

Resources for Individuals with Disabilities -

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If you are an individual with a disability, it is likely that you face additional barriers in the return-to-work process. So why bother? Well, based on the myriad of Work Incentives available to individuals with disabilities today, it is becoming clear that there are many reasons these individuals are being offered these incentives. One of those reasons is that individuals with disabilities represent one of our largest minority populations in the U.S., at approximately 14% or 37.5 million people*. This translates to a large talent pool that employers NEED in our workforce. Of course there is the financial incentive to work, and more important to some, the many friends, acquaintances and business connections you will make along the way.

So what are some of the resources you should know about? Here are some I believe may be helpful to you:

- **Disability Program Navigators** – The Disability Program Navigator (DPN) initiative is a collaborative effort of the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Department of Labor (DOL). This program is designed to assist individuals with disabilities in One Stop career centers across 17 states at this time. DPN's have many goals within the One Stop such as; improving accessibility for individuals with disabilities, outreach to the local community to create linkages to employers and services for individuals with disabilities and to act as a resource to One Stop staff on how best to serve individuals with disabilities within the One Stop. For more information about the DPN initiative, go to: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityresearch/navigator.htm> To take advantage of this resource, and make a connection with your local DPN and One Stop Career Center, see: <http://www.labor.state.ny.us/workforcenypartners/dpn.shtm>.
- **One Stop Career Centers** – One Stop's are a collaboration of partner agencies that collectively offer employment, education, and training services. One Stop's are located across the U.S. and each offers services to ALL job seekers that will help to link them to employers. To find your local One Stop go to: <http://www.servicelocator.org/>.
- **VESID** – The Mission of the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) is to promote educational equity and excellence for students with disabilities while ensuring that they receive the rights and protection to which they are entitled; assure appropriate continuity between the child and adult services systems; and provide the highest quality vocational rehabilitation and independent living services to all eligible persons as quickly as those services are required to enable them to work and live independent, self-directed lives. See the VESID website to find out more at: <http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/home2.html>.

- **Benefits Planning Assistance & Outreach (BPAO)** – Authorized by the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999, this program offers assistance to beneficiaries of Social Security in understanding Work Incentives that can assist them in the return-to-work process. BPAO providers can help you to understand the complex rules that govern benefits programs. This site will tell you more about this program: <http://www.ssa.gov/work/ServiceProviders/bpaofactsheet.html>
To find your local provider for assistance in understanding your Social Security benefits, see this web-site: <http://www.ssa.gov/work/ServiceProviders/BPAODirectory.html>.
- **Earned Income Disallowance (EID)** – The earned income disregard is an incentive through Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This incentive supports individuals with disabilities efforts to become self-sufficient by temporarily removing financial disincentives that would otherwise raise a tenants rent. Through this Work Incentive, qualifying individuals who become employed can have 100% of the increase in their income due to employment excluded for the first 12 months, and 50% for the second 12 months of employment. Months do not need to be consecutive, but this incentive must be used within a 48 month period of time. Follow this link to find out more about the EID Work Incentive: http://www.nhlp.org/html/pubhsg/eid_packet.htm.
- **Medicaid Buy-In for Working People with Disabilities (MBI)** – The Medicaid Buy-In program offers Medicaid coverage to people with disabilities who are working, and earning more than the allowable limits for regular Medicaid, the opportunity to retain their health care coverage through Medicaid. This program allows working people with disabilities to earn more income without the risk of losing vital health care coverage. Follow this link to find out more about the MBI program, including income and resource guidelines: http://www.health.state.ny.us/health_care/medicaid/program/buy_in/.
- **Job Accommodation Network (JAN)** - Welcome to JAN, a free consulting service designed to increase the employability of people with disabilities by: 1) providing individualized worksite accommodations solutions, 2) providing technical assistance regarding the ADA and other disability related legislation, and 3) educating callers about self-employment options. Follow this link to find out more about JAN: <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/>.

I hope these resources will assist individuals with disabilities and their advocates in promoting employment. There are more resources now than ever before to assist individuals with disabilities in becoming more self-sufficient. Best wishes on your road to rehabilitation.

*Statistical information obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau, article CB05-FF.10-2 July 19, 2005