



Formation of NEXUS

- Implement the intentions of WIOA
- Meet workforce challenges
- Dual customer approach
- Connection to untapped pool of candidates



Alignment with the Missouri 2024-27 WIOA State Plan – Missouri Public Workforce System

- Serving the dual customer.
- Sharing local job opportunities and providing a single point of contact.
- Partner collaboration to expand employment opportunities for people with barriers through development of business partnerships.
- Understanding each agency's business-focused programs and services.



Alignment with the Missouri Chamber Workforce 2030 Plan

- Maximize business engagement
- Focus on improving worker skills
- Prioritize regional sector strategies
- Increase career awareness
- Attract and retain talent
- Improve communication for all stakeholders

[Workforce2030.pdf](#)

Who?



What?



Mission

- To leverage career opportunities for individuals with barriers to employment through collaboration and business partnership

Vision

- To be a candidate & information resource for businesses
- To be a leader in inclusive employment outcomes

We Value

- Competitive integrated employment opportunities
- Sharing best practices
- Collaboration
- Professionalism

Benefits



Benefits for Partners

- Monthly networking opportunity
- Shared job leads, best practices, braiding services
- Employer presentations

Benefits for Businesses

- Market current hiring needs
- Access an untapped pool of applicants
- Monthly networking opportunity
- Educational opportunities regarding available resources

How?



Monthly Collaboration

- Employers to share workforce needs and challenges.
- Partners to share ideas, best practices, and solutions.
- Meetings can occur in person, virtually, or hybrid.
- Employer could host a Nexus meeting on site.



Structure...

Monthly Meetings

- Same day/time of every month
- Example (2nd Tuesday of every month at 9:00am)

Local Steering Committees

- Coordinate meetings, partner lists
- Takes minutes of meetings
- Assists with communication to partners
- Multiple agencies represented
- Plan events
- Suggest protocol
- Data collection
- Promotion of the group



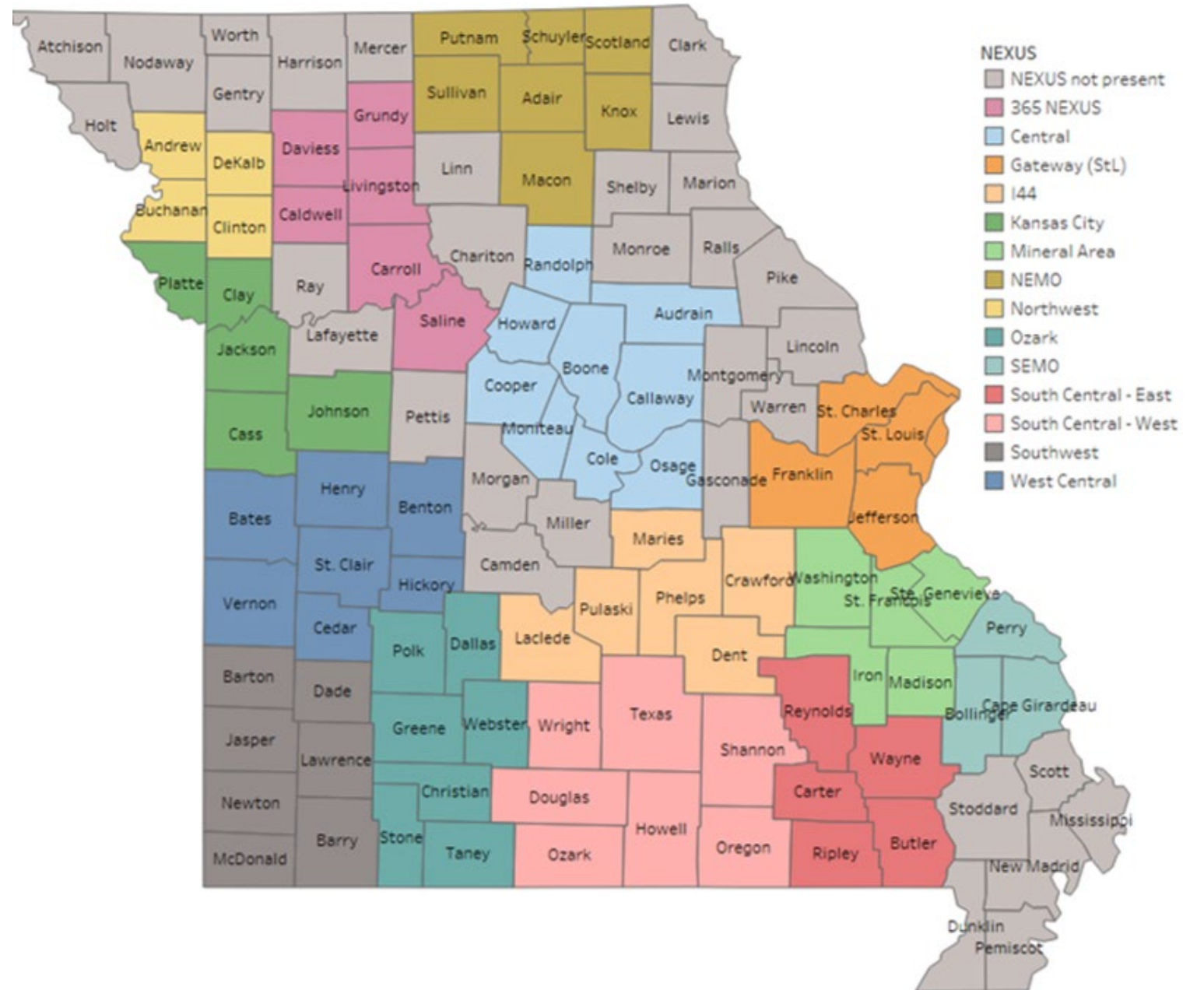
What to Expect...

Typical Nexus Meeting Agenda

- Welcome/Sign In
- Introductions/Member Updates
- Nexus Mission – “To leverage career opportunities for individuals with barriers to employment through collaboration and business partnership.”
- Mission Moments (sharing of successes because of Nexus)
- Employer Updates/Job Leads
- Upcoming Events / Information Sharing
- Networking with others
- Next Meeting information



Nexus Groups...



Mission Moments



- To leverage career opportunities for individuals with barriers to employment through collaboration and business partnership.

New Priority for WIOA Planning



- Continue expansion to all counties in Missouri and grow existing groups.



Opening Doors: Empowering the Disability Talent Pipeline through Apprenticeships Webinar



March 26 from 1:30 – 3:00 PM ET

REGISTER TODAY

This session will explore effective strategies to support young apprentices with disabilities in completing apprenticeship programs and highlight the partnerships employers can leverage to engage this untapped talent pool and address critical workforce needs. A live Q&A will follow the presentation. For more information, please contact CAPE-Youth via email at info@capeyouth.org.

LEAD WIOA Technical Assistance (TA) Center

- The **National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities (LEAD)** is a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) TA center, grant funded by the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor.
- The LEAD Center helps states, workforce development professionals, and American Job Centers (AJC) implement WIOA, in service to Americans with disabilities.
- Through its resources, tools and TA, the LEAD Center:
 - increases career pathways for people with disabilities that ensures employers have access to the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy;
 - supports financial literacy training and economic self-sufficiency for people with disabilities; and
 - improves coordination and collaboration of workforce development system partners, contributing to a more effective system.

Stronger Workforce, Smarter Solutions — Powered by LEAD Center Technical Assistance

Do you serve people with disabilities? Is your team ready to:

- Learn strategies that improve employment outcomes?
- Harness data-driven planning and cross-agency collaboration to advance policy adoption?
- Support individuals with a wide range of disability experiences?

If so, the LEAD Center can help!

State workforce agencies, AJC teams, and WIOA partners are invited to request LEAD Center Technical Assistance (TA). Targeted and intensive TA engagements begin with a formal request and signed agreement.



Scan QR code or visit this link to learn more:

LeadCenter.org/Technical-Assistance

LEAD Center State Specific Policies and Data

[Explore](#) state-specific policies, initiatives, and services to better understand how your state supports opportunity and participation for people with disabilities.

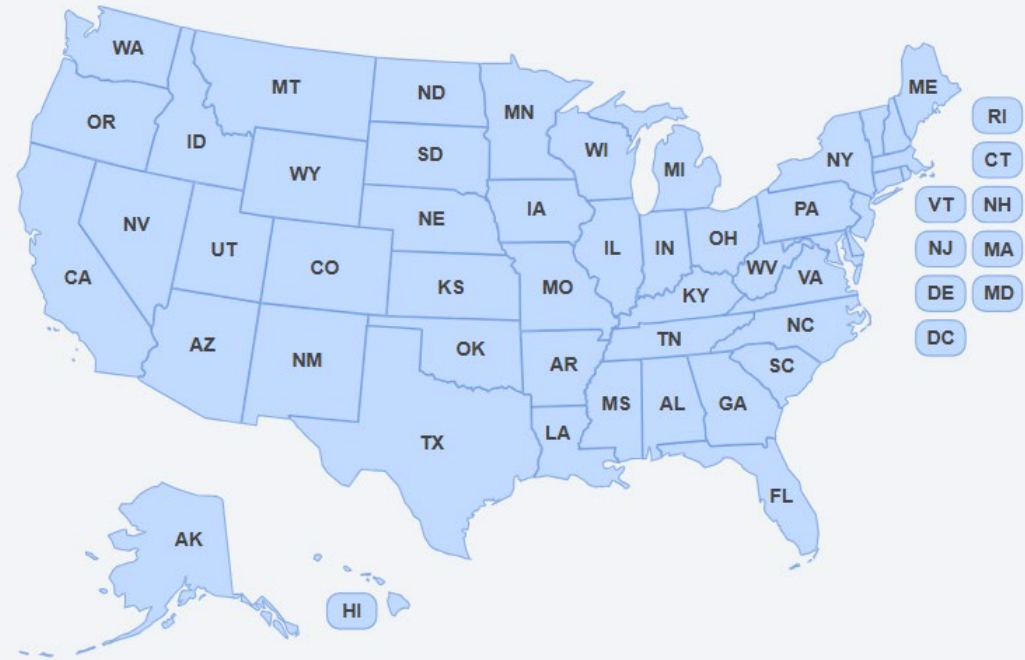
With easy navigation, you can select any state to explore its unique approach to policies and data.



State Specific Policies and Data

Every state sets a course to ensure that workplace systems provide equal opportunity and full participation for those with disabilities.

In this section, find links to labor, health, vocational rehabilitation (VR) and other agencies for each state, along with relevant policies, initiatives, and services. Select a state to learn about their policies and initiatives.



Select a State to Begin ▼

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LeadCenter.org

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Thank You for Joining!