

December 26, 2007

To the Honorable Members of the 95th General Assembly:

As required by Public Act 093-0639, I am submitting the enclosed report on the progress of the Illinois workforce system in serving individuals with disabilities for Program Year 2006 (July 1, 2006–June 30, 2007). This report is based on information obtained from the Local Workforce Investment Areas, the Illinois Department of Employment Security, and the Illinois Department of Human Services/Division of Rehabilitation Services. It highlights the commitment of the state to increasing workforce services to customers with disabilities.

During this program year, DCEO began the process of rebranding One-Stop Career Centers as **Illinois workNet™** Centers to more directly reflect our commitment to a fully inclusive approach to workforce development services. **Illinois workNet** is a groundbreaking development that is providing comprehensive workforce programs and services to all customers, utilizing state of the art technology to eliminate many of the physical barriers to accessibility. In addition to being available at physical locations, workforce services are available on-line so they can be accessed from home, local libraries, churches, chambers of commerce and community based organizations, allowing **Illinois workNet** Centers and its community partners to be available to every customer in Illinois needing workforce services.

A second major initiative that supports increasing workforce services is **disabilityworks**. **disabilityworks** is an unprecedented collaboration among the State of Illinois, City of Chicago, the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, and businesses and community service organizations to expand and improve employment and training opportunities for people with disabilities. Due to its initial success, **disabilityworks** became the first Illinois recipient of the U.S. Department of Labor's New Freedom Initiative award in October 2006. This year, with the integration of the Disability Program Navigation Project, we have now expanded **disabilityworks** throughout Illinois. This expansion was seen as a natural “fit” and served a two-fold purpose of continuing the Navigator Project since federal funding was ending, while at the same time expanding **disabilityworks**. We are already seeing the positive effects of some of the collaborations resulting from this expansion, such as the creation of a Business Leadership Network in the Southern Region. There are now eight **disabilityworks** Resource Coordinators (dRCs) in strategic locations throughout the state, in order to ensure that all of Illinois will have access to **disabilityworks'** resources.

The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity remains committed to increasing workforce services to customers with disabilities so they will have access to the same information, resources, and assistance as customers without disabilities. These commitments have placed Illinois in the unique position of becoming a national leader in expanding employment opportunities for people with disabilities. With the aggressive pursuit of these initiatives, DCEO is setting the standard for the rest of the country.

Sincerely,



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2007 WIA Annual Report

Individuals with Disabilities Served

Prepared by:
Bureau of Workforce Development

Reporting Period: July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2007



ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

December 31, 2007

Introduction

As the State agency responsible for the oversight of Title I of the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity offers the following report on services provided through Illinois' One-Stop Centers to people with disabilities. This annual report is provided to the Governor and General Assembly as required under Illinois Public Act 093-0639. The information provided is for the period of July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007.

One-Stop Delivery of Services to Individuals with Disabilities

As mandated by WIA, local entities responsible for administering separate workforce investment related programs collaborate to create a local service delivery system that increases opportunities and improves outcomes for customers. Services are delivered through One-Stop Centers and affiliates located in each of the state's twenty-six local workforce investment areas (LWIAs).

The following table displays available service information for the period of July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007:

How Individuals with Disabilities are Served Through the One-Stop System	Number Served
Number of individuals referred to the One-Stop system by the Department of Human Services/ Division of Rehabilitation Services (DHS/DRS)	424
Number of individuals with disabilities served by the One-Stop System	17,125
Number of individuals with disabilities served under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA)	3,667
Number of individuals with disabilities placed in jobs by the One-Stop System	5,336
Number of individuals with disabilities referred by the One-Stop System to the Department of Human Services /Division of Rehabilitation Services	955

Efforts to Improve One-Stop Services to Customers with Disabilities

Although 17,125 individuals with disabilities were reported as being served by the One-Stop system during this program year, it is likely a significant number of One-Stop customers with disabilities are not counted, such as those who only utilize services, such as the resource room. This in part is due to disclosure of a disability being voluntary. However, to ensure that all customers, whether or not they have a disability, receive the same level of service in all One-Stop Centers, DCEO, IDES DHS/DRS and their One-Stop partners have developed programs to improve services that include:

- The statewide expansion of the **disabilityworks** initiative that includes the full integration of the Disability Program Navigators;
- Ensuring that **Illinois workNet** is physically and programmatically accessible, as well as linked to **disabilityworks.org**;
- Ensuring that Assistive Technology in One-Stop Centers is working and individual assistance is available;
- Promoting the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) to address the increasing number of returning veterans with disabilities;
- Ensuring that individuals with the greatest needs receive DHS/DRS services

These, as well as related programs from other One-Stop partners, will not only result in long-term systems change approaches to the employment and training of people with disabilities, but will become models for other states. In addition to these efforts, DCEO as well as our partner agencies of the Illinois Department of Employment Security and Illinois Department of Human Services have also accomplished the following to improve services to customers with disabilities.

Illinois workNet™

Illinois workNet™ is a Web Site Portal and Program that simplifies the process of connecting individuals, businesses, and workforce professionals to local and statewide resources that had only previously been available within the physical Illinois workNet Centers (formerly One-Stop Centers). The Portal is a consumer-friendly and accessible Web interface to the resources and services provided by WIA mandated partners.. The Program provides workforce professionals with the resources and training needed to integrate and make the most of the Portal. Together, the Portal and Program have created a virtual format that Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIB) and Local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIA) use to promote local resources.

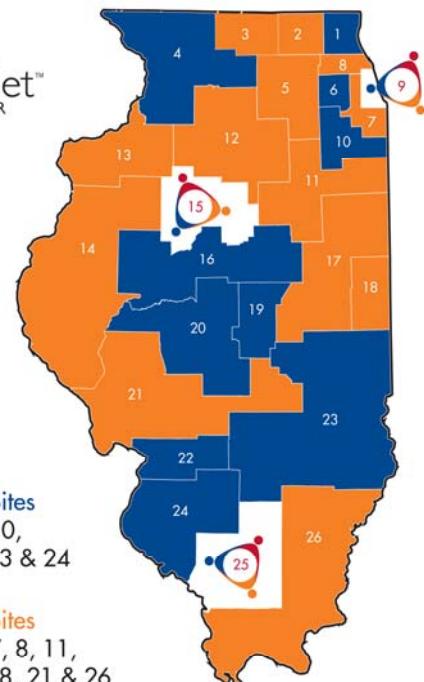
The pilot phase for **Illinois workNet** ended in June 2006 in LWIAs 9 (Chicago), 15 (Peoria), and 25 (Marion). Phase II rollout began on July 1, 2006 and was completed on June 30, 2007. Phase II implementation included the three pilot sites plus 10 other LWIAs (1, 4, 6, 10, 16, 19, 20, 22, 23, and 24). (See map at right.) Phase III rollout began July 1, 2007 and will continue in LWIAs 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 21, and 26 through June 30, 2008. Access sites include comprehensive One-Stop Centers, satellite sites, community-based organizations, faith-based groups, and other non-traditional partners.

A critical component in the implementation of **Illinois workNet** is ensuring that individuals with disabilities have full access to the Portal. **Illinois workNet** meets web accessibility standards, diminishes the need to arrange for transportation to physical locations to obtain services, and includes specific resources that benefit individuals with disabilities.

In order to ensure that people with disabilities have full access to the Portal, accessibility and usability studies are conducted on a regular basis. For example during the Pilot Phase, an accessibility study was conducted that included individuals with various physical and cognitive disabilities as well as staff with provider organizations that serve individuals with disabilities. The study found that, overall, both the individuals with disabilities and provider staff found the Portal accessible and easy to use. In addition, any individual issues were corrected and annual usability studies have been conducted to ensure ease of use. During Program Year 2007 another accessibility study will be conducted that will focus on users who require assistive technologies such as JAWS® or ZoomText Magnifier software and alternative keyboards.

Phase 1 Pilot Sites

Local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIAs) 9, 15 & 25



Phase 2 Rollout Sites

(LWIAs) 1, 4, 6, 10, 16, 19, 20, 22, 23 & 24

Phase 3 Rollout Sites

(LWIAs) 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 21 & 26

Illinois workNet provides direct access to its partner, [**disabilityworks.org**](http://disabilityworks.org). This site offers resources for individuals with disabilities who want to enter the workforce or who are currently in the workforce and are investigating future employment options. Conversely, users who access [**disabilityworks.org**](http://disabilityworks.org) can also easily link to **Illinois workNet**. Ultimately, **Illinois workNet** and [**disabilityworks.org**](http://disabilityworks.org) will be fully integrated so that people with disabilities will be able to access all of the benefits of both sites through one, easy to use, completely accessible site.

disabilityworks and the Disability Program Navigator (DPN) Project

On May 18, 2006, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, in partnership with the City of Chicago, Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce and other state agency partners, officially launched the **disabilityworks** initiative. **disabilityworks** connects qualified people with disabilities with employers who have committed to hire people with disabilities. Furthermore, **disabilityworks** connects people with disabilities who need additional job skills, training and education to service providers and educational institutions so they can become qualified to fill employers' workforce needs.

disabilityworks has created opportunities for unprecedented collaboration and cooperation among DCEO, other state agencies, the City of Chicago and the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce that aggressively addresses economic opportunities for, and the employment of, people with disabilities. This collaboration demonstrates the deep commitment on both the private and public sectors to resolve the high unemployment rate for people with disabilities.

disabilityworks is all about collaboration. It is about bringing together the supply and demand sides of the employment equation; it is about targeting training programs to meet employment needs; it is about connecting the resources of state and local agencies to facilitate inclusive opportunities for people with disabilities. It was this innovative approach that earned **disabilityworks** the New Freedom Initiative Award from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) for 2006..

As a result of **disabilityworks'** successes in the Northeast Region of Illinois, it was decided to expand the initiative throughout the state. At the same time, the DOL began to encourage states to develop a sustainability plan for the Disability Program Navigator (DPN) project that DOL had funded for the past four years. It soon became apparent that integrating the DPN project into **disabilityworks** would be the most efficient, effective and mutually beneficial means of not only sustaining the DPN project in Illinois, but also facilitating **disabilityworks'** statewide expansion plans.

An integration plan was subsequently developed that included centralizing eight DPNs and one Lead DPN within **disabilityworks**, assigning DPNs to specific economic development regions throughout the state and expanding DPN responsibilities beyond their One-Stop-related duties. Additional emphasis was placed on targeting job seekers with disabilities for the Critical Skill Shortages Initiative, as well as jobs identified in high growth occupations that would create inclusive employment opportunities.

Benefits to be realized through the development of a regional DPN approach and integration with **disabilityworks** include:

- A broader focus on statewide systems change and connection to multiple one-stop areas;
- Direct involvement in the implementation and evaluation of **Illinois workNet**, as well as the inclusion of [**disabilityworks.org**](http://disabilityworks.org) into **Illinois workNet**;
- Alignment of DPNs to ensure coverage of all ten economic development regions;
- Utilization of DPNs to build **disabilityworks** business and provider leadership networks throughout the state; and
- An opportunity to extend DPN expertise beyond the parameters of the One-Stop System, such as to community colleges.

Anticipated outcomes of the **disabilityworks**/DPN integration plan include:

- Training of One-Stop staff regarding disability awareness, assistive technology, physical and programmatic accessibility, available programs and services, etc., so that customers with disabilities are provided an inclusive employment program when accessing services through the One-Stop;
- Marketing of One-Stop programs and services to people with disabilities and community service providers and establishing **disabilityworks** provider leadership networks throughout the state (where appropriate); and

- Outreach to businesses and employers, providing information regarding a virtually untapped but talented, capable and reliable workforce and establishing **disabilityworks** business leadership networks throughout the state (where appropriate). Outreach will be conducted in concert with the efforts of the Business Service Team structure, where located, throughout the state.

Prior to its official launch in July, 2007, the eight **disabilityworks** Resource Coordinators (dRCs) were interviewed and selected, along with the state Lead, regions were assigned and a training and orientation program was developed so that the dRCs would have the training and support to make an immediate impact in their assigned regions.

Medicaid Infrastructure Grant

During this period, Illinois was awarded a Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) for 2007. This grant provides \$500,000 federal funding to develop a strategic plan to reduce or eliminate barriers to employment for people with disabilities. The application for this grant was collaboratively developed by DCEO, the Department of Healthcare and Family Services (DHFS), the Department of Human Services (DHS) and **disabilityworks**, as well as disability advocates and individuals with disabilities.

This grant stipulates that the strategic planning process must also include businesses, people with disabilities, and disability advocates. To ensure a strong business presence in the development of the strategic plan, and that it complements what has already been accomplished by **disabilityworks**, it was agreed that the strategic planning leadership committee would function as a subcommittee of the Illinois Workforce Investment Board (IWIB). It was also critical for individuals with disabilities to be represented on the committees not only as consumers, but also as business owners and service providers.

The initial emphasis for this year has been on the formation of a truly diverse, dynamic and results oriented committee. With this objective accomplished, it is anticipated that the strategic plan will be completed in 2008.

Department of Employment Security

The Department of Employment Security (IDES), a partner in the One-Stop Centers, promotes employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities and encourages employers to consider them for their job openings. These services are provided through 50 Illinois Employment and Training Centers (IETCs) and 13 satellite offices in Illinois. Although the majority of IETCs are located in One-Stop Centers, a few are located in separate offices. Where the State is the leaseholder of a local One-Stop Center, the agency continues to improve physical accommodations to make the offices accessible. Assistive Technology has been purchased through Workforce Investment grants for the One-Stop Centers, including trackball mice, large print keyboard labels, large monitors, closed circuit television, audio tape players, and screen magnification software, web page reading software, headphones, adjustable keyboard trays, enlarged keyboards, scanning/reading software, and scanners. In addition, some One-Stop Centers have extra equipment including height adjustable tables, large button telephones with amplification, Zoom Text software, and Braille printers, as well as a subscription to "Textnet", a web-based TTY. One-Stop Center staff has been trained on the use of assistive technology (AT) equipment, enabling staff to provide better service to customers with disabilities. Staff has also received training on methods of assisting persons with disabilities in a professional manner, always respectful of their dignity as individuals. Possible future initiatives include expanding the availability of information in media other than print to all One-Stop Centers. Examples are the use of Braille and tapes to describe programs and services.

Funded by the Federal Jobs for Veterans Act, IDES has almost 30 full-time Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) staff in IETCs around the state to perform outreach and provide services to disabled Veterans. The DVOP staff assists disabled veterans to develop their interviewing and resume writing skills, and help them conduct their job search. IDES also works with the National Federation for the Blind and the U.S. Department of Labor in promoting the Jobline system to bring employment services to persons with visual impairments. Jobline, reached via a national toll-free number, provides individuals unable to read computer screens with an audio version of America's Job Exchange, an online labor exchange system that currently lists job openings nationwide and is a successor to America's Job Bank in many states. Jobline guides the jobseeker through the steps that allow them to create their own employment profile and search for jobs based on location, job titles and keywords.

The Equal Opportunity Officer for IDES is part of the Interagency Committee on Employees with Disabilities (ICED) which seeks to help individuals with disabilities secure employment in state government. IDES looks forward to this avenue as a way to expand on current accommodations and practices.

Department of Human Services/Division of Rehabilitation Services

DRS serves those with Most Significant Disabilities (i.e., the disability seriously limits at least three or more of the individual's functional capacities) and those with Very Significant Disabilities (i.e., the disability seriously limits two of the individual's functional capacities). Functional capacities include:

- Mobility
- Self-care
- Self-direction
- Work Skills
- Work Tolerance
- Interpersonal Skills
- Communication

By restricting the Order of Selection, DRS serves customers, who are more highly impacted by their disabilities and who are generally less able to take advantage of the more generic type of services provided at One-Stop Centers.

It should be noted that referrals to the One-Stops are tracked only during the DRS application process. Individuals who may have come into the DRS office for information, or for whom DRS services were not applicable, are most likely not reflected in this count.

Summary

The Illinois workforce system strives to ensure that all customers, whether or not they have a disability, receive the same level of service in all One-Stop Centers. Through its innovative initiatives, programs and activities, described above the workforce system in Illinois is providing greater access to people with disabilities. However, as stated previously, the numbers reflected within this document may undercount the true service levels to people with disabilities as some choose not to self-disclose and are, therefore, not included in counts of services to people with disabilities served by One-Stop Centers. On the other hand, should an individual decide to disclose, they must provide documented evidence of a disability or disabilities, to which they may not have access. (This policy is under review and revision.)

Additional undercounting occurs because One-Stop Centers are currently not required to register customers who participate in self-service or informational activities (known as universal services); consequently, customers with disabilities who receive universal services are not counted. Finally, the cumbersome reporting process constrains LWIAs from reporting timely. Illinois will be addressing these issues, both programmatically and administratively to not only strengthen the self-reporting of individuals with disabilities but also the ability of the LIWAs to report.