

State of New Jersey



Dear DHS stakeholders:

Since 1988, October has been recognized as National Disability Employment Awareness Month. This year's theme is "Profit by Investing in Workers with Disabilities". A couple of weeks ago, Governor Chris Christie issued a [proclamation](#) noting, 'people with all ranges of disabilities can achieve employment, providing a sense of purpose, accomplishment and earned income'. He recognizes that the more people working, the more productive and prosperous a state.

Building upon the 2008 public/private initiative called '[DiscoverAbility](#)', the Departments of Human Services and Labor and Workforce Development, together with our contracted agencies and hundreds of businesses statewide, have intensified efforts to collaboratively provide the services and training necessary for individuals with disabilities to prepare for and find employment.

We all know that people with disabilities are a multi-skilled workforce resource for employers. In fact, several New Jersey companies were [recently celebrated](#) by the National Organization for Disabilities for 'breaking new ground in employment best practices and embracing disability as an aspect of diversity'.

The Department of Human Services has numerous supported education and employment programs in its Divisions of Disability Services, Developmental Disabilities, and Mental Health and Addiction Services as well as within its Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Additionally, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services solicits private non-profit and for-profit companies to facilitate work training, employment counseling, educational advancement, assistive technologies and job placement services.

And, Governor Chris Christie has set aside portions of various state contracts such as data entry, document imaging, unarmed security, janitorial services, laundry services, vending machine management, snack bar and cafeteria operations for agencies employing individuals with disabilities.

It is so important to celebrate these achievements and recognize that together, our efforts are changing expectations. Through training, counseling, assistive technology and support, when necessary, we are working to ensure that people with disabilities can compete for, be hired, maintain employment – and achieve personal savings.

But, there is more work to be done. So, thank you for your continued advocacy and action in this regard. The Department looks forward to our continued collaborations to advance this initiative.

Regards,

Jennifer Velez
Commissioner