Alaska Work Matters Task Force: Final Report

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Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA), Alaska Mental Health Board (AMHB, Alaska Commission on Aging (ACOA)

Alaska Work Matters Employment Task Force

Employment Policy Context:

- 2014: Alaska becomes an Employment First State

  2014: Beneficiary Employment and Engagement became a Trust focus area

- 2018: DOLWD repealed Alaska's subminimum wage regulation
- 2018: National Governor's Association Employment Learning Lab
- 2019: Empowerment Through Employment Conference

Draft Task Force Documents:

- State Exchange on Employment and Disability (SEED) developed:
  - Task Force Brief
  - Telework Policy Guide for State and Local Policymakers

"Employment is the most direct and cost-effective means to empower individuals with disabilities to achieve independence and economic-self-sufficiency and revitalize our State's economy by growing the taxpayer base and simultaneously lowering costs to the State for cash or medical and disability benefits and their administration."

Purpose

- Review existing policies, practices, and procedures, barriers, and workforce utilization data regarding the employment of people with disabilities in the State of Alaska
- Prepare a report with recommendations for policies, practices, and procedures

Possible Enhancement Areas

- Make the State a Model Employer
- Building the capacity of the private sector
- Designing Youth transition programs
- Establishing Employment First initiatives
- Improving Transportation policies

Possible Enhancement Areas (cont.)

- Implementing stay-at-work and return-to-work policies and programs
- Supporting disability-owned and disabled veteran-owned businesses
- Enhancing rural traditional skill development such as subsistence, self-employment, et al.
- Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Model

Composition: Members or their Designees

Commissioners, Chief Executive Officers, Executive Directors, Directors and Representatives

Administration, Education and Early Development, Labor and Workforce Development, Health, Family and Community Services, Transportation and Public Facilities;

Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority;

Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, Alaska Mental Health Board; Alaska Commission on Aging, State Independent Living Council, Alaska Vocational Technical Education Center;

Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation; Senior and Disabilities Services; and Behavioral Health;

Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation;

Three private sector employer representatives;

Five private citizen representatives.

Timeframes, Resource Allocation, & Deliverables

Timeframe: 12 months

Resource Allocation

- Virtual meeting platform costs, transcription, and staff time to facilitate administrative
- Designated time to participate in Task Force meetings and reports

Deliverables

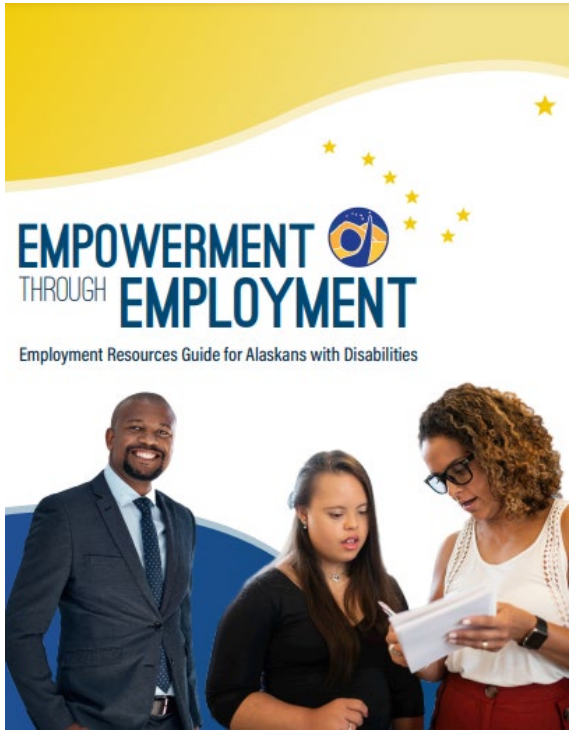
- Statewide data pull regarding services provided to Alaskans with disabilities across the lifespan to support employment and employment outcomes
- At least four statewide meetings with Task Force members
- Policy enhancement recommendation report relating to improving employment outcomes

Task Force Timeliness and Telework

- Core employment strategy for people with disabilities
- Telework for “high risk” population will be critical
- SEED’s Telework Policy Brief: Public and private sector employers report telework can benefit organizations:
  - Saving money by promoting management efficiencies and costs related to employee turnover and absenteeism;
  - Making organizations more resilient in response to emergencies;
  - Reducing real estate and energy costs, transit costs, and environmental impact;
  - Improving the quality of employee work-life; and
  - Increasing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- *Note: SEED has developed a robust Telework Policy brief which could help inform this timely work.*

Cross Agency Collaboration

- Trust Beneficiary Employment and Engagement
- At-Risk Youth Initiative
- Senior Employment Initiative
- Business Employment Services Team (BEST — collaborative employer engagement)
- Empowerment Through Employment
  - Conference and Guide
- Many others…



Task Force Final Report

Alaska Work Matters Task Force
Final Report

Recommendations — Section One

State of Alaska as a Model Employer for Individuals with Disabilities

1. Set utilization goals for State hiring
2. Increase awareness and utilization of the existing Provisional Hire program
3. Establish a centralized accommodation fund for state positions
4. Increase state employment for people with the most significant disabilities through support for Personal Care Services
5. Ensure that all State of Alaska online platforms are fully accessible
6. Educate executive and legislative staff about disability employment trends and data on employment outcomes

Recommendations — Section Two

Building the Capacity of the Private Sector

1. Build on the existing Business Engagement Services (BEST) Teams to increase collaboration between private sector employers in order to increase diversity and inclusion
2. Continue planning and implementing job fairs (including virtual and reverse job fairs) to connect employers and job seekers with disabilities
3. Increase the number of students with disabilities served by the Alaska Vocational Technical Education Center (AVTEC)
4. Increase the number of people with disabilities involved in Apprenticeships and Internships
5. Support disability-owned and disabled veteran- owned businesses through procurement and contracting systems
6. Reduce hiring barriers for job seekers with justice system involvement

Recommendations — Section Three

Employment Services and Support

1. Strengthen State support for Employment First
2. Strengthen implementation of the state Medicaid plan and waivers to better support employment services and outcomes
3. Expand the use of the Individual Placement and Supports (IPS) model for people with mental health conditions or substance use disorders
4. Improve transportation policies to require options that are reliable and accessible for individuals with disabilities
5. Support rural traditional skill development such as subsistence and self-employment

Recommendations — Section Four

Preparing for Work and Transition

1. Expand and improve existing School-to-Work transition resources for school personnel
2. Strengthen the At-Risk Youth Initiative

Recommendations — Section Five

Stay at Work, Return to Work

1. Improve stay-at-work and return-to-work policies and programs for individuals who become ill or injured on the job
2. Support and encourage teleworking where possible and desirable
3. Invest in Post-COVID Health and Safety Planning
4. Support and expand the Senior Employment Initiative

What's Next?

- Formation of an ADHOC Committee to coordinate activities and assess progress with respect to implementation of recommendations included in this report
  - Director's with the AK DOLWD DVR and the DOH GCDSE will chair this committee
  - Use the annual employment first report as the vehicle to document progress made
  - Administrative support for the ADHOC committee will occur through the GCDSE
  - Updates will occur through the existing beneficiary boards such as the GCDSE, AMHB/ABADA, ACOA, SILC, SVRC, AWIB, & ABIN

THE TIME IS NOW

thank you