



Department of Human Services

October 2012

Dear Stakeholder,

October is [Disability Employment Awareness Month](#). In recognition, the Department of Human Services will highlight 'Employment First', the philosophy and practice that promotes competitive employment as the first and preferred post-education activity for *everyone*, including people with disabilities.

Work can provide a sense of purpose, personal accomplishment, financial strength and self-determination. But for individuals with physical or developmental disabilities, mental illness or addiction disorders, finding an occupation can be elusive. As one of 14 states that recognize 'Employment First', New Jersey is setting new benchmarks – not just for people with disabilities - but for their families, school administrators, employers, government agencies, business leaders and community partners.

We'll be participating in several events and activities that advocate Employment First and we'll be using [DHS Connects](#) and social media to highlight the personal stories of about 20 workers with disabilities. Please check our [Facebook page](#) regularly for updates.

There are a couple of other acknowledgments in October: [Blindness Awareness](#) Month, [Mental Illness Awareness](#) Week (10/7-10/13), [Primary Care Week](#) (10/14-10/20) and [World Food Day](#) (10/16). We'll be spotlighting these topics on our Facebook page, as well.

Last month, we [showed appreciation](#) for the state's many [Direct Support Providers](#) and participated with Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno in the [groundbreaking](#) of an affordable housing property in Brick Township that will become home to women veterans with children, individuals with mental illness and people with developmental disabilities. In

addition, Deputy Commissioner Lowell Arye participated in a '[Farm to Fork](#)' harvest in Hunterdon County helping collect corn and apples for delivery to the Community Food Bank of New Jersey. He also joined Acting Commissioner of the Department of Banking and Insurance, Ken Kobylowski, in Bayonne to [speak with](#) a group of senior citizens about life insurance, long term care insurance, prescription and food assistance.

Finally, September held the first meeting of the Interagency Council on Homelessness. The group heard a presentation about "Opening Doors," the federal ten year strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness from Laura Zeilinger, Director of National Programs and Field Support at the US Interagency Council on Homelessness. Information on the US Interagency Council and a copy of "Opening Doors" can be found at <http://www.usich.gov>.

We continue to have regular meetings with stakeholders on the Department's work and outreach. I look forward to our continued partnerships.

Regards,

Jennifer Velez