

July 29, 2015

Inclusive Service as a Pathway to Employment 25 Years after the Americans with Disabilities Act

Dear Colleague:

This year, the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and its legacy of equal opportunity and inclusion. Accordingly, we recognize the significant contributions of disability advocates, service professionals, employers, elected leaders, and countless other Americans who worked toward the goal of meaningful inclusion by passing the ADA. The Department of Labor has released a [historical timeline](#) to mark these important milestones leading up to and succeeding the passage of the ADA.

Because employment is essential to participating fully in American life, the widespread adoption of policies and practices promoting inclusive workplaces is critical. Importantly, youth and young adults with disabilities must have access to career preparatory experiences that can bolster their careers. As CNCS and ODEP noted in a prior [letter](#), volunteering often helps youth explore their skills and career interests. This gives them valuable work experience in fields of their choice and teaches them the importance of establishing relationships and networks. By building this self-knowledge and acquiring these skills, youth can maximize their personal growth and effectively plan their futures.

ODEP and CNCS are offering new resources to support this work, including:

- **Inclusive Service Learning Guide**

ODEP created a guide for youth service professionals interested in helping young people pursue volunteer opportunities. The [Fostering Inclusive Volunteering and Service Learning Guide](#) explores the benefits of volunteering and offers a framework for youth service professionals to find service opportunities that are good fits for their customers.

- **Transition to Employment: Toolkit for National Service Alumni with Disabilities**

In 2014, President Obama launched the [Employers of National Service](#) initiative. This initiative connects former AmeriCorps volunteers with leading employers from the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. It provides these employers with a pool of dedicated and highly qualified workers that can apply their unique talents and skills to improve their businesses. As part of this effort, CNCS released a toolkit to help AmeriCorps alumni with disabilities find good jobs. The toolkit provides information about government resources, disability-specific networking, and mentoring.

- **How WIOA Supports Service Learning**

The recently enacted [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\)](#) updated the workforce development system. Significantly, WIOA now provides funding for a variety of youth leadership development activities, including community service and peer-centered activities that encourage civic responsibility and social engagement. In addition, youth service professionals in the workforce development system may take advantage of service learning opportunities in WIOA by referring youth eligible for services in this system to explore volunteerism. National and community service programs may also connect to these WIOA-funded activities to promote the availability of service learning opportunities or to recruit higher numbers of disconnected youth, including those with disabilities, into their programs.

As we carry the ADA's legacy into the future, we must continue to be vigilant in our efforts to foster the inclusion of people with disabilities, including our nation's youth with disabilities, in all areas of life.

Please help us share these resources to promote inclusive service.

Sincerely,


Je
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