

Program/Initiative Title: **At A Glance Resource Guide for People with Disabilities and Resource Sheet**

Overview describing the innovative practice

The Anoka County Job Training Center (ACJTC) was one of 3 recipients statewide of the federal grant, *Disability Employment Initiative, DEI*, (10/1/2014 - 3/31/2018). The purpose of DEI was to introduce and institutionalize those WorkForce Centers system enhancements (American Job Centers) designed to increase the employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities upon graduation from career pathways training programs. During DEI, the Disability Resource Coordinator, developed across agency procedures and resources to support program participants successful completion. Following the conclusion of DEI, the agency committed resources to continue system enhancements to support people with disabilities who use our general WorkForce Center services. One sustainability effort, *At a Glance Resource Guide* (staff edition) and its companion piece, *Resource Sheet* (clients who have a disability guide) were created to assist staff and customers in accessing those agencies that were expressly developed and administered by people with disabilities for people with disabilities (A Peer to Peer Service Model).

The uniqueness of *At a Glance* and *Resource Sheet* is that these listed agencies established and advocated for by people with disabilities and their allies, are consumer driven and consumer operated. They serve a broad range of persons with disabilities with varied appropriate services including in their service delivery model a prominent focus on: disability rights, training for individual self and group advocacy. These agencies actively advocate statewide and nationally for the civil rights of people with disabilities and increased institutional accessibility. In addition, agency staff serve as role models to teach and empower customers with disabilities to self-advocate as they create their unique journeys. Another distinctive feature of *At a Glance* and the customer *Resource Sheet* is the customer friendly design. Each agency is described by the most frequent questions asked by people with disabilities. Thus, the employment counselor and the client can easily match client questions with the appropriate agency.

Jobseeker Impact (ie: Benefits, outcomes for jobseekers)

The overall impact of these guides is far reaching in that they help job seekers with disabilities connect with most appropriate resources ongoing to learn from peers who can share their wisdom and support from a personal perspective. There is nothing more frustrating or detrimental for a customer seeking help through the public sector than to be misguided, misinformed and not receive the available support that they need. When customers with disabilities struggle to manage their job search and employment for lack of appropriate resources and support, they continue to require assistance for a much longer time. Although currently difficult to quantify the overall impact of these two guides, it is projected that in time this will increase both individual self-advocacy skills, promote greater institutional accessibility which in turn will evidence improved employment outcomes for job seekers with a disability.

All ACTC staff receiving a copy of the *At a Glance* and *Resource Sheet* are trained on the appropriate usage of these resources. These new innovative tools are accessible to staff in an electronic format.

Employer/Community impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for non-jobseekers)

With the current workforce shortage of skilled workers, enabling people with disabilities to be included in today's talent pool is beneficial to both employers and the community at large. The socio-economic impact of such efforts can be far reaching. Many studies have shown that people with disabilities are as capable as anyone else in the work place and have higher levels of job retention than non-disabled workers.

Identification of those involved, including collaborators

The *At a Glance* tools were designed by ACJTCs Disability Resource Coordinator in response to staff need to help guide customers with disabilities and the consumers' need for peer support and training in self and system's advocacy.

Leveraging/alignment of outside resources

With DEI ending, ACJTC has leveraged other project and program funds to enhance services and supports to job seekers with disabilities. As a recipient of the latest round of Pathways to Prosperity Funds, we are able to increase staff capacity to coordinate services, train new staff during the onboarding process, and continue to support and educate all staff on **(disabilities-no)** developing their expertise assisting customers with disabilities.

Ideas for replication/lessons learned

Replication of ACJTC's **At a Glance** for staff and *Resource Sheet* for people who have a disability is easily done by any agency or service provider throughout the state. Currently, this is a very low-cost tool to update, maintain and produce.