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Building the Capacity of the Massachusetts Workforce Development System in Massachusetts to Better Serve Individuals with Disabilities

Ensuring that community resources that are available to assist anyone with their job search and training needs, are fully accessible and effective for individuals with disabilities.

- Massachusetts has 32 One-Stop Career Centers throughout the Commonwealth.
- These One-Stop Career Centers serve 196,000 job seekers per year.
- Currently 6% of individuals served are identified as having a disability.

Project: Disability Employment Initiative

- ▶ Funded by United States Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration
- ▶ Awarded to the Massachusetts Department of Career Services in September 2012, under a competitive grant competition.
- ▶ Institute for Community Inclusion assisted in development of grant application, and is a major partner in the project's implementation.
- ▶ Project timeline – October 2012 to September 2015

Project Activities

- ▶ Four workforce investment regions in the state serve as pilot sites, receiving funds for a Disability Resource Coordinator position and additional activities, to build and strengthen capacity to assist individuals with disabilities to find employment.
- ▶ Regions receiving pilot funding: North Shore, Lowell, Hampden County, Franklin Hampshire
- ▶ Three other regions, that are not receiving funding, serve as a control group. These control regions are: Boston, South Shore, Berkshire.
- ▶ During the course of the project, evaluation will occur to determine the impact of the project on employment outcomes for individuals using One-Stop Career Center services in the pilot regions, compared to control regions that did not receive any funding or assistance to build capacity.

Pilot Site Service Strategies:

- ▶ Partnerships and collaboration among local area agencies and service providers, for sharing of resources and expertise.
- ▶ Braiding of resources from multiple agencies to serve individuals (example: using WIA funds in combination with funding/services from the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and Department of Developmental Disabilities).
- ▶ Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs) – For individuals with intensive and complex needs, an IRT is formed around the specific needs of the individuals, with IRT members (various community partners and resources) making commitments and taking on specific roles to assist and support the individual to succeed in employment.
- ▶ Increasing use of Ticket to Work by One-Stop Career Centers to bring in additional resources and build capacity. - Ticket to Work is a program from the Social Security Administration that pays service providers for assisting individuals to become successfully employed. Over 8,000 individuals use the Massachusetts One-Stop system annually who are eligible for the Ticket program, but is currently very limited in its use by the system as a funding stream.
- ▶ While the DEI project is intended to serve a cross-section of individuals with disabilities, veterans and individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are target populations.

Institute for Community Inclusion Role:

- ▶ Technical assistance to each of the four pilot regions, to assist and support each of the sites in implementation of project activities.
- ▶ Assistance on implementation of the Ticket to Work program.
- ▶ Providing guidance to the Massachusetts Department of Career Services on implementation of project activities, and overall project coordination.
- ▶ Facilitating cross-department collaboration at the state and local level between various public disability agencies and the workforce development system.