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# The Maine Ability Partnership: Drawing the MAP to a Culture of Inclusion in Maine's One-Stop Employment Service Delivery System

Maine Department of Labor

Maine Office of Disability Employment Policy

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# **The Maine Ability Partnership**

Drawing the MAP to a Culture of Inclusion in Maine's  
One-Stop Employment Service Delivery System

JUN 03 2004





# **The Maine Ability Partnership**

## **Drawing the MAP to a Culture of Inclusion in Maine's One-Stop Employment Service Delivery System**

Preparation of this item was funded by the U.S. Department of Labor,  
Office of Disability Employment Policy.

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# **The Maine Ability Partnership**

## **Executive Summary**





# The Maine Ability Partnership

## Executive Summary

The Maine Ability Partnership (MAP) was established through a planning grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy to the Maine Department of Labor. The purpose of this planning year has been to assess the current capacity of the One-Stop Employment Service Delivery System (CareerCenters) in Maine to serve all customers equally, regardless of disability, and to develop a plan to increase this capacity to its fullest potential.

Maine is a leadership state in its implementation of the Workforce Investment Act. In 1997, using the combined knowledge of all the partners, including Workforce Investment Act, Wagner Peyser, Vocational Rehabilitation, and State Facilities Management, time and energy was spent in an effort to create the most accessible CareerCenters available at the time. Although everyone involved in the original design process intended an accessible system, Maine has realized through time that barriers to accessible programs and services for people with disabilities exist within the CareerCenter system. Recognizing the strides toward inclusion that have been made, Maine used this planning grant to elucidate and address remaining barriers.

According to the U.S. 2000 Census, nearly one out of five people living in Maine has a disability. In a state with a population of 1.29 million people that represents about 258,000 people.<sup>1</sup> The State Vocational Rehabilitation program currently provides vocational rehabilitation services to a statewide caseload of over 6,500 Maine residents and approximately 1,435 are waiting for services. The current ability of non-vocational rehabilitation partners to provide services to persons with disabilities and the numbers of people waiting for disability specific services demonstrate that the overall capacity within the CareerCenter system cannot meet demand. Therefore, there is a vital need for customized employment options and universal accessibility within the entire system.

To determine the scope of programmatic and physical access currently available at Maine's 23 CareerCenter sites, several activities were conducted including: community forums, targeted outreach, staff discussions, and other data collection methodologies. (For more information about data collection activities see pages 9 through 11 of the full report.)

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<sup>1</sup> Maine's Work Group for Community-Based Living Roadmap for Change October 2003 pg. 2.

## **Findings:**

Access issues found through the activities of the Maine Ability Partnership (MAP) can be categorized into three key themes: Capacity, Communication, and Access.

- 1. Capacity:** including issues such as policy development, collaboration and partnership development, professional development, on-going and rotating skill set development / training, and continuous evaluation
- 2. Communication:** including interagency / interdepartmental communication as well as with all customers. Additionally, communication includes equal on-demand access to communication supports and technologies, information materials access, outreach, marketing, and interactive communication.
- 3. Access:** including electronic information access through the Internet as well as computer software access and other technologies that will provide greater access to information and services. Access also includes the ability to gain access to building sites and participation in workshops and special events. This also refers to increased physical accessibility within a specific CareerCenter building.

Strengths identified through Maine Ability Partnership (MAP) activities include staff commitment to community, active local workforce investment boards and committed economic development professionals. Areas of significant concern include inter-agency and partnership collaboration, communication barriers, disability misinformation and stereotyping, lack of awareness of access issues, obsolete and inaccessible technology, and infrequent and inconsistent training or professional development. With regard to staff training and comfort level, a compelling 55% of staff surveyed stated that they feel some level of discomfort serving someone who might have a disability and 68% requested general disability and etiquette information. (See report pg. 14.) Staff identified concerns about meeting the needs of a person who has an "invisible" disability. Some staff members appeared to believe that all people with disabilities need Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services and that VR services could, or should, have the capacity to serve all people with disabilities. (See report pg. 13.) Some staff members, including VR counselors, indicated that they need further training to better serve clients within specific disability population groups, including people with

brain injury, psychiatric, or multiple disabilities. One staff member stated that he has been employed for three years without receiving any disability or diversity training.

The general perception from the disability community is that the CareerCenters are not equipped to serve people who have disabilities. More than one forum attendant expressed the perception that the CareerCenter is, as one person put it, the "last place a person with disabilities would look for assistance." One participant said, "I know very little about the CareerCenters except that when I have used them, the staff has not known what to do with someone with a vision impairment." One forum attendant who is blind stated that there are problems with access technology "because instead of asking us for what would work, what software works for us, a system was installed that is totally inaccessible for us..." Another participant stated that a client with a visual disability "needed to use the large print screen but not one of the staff knew what to do to get it to work." A member of the Deaf community stated that Deaf people "feel like second class citizens" because the TTY (teletypewriter) machines are not answered at the same rate as voice telephones. Deaf and Hard of Hearing participants raised other concerns regarding a lack of communication access at CareerCenters. Several people who have developmental disabilities expressed feeling that staff made assumptions about what they were capable of doing and "didn't communicate well." (Findings begin on page 12 of the report.)

As stated by one forum participant, improving access comes down to one simple thing: "It's always about the attitude." As with any culture change, changing attitudes about disability will not be accomplished by a single event, initiative or policy. Creating a system in which the provision of equal access to employment services happens naturally without barriers will require an ongoing, incremental wearing away of myth and stereotype while building up skill sets, supports, and tools that will eventually complete a fundamental change in the entire culture of the system. Everyone who comes into the CareerCenter has a personal story. Disability is simply a factor added onto these life experiences. It is, however, a factor that can easily become a significant barrier to employment and, therefore, to the individual's overall quality of life. By increasing the access available at CareerCenters, the system will be better able to assist all of its customers in the breaking down of employment barriers.





# **The Maine Ability Partnership Recommendations**



# **The Maine Ability Partnership**

## **Recommendations:**

**\*\*\*Any Decision Making Process Must Address This Question:**

**How Does \_\_\_\_\_ Affect Access?**

### **Capacity:**

### **Policy Development:**

1. Create minimum accessibility standards for all CareerCenters in Maine.
2. Develop an Access Task Force and hold a conference.
  - a. Include leadership and "front-line" or direct service staff members from each of the CareerCenter sites in Maine in the group.
  - b. Provide information regarding access principles and describe barriers currently faced by people with disabilities at CareerCenters
  - c. Develop access action plans for each CareerCenter site.
3. Develop the CareerCenter Access Advisory Council out of the original Access Task Force but include members from outside the CareerCenter system.
4. Expand Statewide CareerCenter management meetings to include Bureau of Rehabilitation managers and managers from all other partners.
5. Hold shared management meetings at all individual CareerCenters that include all partners.
6. Target education and outreach to employees, customers, and diverse communities in a coordinated and effective manner following the implementation of each new policy to encourage systemic behavior change.

### **Staffing:**

1. Re-evaluate Information Center positions to reflect more accurately the diversity of skill required for the position.
2. Actively seek qualified applicants with disabilities to staff Information Centers when vacancies arise.
3. Create volunteer peer support positions to assist with staffing needs.



## **Training:**

1. Provide training for all staff, including volunteers, in all areas of disability, including basic information about applicable laws, diversity, and inclusive workplace culture. Provide training throughout the five-year period of this plan and make arrangements to continue training beyond plan timeline.
2. Provide trainings that include trainers with the disabilities being discussed so that disability specific issues are presented in concert with the full range of information being provided.
3. Rotate in-service trainings on a quarterly basis so that no staff member goes more than 6 months without attending at least one day of in-service.
4. Provide "Brown-bag lunch" update discussions at CareerCenter sites focusing on an access topic a month.
5. Build cross training into regular training schedules, mini-conferences, and joint staff meetings in each co-located center so that access discussion occurs frequently.
6. Develop a policy regarding regular staff updates on the use of the TTY (Teletypewriter) so that answer rates become equal to those of the voice telephone.
7. Distribute staff questionnaires and require completion during each implementation year to gauge attitude/behavior change.

## **Communication:**

### **Inter-agency:**

1. Increase inter-agency discussion regarding access issues and measure how collaboration serves people with disabilities to ensure that progress is made.
2. Build and increase community partnerships while emphasizing effective and meaningful communication across discipline.
3. Develop policy regarding seamless inter-agency communication to open interdepartmental and interagency communication so that it runs smoothly.

4. Allow time at each staff meeting during which staff members representing all the partner agencies can come together to discuss communication issues within the system that relate to effective service delivery.

**Outreach:**

1. Conduct culturally appropriate outreach to people with disabilities, especially people from traditionally underserved populations.
2. Conduct outreach to community based partner agencies, employers, and others to build bridges for more effective service delivery and increased job listings.
3. Create a "CareerCenter show" showcasing "Thursday's job" on television as one method of reaching people. The show will be signed, captioned, audio described, and translated into other languages to reach populations with limited English proficiency. Maine will pilot this concept as a potential national model.

**Between Staff and Customers:**

1. Provide in-service training regarding communication related disabilities and the variety of effective communication strategies available. Awareness of a variety of communication issues and strategies are vital for staff members who deal directly with the general public.
2. Provide an array of alternate formats for all Information Center materials
3. Establish a fund for ASL (American Sign Language) interpreting immediately and advertise its existence to Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities.
4. Set up interpreting and other communication strategies for "drop-in" events.
5. Encourage and reward staff members who wish to add ASL to their language skills. ASL learned by staff members would be for direct communication only.
6. Establish a video interpreting system through which an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter can be reached from any of the CareerCenter sites. House the system within the Department of Labor and hire two full-time interpreters. Pilot the system in five sites and add additional sites as the system becomes more widely used. Advertise.

## **Access:**

## **Technology:**

1. Complete a full evaluation of access technology in the first half of the first year to better assess the specific needs of CareerCenters. Implement all recommended changes and provide training to staff regarding all equipment changes.
2. Create a "how-to" guide in various formats that will instruct a person in the use of each type of equipment used in the center. These guides should be provided in several formats including pictograph, audio, and others.
3. Provide voice tours of the Information Center, similar to that of a museum tour, which can be pre-recorded for people who are blind or who have visual disabilities as well as for those who may have memory or learning disabilities.
4. Provide screen-reader technology that is compatible with the thin client technology used in CareerCenters in order to enable independent access for screen reader users to those customer software applications available only through the thin client environment and advertise that this technology is now available.
5. Add printed text-to-synthesized voice output equipment for persons with visual or learning disabilities.
6. Review all assessment tools used in CareerCenters and update methods for access.
7. Assess all software programs, including those for assessment and exploration, used by CareerCenters, especially those intended for independent use by CareerCenter customers, to ensure their ability to work with access technologies designed for people with disabilities such as screen readers, screen magnifiers, voice recognition, etc. Replace or update programs that do not work with these technologies.
8. Provide a minimum of one assistive listening device in every CareerCenter and several in high population area CareerCenters for use in a workshop setting.
9. Provide a TTY (teletypewriter) for public use in every CareerCenter where a voice telephone is provided for public use.
10. Add a camera and applicable software to at least one computer in each CareerCenter so that Video Relay can be used for business calls.

11. Evaluate technology a minimum of twice each year during implementation in collaboration with Access Technology experts to ensure that CareerCenters keep up with new and developing technology.
12. Provide additional training on an ongoing basis and following each technology update to ensure that staff retains the ability to effectively use and assist others in the use of all available technology.
13. Routinely measure staff ability to assist with the use of equipment and programs and work with staff to increase skill sets accordingly.
14. Set up and maintain accessible on-line access to CareerCenter services.

**Physical:**

1. Continue on-going physical site evaluations by the State Accessibility Coordinator and follow recommendations.
2. Conduct a new assessment of lighting and other issues related to the safe and effective use of CareerCenters by people with low vision at target centers, including Lewiston, Portland, Augusta, Houlton, and Presque Isle. Assess other centers as needed. All recommended changes should be in affect before the end of the second year.
3. Relocate or refurbish certain CareerCenter sites to ameliorate accessibility issues
4. Public transportation programs linked to CareerCenters and CareerCenter computers will include access for people with disabilities.
5. Post policy regarding service animals and provide training to staff members regarding service animal rights.
6. Evaluate snow removal methods with regard to physical access to CareerCenter sites in winter months and make changes accordingly.





# **The Maine Ability Partnership**

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#### **Attachments:**

- I: Text of PowerPoint Presentation**
- II: Staff Questionnaire**
- III: Breakdown of Staff Questionnaire Responses**
- IV: Forum Questionnaire**

## Purpose:

The Maine Ability Partnership (MAP) was established through a planning grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy to the Maine Department of Labor. The purpose of this planning year has been to develop a plan to increase the capacity of Maine's One-Stop Employment Delivery System (CareerCenters) to serve all customers equally, regardless of ability. While recognizing the strides toward inclusion that have been made, Maine was aware that the CareerCenter system remained at least somewhat inaccessible to people with disabilities when it applied for this one-year grant. The Maine Ability Partnership conducted activities to find those areas within the system where there is room for growth. The findings in this report provide a baseline of information from which to begin building upon the current capacity of the CareerCenters to improve employment outcomes for all customers.

Drawing the MAP to a "Culture of Inclusion" through which the system becomes fully able to equally serve all customers will allow Maine to firmly establish the CareerCenters as **the employment resource of choice** for employers and employees in Maine. Throughout this planning year the Maine Ability Partnership emphasized working collaboratively as individual CareerCenters and as a system to meet the needs of all customers, recognizing that disability is simply another part of the human continuum.

## History:

Maine is a leadership state in its implementation of the Workforce Investment Act. On July 1, 1996 the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services moved from the Department of Education to its current position within the Department of Labor. In 1997, a group of 40 stakeholders, including the Assistant to the Commissioner of the Maine Department of Labor, leadership from the Bureau of Employment Services, leadership from the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, leadership from two training partner agencies and the 12 county service delivery areas met on a bi-monthly basis from January to May. Meetings of this "gang of forty" were held to discuss issues relating to co-location, the development of a shared management structure, and the need for the members of these

teams to work together effectively.<sup>1</sup> The early structure of the workforce and economic development system in Maine evolved through the integration of Maine's State Workforce Investment Board, the Maine Jobs Council:

"The Maine Jobs Council (MJC) integrated nine councils into one employment policy board (The State Workforce Investment Board). Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs) in Maine set policy, negotiated performance measures with the Maine Jobs Council, certified training providers, and programs, selected One-Stop operators, and chartered CareerCenter sites. The local boards were also responsible for vision and leadership, technical assistance, oversight, community relations, and the leveraging of resources."<sup>2</sup>

These meetings and the structure of the LWIBs helped to align disability specific and general employment service systems within the early CareerCenters and prepared Maine to implement the Workforce Investment Act. Maine was awarded an early implementation grant to create a One-Stop system in 1997 based, in part, on this work.

Using the combined knowledge of all the partners, including Workforce Investment Act, Wagner Peyser, the State Vocational Rehabilitation Program, and State Facilities Management, time and energy was spent in an effort to create the most physically and programmatically accessible CareerCenters available at the time. One Local Workforce Investment director stated that this early process included experts from all areas of the system who worked together in "a good faith" effort to design a universally accessible system. This director emphasized the importance of this early collaboration by stating "each time a building was completed, we had a walk through team that went through the building numerous times with check-offs to make sure all issues to each partner were completed." One director within the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services who was involved in the development of the system noted that it is important to remember the effort that was put into the early system, but added that many of the issues that have surfaced through time "could not have been anticipated without having first lived in the buildings."

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<sup>1</sup> "Case Studies on the Implementation of the Workforce Investment Act" by Jaimie Ciulla Timmons, Sheila Fesko, and Allison Cohen. Spotlight on Maine: Issue 3, Fall 2002. Pg. 8

<sup>2</sup> "Ibid pg.2.

The State is now divided into four Workforce Investment Areas: Washington/Aroostook Counties, Tri-County, Central/Western Counties, and Coastal Counties. The Local Workforce Investment Boards, several State agencies and community-based organizations are represented as partners in local CareerCenters throughout Maine and there is an emphasis on local control. The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, the designated state agency for the federal Vocational Rehabilitation program, resides within eleven of these locations and is in the process of increasing this presence to twelve. The Bureau of Rehabilitation uses office space on an itinerant basis in the remaining CareerCenters. Maine's CareerCenters are dispersed throughout this large rural state in twenty-three locations.

A manager cited in a case study conducted in January 2001 by the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) in Boston states, "we made sure that the shared management in each of the CareerCenters was real, that all of the managers who were attempting to cooperate really understood how critical that was."<sup>3</sup> These early triumphs were recognized by ICI with an award and profile in Case Studies on the Implementation of the Workforce Investment Act Issue 3, Fall 2002.<sup>4</sup> The case study found creative management, cooperation, and shared vision to be important strengths in the fledgling development of the CareerCenter system in Maine from 1997 to 2001.

Shared management meetings were held at most CareerCenters during early implementation, although today this practice continues on an inconsistent basis in only a few locations. Progress toward a unified CareerCenter (as discussed in the Institute for Community Inclusion's Case Studies on the Implementation of the Workforce Investment Act Issue 3, Fall 2002) has not totally eroded, but this early strength may not be fully realized throughout the system at present. Although everyone involved in the original design process intended an accessible system, Maine realized through time that some significant issues persist. With this in mind Maine began this planning year to better understand the current situation so that access can be improved for all stakeholders including: employees, employers, customers, and the larger community.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid pg. 8

<sup>4</sup> Ibid pg. 9

The Maine Ability Partnership has the potential of providing Maine with the opportunity to use its early successes, and the lessons learned, to more fully implement The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, the Olmstead Decision of 1999, the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999, and President Bush's New Freedom Initiative of 2001. The overarching vision of the Maine Ability Partnership - providing 100% equally accessible user-friendly employment services for all - supports these laws and the President's initiative as it proposes to continually enhance access to services available in CareerCenters in Maine for the purpose of increasing competitive, community-based employment outcomes for all customers.

### **Current Status:**

National, state, and local data suggest that many barriers remain to the full and equal employment of people with disabilities. According to the U.S. 2000 Census, nearly one out of five people living in Maine has a disability. In a state with a population of 1.29 million people that represents about 258,000 people.<sup>5</sup> A 2002 national sample from the Current Population Survey estimated that only 30.9 percent of civilian, non-institutionalized, men and women with a disability aged 18-64 in the United States were employed compared to 89.2 percent in the same category without a disability.<sup>6</sup> A 2002 survey for The State of Maine, estimated "36.0 percent (plus or minus 5.6 percentage points) of civilian, non-institutionalized, men and women with a disability, aged 18-64 in Maine were employed."<sup>7</sup> Using this information and applying the remaining 64 percent unemployment rate to the number of people who have a disability cited above, there are approximately 165,120 people in Maine who have a disability and who are either

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<sup>5</sup> Maine's Work Group for Community-Based Living Roadmap for Change October 2003 pg. 2.

<sup>6</sup> (Houtenville, Andrew J. 2004. "Disability Statistics in the United States." Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center, [www.disabilitystatistics.org](http://www.disabilitystatistics.org). Posted May 15, 2003. Accessed February 25, 2004.)

<sup>7</sup> (Houtenville, Andrew J. 2004. "Disability Statistics in the United States." Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center, [www.disabilitystatistics.org](http://www.disabilitystatistics.org). Posted May 15, 2003. Accessed March 02, 2004).

unemployed or underemployed. Nationally, nearly 30% of persons with severe disabilities live below the poverty level, compared to 8% of persons without a disability.<sup>8</sup>

The employment assistance needs of people with disabilities in Maine are primarily met through the Maine Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS). In 2003, BRS served 11,000 individuals with disabilities. The State Vocational Rehabilitation program currently provides vocational rehabilitation services to a statewide caseload of over 6,500 Maine residents and approximately 1,435 are waiting for services. The capacity within the overall CareerCenter system to equally serve people with disabilities cannot meet demand. This includes the current ability of non-vocational rehabilitation partners to provide services to persons with disabilities. Therefore, there is a vital need for customized employment options and increased universal accessibility within the entire CareerCenter system.

CareerCenter core services are designed around a self-service model. While many people appreciate the independence this structure within the Information Center provides, some have difficulty accessing these services independently and others prefer more assistance. This also applies to people who do not have disabilities. A person with limited exposure to computers, for example, might request additional assistance in learning basic operations in order to create a new resumé. People with disabilities do not always need assistance, but self-directed activities alone are not always sufficient for someone who has a disability to find meaningful work. Customized employment options would allow a person who needs additional assistance but does not need vocational rehabilitation to receive services through the general CareerCenter. The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, even if there were resources enough to serve the approximately 165,000 unemployed people with disabilities in Maine, cannot be regarded as the only option for people who need or desire employment or training services. Section 188, of the Workforce Investment Act - the Disability Checklist - was predicated on the concept that disability is a natural phenomenon and people with disabilities will seek employment services without the need for vocational rehabilitation services.

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<sup>8</sup> Maine's Work Group for Community-Based Living Roadmap for Change October 2003 pg. 8.



## **Ticket To Work:**

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) has a longstanding history of assisting individuals receiving SSI and/or SSDI and recognized early the importance of accurate benefits counseling in helping people decide to go to work. Existing resources have been used for several years to fund two full-time benefits specialist positions at Alpha One and Maine Medical Center, the two organizations certified by the Social Security Administration to provide benefits counseling throughout Maine. In 2003, 45 percent, or approximately 4,950 people served by BRS received SSI or SSDI.

BRS hired a Ticket to Work (TTW) Program Coordinator in June of 2003 to prepare for the mailing of an estimated 52,872 tickets to eligible SSI/SSDI beneficiaries by September 2004, and to provide outreach and capacity building throughout Maine. The establishment of a toll-free number for ticket holders, creation of TTW informational materials, training of all VR counselors, development of partnership agreements with participating Employment Networks, and over thirty presentations provided to a wide range of stakeholders are examples of some of the activities conducted during the first six months of the program.

Since the enactment of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIIA) of 1999, BRS has embraced the intent of this pivotal legislation to remove employment barriers for people with disabilities, and has played a leadership role in Maine to implement key provisions of the law. Under TWWIIA, Maine received a Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) awarded to the Muskie Institute at the University of Southern Maine. BRS actively participates in the MIG Advisory Group to ensure that optimal use is made of this resource to improve opportunities for people with disabilities to go to work.

Since the Ticket to Work (TTW) rollout in November 2003, the Maine experience has been consistent with national participation, which is low. As of March 2004, 18,370 tickets had been mailed to Maine beneficiaries, with 51 of the total 54 assigned going to The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services. A task group comprised of the TTW Coordinator, MIG staff, a Social Security Administration representative, Benefits Specialists, Employment Network, and other community partners has been formed to

continue the effort to implement the legislation as successfully as possible. More engagement of all community members and providers, including all the partners at the one-stop CareerCenters, will be an important part of the effort to ensure that people with disabilities receive accurate, accessible and timely assistance with efforts to increase their workforce participation.<sup>9</sup>

### **Planning Grant Activities:**

The Maine Ability Partnership focused on assessing partnership collaboration and general employment services provided within the CareerCenter system statewide. Specific attention was paid to services provided through the Information Centers at each site. To determine the scope of programmatic and physical access currently available at Maine's 23 CareerCenter sites several activities were conducted, including:

- **Community Forums:** Five open Community Forums were held across Maine for the purpose of gathering information directly from people with disabilities, their family members, support providers, advocacy groups, and others. Participants were asked to comment on their experiences with the CareerCenters' current ability to serve individuals who have disabilities. Forum attendees were asked seven questions designed to elicit their reactions to and knowledge of current capacity as well as their ideas for increasing access to these programs and services. These forums were attended by a total of 42 people. (See attachment IV)
- **Community Outreach:** The MAP coordinator performed targeted outreach efforts to specific disability groups and organizations within Maine, reaching an additional 160 people from diverse backgrounds. The purpose of this outreach was similar to the Community Forums as the goal was to solicit information

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<sup>9</sup> Karen Fraser, the Ticket to Work program coordinator, supplied specific Ticket To Work program activity information.

about current capacity and ideas for increasing access from members of various disability groups within Maine. These groups included:

- Speaking Up For Us: a statewide self advocacy group whose members have moderate to severe disabilities, some of whom are at risk of institutionalization and/or are under guardianship;
  - The Deaf Rights Group: an advocacy group whose members are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and hearing professionals and community members;
  - The Statewide Independent Living Council;
  - The State Rehabilitation Council;
  - The Division of Deafness Advisory Council;
  - The Maine Blind\_Forum and the Iris Network's InfoChat: online forums whose members are blind, visually impaired, and sighted professionals and community members.
- **CareerCenter Site Visits:** The MAP coordinator performed targeted outreach within the CareerCenter system itself. Specially arranged staff meetings were held at twenty-one of the twenty-three CareerCenters. Staff from all twenty-three centers participated. The purpose of these meetings was to learn how the people currently providing employment services view the system's overall capacity to serve people with disabilities and to solicit their ideas for improvement. A general overview of the MAP activities for the year, some concepts regarding inclusive and diverse workforce culture, and some modeling of possible accommodations were included in presentations attended by 220 staff members representing each of the CareerCenter sites in Maine. Discussion followed each presentation and staff members were asked for feedback via anonymous questionnaire, garnering a 26.4 percent overall response rate. The staff questionnaire, developed by the MAP coordinator, asked seven specific questions and left space for additional comments. The questionnaire was designed to elicit responses showing awareness levels, skill sets, and attitudes. It was also designed to give staff members an opportunity to express their opinions about both the strengths and weaknesses of the system. An introductory

statement on the questionnaire emphasized that no judgment would be assigned to any response as data was being collected to get an accurate picture of where Maine's CareerCenter system currently stands with regard to equal provision of employment services. The questionnaire respondents were from a mixed group of CareerCenter staff representing all partner agencies (See attachments I, II, and III)

- **Maine Jobs Council:** An informational presentation was provided to the full Maine Jobs Council in September of 2003, which was attended by 73 people, and approximately one third of the members represent Maine's employer network. The goal of this presentation was to provide an overview of the Maine Ability Partnership activities to those in the workforce and economic development communities to facilitate further discussion.
- **Physical Evaluation:** Previously conducted physical site evaluations were reviewed by the MAP coordinator and further physical site evaluations are being conducted by The State Accessibility Coordinator. The State Accessibility Coordinator and the Maine Department of Labor Equal Opportunity Coordinator are currently working with some CareerCenters to ensure that all CareerCenter buildings become physically accessible. Some action has been taken to improve physical access during this planning year, including one CareerCenter that moved to a newly renovated space. Additionally, The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has stopped providing services at one site until it is moved to an accessible site and plans are being made toward that end.
- **Employer Outreach:** The MAP coordinator had several discussions with the Executive Director of the Maine Jobs Council, the Chair of the Commission on Disability and Employment, and others, regarding the current level of awareness within the employer community. Further discussion and outreach efforts to be conducted by Local Workforce Investment Boards regarding the general accessibility and awareness level of Maine's employer base in the first year of

implementation will round out and provide a complete picture of Maine's One-Stop Employment Delivery system.

During the next phase of the Maine Ability Partnership, it will be extremely important to continue these types of outreach and data collection activities to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken. Continued data collection is critical to the success of the plan, but is especially important as related to attitude and behavior changes on the part of both staff and the community at large as perception has a direct effect upon overall capacity.

### **Findings:**

Staff members who attended site visit presentations were eager for information and gave thoughtful feedback about how they feel the system can better serve people with disabilities in the future. During this year of looking at the Maine CareerCenter System, a strength that has shone through time and again is a sincere dedication to the community in which a particular CareerCenter and its staff reside. On the whole, the people who staff the centers are interested and committed members of their communities and they exemplify this in their daily interactions with customers. Several staff members asked disability specific questions during site visits and some asked for websites where they could look up additional information. A written list of useful websites was provided to participants.

Some staff members gave extraordinary effort to participate in Maine Ability Partnership (MAP) activities. It was pointed out at one CareerCenter that a specific resource guide was missing and a new copy of the guide was delivered to the center. Shortly thereafter, the MAP coordinator received an email stating that the resource guide was incomplete with regard to employment services. This demonstrated that the staff member not only put some thought into the current situation, but effort into reading the resource as well. Staff members indicated that they want to assist their customers. However, many staff members who participated in discussions identified areas in which they do not feel adequately equipped to do so. This is not to say that staff members are not eager for information. In fact, one staff member made special arrangements to take time away from the Information Center and traveled a significant distance to attend a

Community Forum to learn more about the access issues people with disabilities are facing.

There are staff members at all CareerCenters who expressed feeling unprepared to meet the needs of certain potential customer groups. Some staff members made assumptions that self-directed information center services are too difficult for the majority of people with disabilities. One staff questionnaire respondent, assuming that a person with a disability would already have a Vocational Rehabilitation counselor assigned before attempting to enter the Information Center answered the question, "Do you feel comfortable serving someone who might have a disability?" by stating:

"...if the counselor explains what they want from the Information Center, and what they expect the client to accomplish. Often in the past, customers have been dropped at the door with no direction and no understanding of what tests or analysis the [Vocational Rehabilitation] counselors wanted. If I know what they want and what their limitations may be in accomplishing that, I usually can serve them just fine"

While it may be true that self-directed information center services are currently difficult for some people with disabilities, there are a variety of barriers that explain this, ranging from a lack of individualized support to access technology issues. Some people who have memory loss and other disabilities stated that it was difficult for them to access job search information without some level of assistance. This appears to be true for people who do not have disabilities as well. Information Center staff and managers within the CareerCenter system suggested that there is a high volume of demand for personal assistance with "self-directed" activities regardless of disability status.

Issues found through the activities of the Maine Ability Partnership (MAP) can be categorized into three key themes: Capacity, Communication, and Access.

1. **Capacity:** including issues such as policy development, collaboration and partnership development, professional development, on-going and rotating skill set development / training, and continuous evaluation
2. **Communication:** including interagency / interdepartmental communication as well as with all customers. Additionally, communication includes equal on-demand access to communication supports and technologies, information

materials access, outreach, marketing, and interactive communication between various stakeholders.

3. Access: including electronic information access through the Internet as well as computer software access and other technologies that will provide greater access to information and services. Access also includes ability to gain access to building sites and participation in workshops and special events. This also refers to increased physical accessibility within a specific CareerCenter building, some examples might include:

- Notification provided to customers of a new Maine Department of Labor chemical and fragrance policy. This will increase access to the center by people who may have multiple chemical sensitivity.
- A reminder to push in chairs along aisles. This will better allow a person who may use a wheelchair to pass.
- Improve orientation tools at CareerCenter sites where it may be difficult for a person who is blind or who has limited vision to navigate due to curving hallways or large open spaces.

## Capacity:

Both general and disability specific CareerCenter staff were asked, “Do you feel comfortable serving someone who might have a disability?” The compelling response, statewide, is that 37% of respondents feel comfortable, while 55% of staff currently feel uncomfortable serving someone who might have a disability; 8% did not respond to the question. Some staff members stated that they are comfortable and then listed the types of disability with which they are uncomfortable, which was encouraged as a way of gaining an accurate reading of those areas in which there is the most need for staff development. Among staff questionnaire respondents, 68 percent requested general disability awareness and etiquette information. Staff identified their most significant areas of discomfort in working with people who have sensory, intellectual, memory related, and psychiatric disabilities. Staff also identified concerns about meeting the needs of a person who has an “invisible” disability. A clear need for additional disability

and diversity awareness information and cross training among partner agencies was noted. Some examples include:

- A majority of staff requested additional trainings and awareness building events;
- One staff member stated during a forum that three years had passed since being hired without having received any training with regard to access/diversity issues.
- One staff member identified a current lack of collaboration by stating, "When we first got co-located we formed teams to address how [Vocational Rehabilitation] and the [CareerCenter] would work together. It hasn't happened! Occasionally we share clients and some [Vocational Rehabilitation] clients use the information center, but I feel totally clueless about what happens "on the other side of the building." I don't even know how to refer to the non-Vocational Rehabilitation employees! In theory we are all "The CareerCenter" but there seems to be a division." The same respondent further stated, "I seldom hear of any of my consumers actually getting to talk to a [CareerCenter] employee about interviewing, the job market, etc. ...It seems to me that if we all truly worked together our clients would get better service for less money."

Several staff questionnaires were answered in a way that showed a lack of current disability information and lingering negative stereotypes and attitudes regarding people who have various types of disability, including:

- In response to the request for additional comments at the end of the questionnaire one staff member said, "I remember my first few weeks here. I had never worked in a social service function and was verbally attacked by two different clients. It was something I had never been exposed to and I took it personally. It would have been nice to have been trained in dealing with irrational, confrontational people before I was put before the public. [The] same holds true for dealing with any other disability. I would like the training before the occurrence so I am better prepared to serve the customer."



- In response to the question, “Do you know whether people with disabilities have been successful in accessing employment services at the CareerCenter where you work? If not, what are the barriers that you are aware of?” one staff member stated “We have had deaf people come in that are very frustrated because they are job searching and no one in the Information Center can communicate with them. I have had a hard of hearing client that claims this [unavailability of effective communication] is a barrier to her job searching, yet I do not have a full grasp of why it is a barrier?” In reply to the same question, another staff member stated “The Vocational Rehabilitation [counselors] help people in finding jobs” One staff member responded with “there is too long a waiting list for people [who qualify for Vocational Rehabilitation.]”

As noted above, some staff members appeared to believe that all people with disabilities need Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services and that VR service could, or should, have the capacity to serve all people with disabilities. Capacity within all partnership programs, including those within the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, appear to have room for improvement in service delivery. Some disability specific counselors indicated that they need further training to better serve clients within specific disability population groups, including people with brain injury, psychiatric, or multiple disabilities.

There seems to be a perception among various populations that the only important issue is job placement. This perception exists both within and without the system. Managerial staff did not express confidence in the ability of the system to serve a greater number of people who have ever more diverse individual needs with less funding and expressed deep concerns about funding issues throughout the process. Limited financial resources were seen as a key factor in discussions with all staff members. A small number of staff expressed concern that additional demands upon their time would negatively impact their placement ratings.

Five community forums and several meetings with community groups whose participants were people with disabilities, family members, support providers, advocates, self-advocates, and others suggested that the current system has significant room for growth. One forum attendant stated that the “CareerCenter, I think would be the last

place a person with disabilities would look for assistance.” Another person stated, “I know the Career Centers are there to assist us but I am not comfortable asking for that assistance and taking the staff away from other duties.” Several people expressed a generalized belief that the CareerCenters are inaccessible to them. Some participants stated that they did not receive enough assistance in the Information Centers, while others said that they received too much assistance or were pushed toward a job they did not want by both general and disability specific employment counselors, such as cleaning or fast food.<sup>10</sup> Some staff members suggested that there is a greater emphasis now on “getting a job” and not enough on building a “career.”

## **Communication:**

### **Inter-agency:**

Since the initial design of the system, inter-agency discussion regarding access issues have not continued resulting in system-wide compartmentalization and a lack of interagency and interdepartmental communication regarding accessibility. Throughout the information gathering process it was noted that the CareerCenter partners, with a few exceptions, do not communicate effectively with each other and collaboration is lacking when working with people with disabilities. Statewide CareerCenter Management meetings are held on a monthly basis but do not include managers from all of the partnership agencies. Shared management meetings do not occur at all CareerCenter sites.

A parent attending one of the forums stated that there is a lack of appropriate collaboration between service providers and cited a need for inclusive planning when students are transitioning from high school to work or post secondary education. The parent further suggested that there is a system-wide lack of information regarding transition issues, assistive technologies, and multiple intelligences. This perception that the system is disconnected to some degree from the people it serves was echoed by several participants, both within and without the CareerCenter system. One forum participant who works within the system pointed out that there was a low turn out at the forum among staff members by stating,

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<sup>10</sup> Speaking Up For Us-Statewide Meeting February 18,2004

“...not only do we need the training but we need to get everybody that works here on board because there are a hundred people that work here and how many have come to say what’s on our mind? [15] If we could get people interested in this sort of thing, maybe we would make some changes.”

The 220 staff members who attended presentations does not represent the full measure of co-located CareerCenter staff system-wide, so building bridges within the system itself and with community based organizations and service providers will be instrumental in meeting the ongoing challenge of service provision for all in a system that is supposed to have “no wrong door.” Increasing the CareerCenters’ ability to work together as a system will reduce redundancies and boost staff morale at the same time because they will be more able to share the burden of work.

#### **Between Staff and Customers:**

Effective communication with customers is of paramount importance. Many people with disabilities stated that they were unaware of the services available in CareerCenters before attending a forum, or were aware but have not attempted to use them. Marketing of CareerCenters as the employment resource of choice for people with and without disabilities does not appear to have reached some disability populations.

Several issues surfaced regarding communication between staff and customers, including:

- One participant who is Deaf stated that his first thought about CareerCenter services is that they are wholly inaccessible. “...very often in the back of my mind I think that [the] CareerCenter has nothing to offer, certainly, for us. I know that.” Another person who is Deaf noted that communication needs, such as ASL interpretation, are not available at drop-in events such as job fairs hosted by local CareerCenters.
- Several people who have developmental disabilities expressed feeling that both general and disability specific CareerCenter staff made assumptions about what they were capable of doing and “didn’t communicate well.”
- One participant who is blind stated, “ I went to the opening of [a] new CareerCenter [name removed] a few years ago and, the moment I arrived, the

person at the door said, quite [nervously], ‘oh, I’ll get someone to help you.’”

“Even though I said I was there just to attend the ceremony, she couldn’t hear me and went to get someone who happened to be one of my staff members.”

The participant suggested that the person was unable to hear, due to fear, that there was no need to get a staff person who works specifically with people who are blind. Another participant said, “I know very little about the Career Centers except that when I have used them, the staff has not known what to do with someone with a vision impairment.”

- With regard to persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, many issues surfaced. A participant who is Deaf stated in a Division of Deafness Advisory Council meeting that CareerCenter customers need to have choice regarding the communication access that is best for them and gave examples such as ASL interpreters, CART, C-print, oral interpreters, assistive listening devices, etc. There was a clear preference among people who are culturally Deaf that CareerCenter services be provided by people who are culturally Deaf because of the language barrier, as one participant stated “you have an expectation [when] you go in, that there is somebody there that can sign to you in your language, say hello, my name, and be able to just help you. [We should] be able to just be who we are; not have to meet that barrier.”

## **Access:**

### **Technology:**

The technology currently available in most CareerCenter Information Centers was installed when the center was initially designed. Much of the technology is out of date, broken, or stored out of reach due to lack of use. Some people with disabilities who would benefit from access technologies stated that they were unaware of the services available in CareerCenters and have not attempted to use them. Technology that is available but unused for a length of time has caused many staff to lose the ability to assist someone with a particular piece of equipment. Examples of issues related to access technology include:

- A forum attendant who is blind stated that accessibility has been “on the back burner, especially for people with low vision or [who are] totally blind. Because instead of asking us for what would work, what software works for us, a system was installed that is totally inaccessible for us...”
- Several participants in an online forum regarding Access Technology and the CareerCenters stated that CareerCenters are inaccessible to people who are blind or have visual disabilities. One person stated, “I am totally blind and travel with a guide dog. I have not used them [CareerCenters] personally but accompanied one of my clients who is visually impaired. She needed to use the large print screen but not one of the staff knew what to do to get it to work. Another thing that I found disturbing was the lighting where the large print computer was located and how the staff reacted to my client's inability to see the screen because of glare caused by the window. My client found it humiliating for the staff to have to stand by her with a piece of cardboard over the window.”
- One respondent stated that the touch screen technology in the CareerCenter information center was useful. However, a majority of people who have commented on the touch screen system, state that the software program is not very user friendly and can be confusing.
- People who are Hard of Hearing expressed frustration at being unable to fully participate in workshops because there are no assistive listening devices available at any of the CareerCenter sites.
- One staff member noted that there are no split keyboards or trackballs in the Information Centers, making it difficult for a person with limited dexterity or mobility to access computers.
- There is some technology in certain centers. One staff member in Portland stated, “I have a classroom designed for easy use [in] a Deaf environment. I have a variety of keyboards and pointer devices (mouse alternatives) to accommodate such needs. JAWS (a voice output screen reading program) and Zoom Text (a text magnification program) are installed on two computers. A mouseless windows class is available. Dragon speak (a voice input program)

is available on two computers.” Unfortunately, this equipment is available in a separate computer lab maintained by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) partner rather than in the Information Center.

- A member of the Deaf community stated that the TTY (text telephone) machines in the CareerCenters are not answered and that a Deaf caller will “never get a live person.” This participant went on to say that this lack of interaction makes Deaf people “...feel [like] second-class citizens here; we don’t feel we get a direct response.” A survey conducted by the Division of Deafness found that TTY machines in some CareerCenters are not answered consistently.
- A staff member who serves veterans stated that certain software programs, such as the OSOS (One Stop Operating System) job listing system, are not capable of being accessed by a screen reader.

#### **Physical:**

Many new CareerCenters are in, or are coming into, compliance with standards set for physical access. There are some notable exceptions and a review of physical access issues is ongoing. Some issues that were discussed include:

- Several people who have mobility disabilities discussed being unable to physically access some building locations, particularly during the winter months, and one staff member stated that inadequate snow removal was a barrier for many clients at one center.
- A physical barrier for people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing is line of sight in some CareerCenters. One forum participant referred to his worst experience with access at a CareerCenter when he wrote “A second floor conference room with a set-up designation suited for hearing people, not for deaf people. It is not culturally friendly and created obstacles to viewing signing persons or interpreters or the chair of the meeting.”
- One Deaf teacher who provided computer classes for Deaf students after hours was unable to both attend to the classroom and sit by the front door to let students in because the door was locked after hours and there was no way

for the teacher to know when students arrived. This is an access issue for anyone attending workshops or classes at the center after hours.

- An assessment of the lighting in one CareerCenter was completed in 1999 and contained recommendations to ameliorate safety concerns related to use by people who have low vision. However, according to a manager from the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, lighting and glare issues continue to pose significant access and safety challenges.

Comments and recommendations made at a meeting of a statewide self-advocacy group, at each of the five forums, and at all other targeted meetings involving people with disabilities suggest that the current system has significant room for growth.

### **The Plan:**

The coordinator of The Maine Ability Partnership, (MAP) with the oversight of a 6 member Steering Committee, conducted all activities in this planning year. The second phase of the MAP should include more work in conjunction with The State Accessibility Coordinator and the Department of Labor Equal Opportunity Coordinator. A MAP team that works in close collaboration with all the partnerships within the CareerCenter system will most effectively meet Maine's access implementation needs.

The Maine Department of Labor has participated from the beginning as a member of Maine's Olmstead Work Group, now entitled Maine's Work Group for Community Based Living. This group met over a period of several years to discuss issues most specifically related to people at risk of institutionalization and published its **Roadmap for Change: Maine's Response to the Olmstead Decision** in October 2003. This important work summed up the myriad statistics related to disability thus:

“Our ability to estimate how many people have a disability or how many people have a particular type of disability is limited. And perhaps that is a good thing, because numbers can prevent us from intimately knowing the uniqueness of each and every person with a disability: each person's needs, hopes, dreams and expectations that are as profoundly worthy as



our own, but so much more difficult to hold because of a disability. From the point of view of the individual, disability rights improve lives one person at a time. The most important number, in a sea of numbers is one.”<sup>11</sup>

The significance of that “most important number in a sea of numbers” can so easily be lost when one is looking at program outcomes and analyzing data. In the creation of a statewide system that is designed for universal access, so much effort is necessarily spent finding the numerical justification for adding this feature or that equipment that it can become difficult to stop and remember that the many thousands of people with disabilities in the state are each “one.”

Whether disability is a factor in their lives or not, many CareerCenter customers come into the center already frustrated and afraid because they have just lost or are in the process of losing a job, and with it any semblance of security. Universal Design is often discussed as an unattainable principle requiring that a place or a system must be all things to all people when, in actuality the concept is itself predicated on the concept of “one.” The quotation below was presented throughout the outreach process and was used as a premise when evaluating current capacity to provide accessible programs and services at each of the 23 CareerCenter sites throughout Maine.

“Access is increased when service providers begin to understand that disability is an environmental phenomenon. In other words the “problem” lies not with the individual who happens to have a disability but rather with the environmental barriers (physical and attitudinal) that exist within our homes, workplaces, and communities.”<sup>12</sup>

It is important to increase understanding among all partnership staff that it is the “environmental” barriers that cause a “handicap” for a person with a disability and not the disability itself. Another phrase, “don’t ‘dis’ my ability,” used during staff discussions about issues that face people with disabilities with regard to employment came from a shirt worn by a person who got tired of having assumptions made about her abilities based upon her status as a person with a disability. Understanding the barriers

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<sup>11</sup> Maine’s Work Group for Community-Based Living Roadmap for Change October 2003 pg. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Deon Locklin, Director, Program for Rehabilitation Leadership, The Workforce Boards in Action Newsletter, Vol. 3, No. 4 published in June 2003



people with disabilities face within CareerCenters will lead to a better understanding of barriers faced by all job seekers. Excellent communication and customer service will then enable an individual to move effectively and meaningfully through the system to reach an individually driven goal. Applied to all customers, regardless of disability status, the most important number is one.

The Maine Ability Partnership's five year plan aims to achieve a 100% user friendly, universally accessible, One-Stop Employment Service Delivery System enabling Maine's approximately 224,400 people with disabilities to obtain employment related services in a welcoming and barrier-free environment. This, "Map to a Culture of Inclusion in Maine's One-Stop Employment Service Delivery System," will evolve over time with repeated and targeted awareness building events combined with extensive outreach. Changing "culture" (defined as attitudes and behaviors) to create an "inclusive" (barrier-free) system will not occur overnight, or in a vacuum. Improvement must begin with a personal approach to collaboration and rapport building within the system and then extend to the community.

## **Capacity:**

The first challenge of capacity building will be to create a standard for all centers with regard to accessibility. One of the first questions in any decision making process MUST be: **How does \_\_\_ affect access?** For example, every CareerCenter keeps a calendar of events and offers space to employers who host job fairs. These job fairs are listed on the CareerCenter website and are advertised locally. If access is not among the first issues addressed, the CareerCenter sets itself up for failure. Some of these questions might include:

- How does a job fair affect access?
- Is there adequate space and sight lines?
- Can communication access be provided?
- Can alternate formats of various types be made readily available?
- Are job fair hosts aware of access issues?

- Are there potential issues related to safety?
- Is the site physically accessible?

The above list is not exhaustive regarding issues that should be considered when planning for programmatic accessibility. Additional collaboration with existing access professionals and all partnership decision makers will help to keep access questions in the forefront.

### **Task Force:**

Bringing together the collective skills and energies of CareerCenter managers, Workforce and Economic Development professionals, Vocational Rehabilitation, Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Division of Deafness, and CareerCenter staff members representing all programs to form a task force will enable us to work collaboratively on barrier reduction throughout the implementation process. This task force design is closely modeled after the original group of 40 stakeholders who worked together in the initial stages of co-location.<sup>13</sup>

However, the MAP task force need not be limited to 40 members, in fact it should include as many “front-line” or direct service staff members as possible from each of the CareerCenter sites in Maine. The membership and formation of this group must be established within the first quarter of year one and will lead into a two-day statewide event in the second quarter of year one. The first day of this event will include an opportunity for the development of teams and for these teams to become fully aware of the issues identified during this planning year, disability specific information and general information relevant to creating a “culture of inclusion” within the CareerCenter system. The second day of this event will allow participants to become intimately involved in the implementation process and to bring to bear their extensive experience and many skills as they create area specific action plans for their respective centers. Indeed, the process of implementing a culture of inclusion within the CareerCenter system requires buy-in from

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<sup>13</sup> “Case Studies on the Implementation of the Workforce Investment Act” by Jaimie Ciulla Timmons, Sheila Fesko, and Allison Cohen. Spotlight on Maine: Issue 3, Fall 2002. Pg. 8.

all parts of the system. Disability as an “environmental phenomenon” and inclusion as “barrier free access,” must become top priorities in each area.

#### **Advisory Council:**

After the initial conference, the task force make up will be altered slightly as the number of members is reduced and members from outside the system, such as individual customers, employers, and members of community-based organizations are included. This group then becomes the CareerCenter Access Advisory Council. The CareerCenter Access Advisory Council will be most effective if its membership is limited to the smallest number possible to achieve the widest possible affect. The initial task force can decide the final make-up of the advisory council. The transition from an in house task force to a fully integrated advisory council is needed to first strengthen the functionality and lines of communication from within the system so that bridge building with other agencies and organizations becomes possible. In this way, collaboration and rapport building are addressed as the first and most important issues facing the system. No improvement can occur in a system that is structurally divisive.

#### **Staffing:**

Positions within the CareerCenter system need to be considered carefully with regard to the creation of a Culture of Inclusion. Information Center positions should be re-evaluated to reflect the diversity of skill required for the position. The skill sets required to appropriately provide both the individuality and broad range of services needed within the Information Center necessitate a more professional job description. Access and diversity training for all One-Stop staff members must occur on a routine and rotating basis to account for turnover and updating of knowledge.

With regard to staff, many managers suggested that staffing issues, specifically a lack of staff, are directly related to a lack of funds. One partner agency director stated that this funding situation is compounded by the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services' inability to contribute staff or resources to the Information Center. People from various disability

groups requested peer supports and staff members in the Information Center who have significant knowledge about disability. One option along this line might be to make use of volunteers for some additional staffing needs. The positives on both sides are clear. The volunteers gain substantial work experience and marketable skill sets while providing the Information Centers with the additional levels of staffing needed to provide customers - both potential employer and potential employee - with the most comprehensive and professional services possible. The only way in which this recommendation will work is if the same level of access/diversity training is provided to all staff, including volunteers, before beginning any CareerCenter based work involving direct customer service. In each year of implementation, staff questionnaires similar to those distributed during the planning year should be completed to gauge attitude/behavior change.

#### **Training/ Professional Development:**

It is extremely important that all areas of disability be addressed in awareness training that will occur throughout the implementation period and that this professional development continue on beyond the five year period of this plan. People with the disability being discussed in a particular training should present information about disability specific issues in concert with other trainers so that a full range of information is provided. During the first year of phase two, policy development and curriculum development will be key areas of focus. Some in-service training can begin in the form of awareness building mini-conferences. Once a full curriculum is complete ongoing trainings will begin. One staff questionnaire respondent discussed the most significant training needs thus,

“Keeping informed and updated about new technologies, [laws] pertaining to ADA, mental health issues, motivational strategies for adult learners. Getting in-services from the other departments that way you know who those people are and who you can call on. We used to have state conferences but not any more. At [CareerCenter site name removed] we had [The Director of the Division of Deafness- name removed] talk to us

about hard of hearing and that was very good. We had some folks come and present about drug abuse/addiction. That was interesting but having local folks would have been better because they will be our immediate resource. If you plan to change the culture and take the 'dis' out of ability then in-services relating to culture is a must."

These "in-service" trainings should be rotating on a quarterly basis and no staff member should go more than 6 months without attending at least one day of In-Service. Once these trainings have completed a two-year cycle, meaning every staff member has attended 4 training days, ongoing "brown-bag lunch" update discussions at CareerCenter sites can focus on a topic a month. Maine's CareerCenters must continue to build and increase community partnerships while emphasizing effective and meaningful communication across discipline. Cross training will be built into regular training schedules and joint staff meetings in each co-located center so that a set period of access discussion can occur routinely. By the third year of implementation, it is expected that co-located centers will be organically cross training themselves, in part, through these ongoing discussions. In each year of implementation, a measurement of how inter-agency and interdepartmental collaboration serves people with disabilities will be assessed to ensure that progress continues in this area.

#### **Capacity to Serve Youth in Transition:**

The CareerCenters are one point of entry into transition services and can be a powerful mechanism for the transitioning youth. Outreach efforts to increase this capacity could include "field trips" to local CareerCenters by students from both college preparatory and vocational school programs. CareerCenter staff can be instrumental in exposing students to programs and services available in their communities. It will be important to work in collaboration with the Maine Jobs Council: School to Work Subcommittee and other already occurring efforts along this line to increase participation by both students with and without disabilities. The CareerCenters have the potential to provide transitioning youth with opportunities to gain valuable information about

available services including assessments, career exploration, labor market information, and can, ultimately, be a powerful force in reducing the out-migration of Maine's youth.

## **Communication:**

### **Inter-agency:**

Focusing attention on streamlining and opening the lines of communication within the system is extremely important. Interdepartmental and interagency communication must be open and run smoothly for any improvements in the system to last. It is recommended that the partnerships come together in a more collaborative effort to improve access by including managerial staff from all the partner agencies at statewide monthly CareerCenter Management meetings. Policy development and discussion regarding seamless inter-agency communication should be completed within the original Task Force and Advisory Council, mentioned under Capacity, and continue through these monthly meetings, so that any developing access issues can be addressed quickly. Shared management meetings must again become a priority at all individual CareerCenter sites. Additionally, staff members representing all the partner agencies should come together on a regular basis to discuss communication issues within the system that relate to effective service delivery. Whenever possible, issues and ideas for improvement brought up during these meetings should be acted upon quickly. Additionally, ideas brought up in this manner can be instituted on a trial basis and adopted as policy if proven effective at streamlining inter-agency communication.

### **Outreach:**

Outreach efforts to various groups, including people with disabilities, employers, providers, and others must continue on a regular basis throughout each implementation year. One priority for outreach efforts during the first two years of plan implementation

must be conducted with regard to people with disabilities from underserved populations, specifically minority and immigrant populations within Maine. A large number of people suggested that they had little to no knowledge of the CareerCenter before the MAP outreach session conducted as a part of this planning year and it is suspected that this is especially true among those who have been traditionally underserved. One forum attendant suggested having a "CareerCenter show" showcasing "Thursday's job" on television as one method of reaching people. Another forum attendant stated that it is difficult to know what is going on at some of the Centers at any given time and that alternate methods of advertising events need to be considered along with accommodations provided for events on a more readily achievable basis. The "CareerCenter Show" concept could evolve into a national model in which access issues are incorporated seamlessly into an informational economic development initiative. The show would be signed, captioned, audio described, and translated into other languages to reach populations who have limited English proficiency.

#### **Between Staff and Customers:**

In-Service training regarding communication related disabilities and the variety of effective communication strategies available must be instituted system-wide within the first year of implementation. Although, the majority of staff suggested that their most significant area of need is communication, specifically with non-English speaking and ASL (American Sign Language) users, other issues related to communication exist. People who have brain-injury, psychiatric disability, cognitive disability, and others may have difficulty communicating effectively with CareerCenter staff. Awareness of a variety of communication issues and strategies are vital for staff members who deal directly with the general public. Alternate formats of Information Center materials must be made available as quickly as possible. A minimum of one newly updated Braille copy, one voice, and one diskette copy of CareerCenter brochures will be available at each site by the end of the first year.

Within the community of American Sign Language (ASL) users the CareerCenter is viewed as totally inaccessible with regard to communication. ASL is a very clear need



area within certain centers, especially in higher population centers like Portland, Lewiston, Augusta, Bangor, and Presque Isle. A fund for interpreting must be set up immediately and arrangements made to advertise its existence within the community of people who use ASL (American Sign Language) to increase awareness.

Staff members who wish to add ASL to their language skills should be encouraged and rewarded for doing so. Staff members who begin learning American Sign Language could meet for a “silent” lunch once a month to practice. Some staff members went so far as to request that an ASL teacher come to the CareerCenter to teach a continuing education class for CareerCenter employees. Of course, it must be understood by staff who choose to begin learning ASL that Maine law prohibits anyone who is not licensed as an American Sign Language / Transliteration Interpreter from being paid to perform the functions of an interpreter. ASL learned by staff members can only be for the purpose of increasing their ability to have meaningful and effective direct person-to-person communications with customers.

Currently within the CareerCenter system there is in place a “language line” interpreting system for speakers of other auditory languages. It does not take the place of an appropriately trained person who speaks a customer’s particular language, but does offer on-demand communication access in the short term. For example: If a person enters the Center and is a native speaker of Italian, the person can either point to their language on a board listing languages or otherwise identify their language to the person at the reception desk who will dial a phone number and request, for a per minute fee, an interpreter of that language. The customer can then have a meaningful conversation with the staff member using this telephone-based interpreter. In the first year of implementation, a system will be devised through which an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter can be dialed and connected to through video from any of the CareerCenter sites. This system will be housed within the Department of Labor and will require a minimum of two full-time interpreters. The system can be started on a pilot basis, adding additional staff as needed to meet specific communication needs. Outreach will occur at the same time so that members of the community who might use the service are aware of its existence. This system will be up and running in at least five pilot sites by the fourth quarter of the first year of implementation.”



## Access:

### Technology:

It is recommended that access technology experts complete a full technology evaluation in the first half of the first year to better assess the specific needs of CareerCenters. Once technology is updated, by the end of the first year, within the CareerCenter system so that it is accessible, there must again be targeted training and outreach. One of the recommendations from a forum participant included a “how-to” guide in various formats that will instruct a person in the use of each type of equipment used in the center.

One forum attendant suggested using computer aided picture making software, such as Boardmaker<sup>™</sup> (a software program for creating pictorial information) to make “how to” books, with captioning, for people who have never used a computer before or for those who need step-by-step instructions on a repetitive basis, such as for someone who might have a memory related disability. Voice tours of the Information Center, similar to that of a museum tour, can be recorded for people who are blind or who have visual disabilities as well as for those who may have memory or learning disabilities.

All people who participated in forums who have low vision or who are blind stated that current technology within the CareerCenters are inaccessible to screen-reader technology. Staff in the Portland center stated that in order to utilize the JAWS (screen-reader) program, the Information Center computers must be re-booted live (off the Citrix system- a “thin-client” graphics based server system used by The State.) Some forum participants stated that they do not like being forced to ask for help when the service could be accessed independently. One staff member suggested printed text-to-synthesized voice output equipment such as “a Kurzweil reading program for persons with LDs [Learning Disabilities] so they could scan the pamphlets or other materials and have them read to them.”

All computer based software programs used for exploration and assessment must be made fully accessible as quickly as possible and preferably to coincide with the timelines for correction of computer related access technology issues. One tool that requires additional evaluation is the computer software product CHOICES®, which is used for career exploration. This particular product will need to be re-evaluated because conflicting reports were obtained from forum attendants and professionals with regard to the software program's compatibility with screen reader technology and the current network within the system. Many issues specific to assessments have been brought up and there is an Employer Testing Services Group currently meeting to address some of these concerns. Assessment tools also include career exploration and informational services. Consistency within the system with regard to assessments performed will be a necessary part any policy developed. An additional review of assessment and exploration tools used in CareerCenters is recommended with ongoing policy updates as needed.

Every CareerCenter should have a minimum of one assistive listening device and those centers in high population areas should have several for use in a workshop. Assistive listening devices are a relatively easy to learn technology. Because of the relative ease of their use, all CareerCenter staff could reasonably be expected to know how to use these devices within 3 months of purchase.

A TTY (teletypewriter) is no more difficult to use than a keyboard with the addition of a few simple abbreviations. Staff from the Division of Deafness (DOD) trained staff at each CareerCenter and followed the response rate of all offices with TTY machines, which has remained low. That these centers are still having such low rates of call response can be attributed in part to infrequent use and in part to fear. According to staff questionnaire responses, and discussion with staff during site visits, there is a high rate of fear regarding the TTY. Each Center that offers voice telephones for public use, must also offer a TTY for public use. Most of the centers visited had their TTY set up so that the one machine was used for both incoming and outgoing calls. Many of the centers had the TTY placed behind the reception desk so that a customer would not be aware that they could access the TTY. A policy that addresses TTY use and practice by staff should be in effect by the first quarter of the first year of implementation and CareerCenters who increase their answer rate on the TTY should be recognized. If successful outreach is to

be made to people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the currently dismal rate of response must be improved. People who feel like "second class citizens" generally do not avail themselves of the services that make them feel this way.

All Assistive Technology must be evaluated a minimum of twice each year during implementation and in collaboration with Access Technology experts to ensure that CareerCenters keep up with new and developing technology. Following each technology update, additional training is required to ensure that staff retains the ability to effectively use and assist others in the use of all available technology.

### **Physical:**

Although this is the area in which there is the most current access, several CareerCenters continue to have physical access issues. CareerCenter sites are undergoing additional physical access evaluations by The State Accessibility Coordinator and recommendations must be followed up on as quickly as possible. One report completed in 1999 specific to issues of concern with regard to lighting in one CareerCenter affecting people with limited vision contains recommendations that do not appear to have been completed to date. A new assessment is recommended for lighting and other issues related to use of the CareerCenter by people with low vision to be conducted specifically at the CareerCenters in Lewiston, Portland, Augusta, Houlton, and Presque Isle. Additional assessments of lighting issues can be added as needed. All recommended changes should be in affect before the end of the second year of the project. Issues that can be ameliorated more readily should be completed by the first quarter of the second year. Some CareerCenters are in need of relocation or refurbishment due to accessibility issues. These changes should take place as quickly as possible, but no later than the end of the fourth year of implementation. It is recommended that further assessment of physical assess features be made in concert with The State Accessibility Coordinator's reports.

With respect to people with limited vision or who are blind, transportation was brought up as a key issue that affects the physical accessibility of any given CareerCenter site. One area of possible further collaboration with other departments or agencies

includes transportation. There are plans to link CareerCenter computers with a public transportation program called GoMaine. Links with public transportation programs must include alternate methods of access for people with visual, auditory, mobility or other disabilities. One forum attendant stated that transportation is a major barrier to attending events at CareerCenters and suggested including additional public transportation initiatives as well as Internet based "E-center" assistance.

Physical access will also include awareness training for all CareerCenter staff with regard to service animals. One forum attendant stated that she had to stop CareerCenter staff from petting her service animal when entering the facility for the first time. Also under the theme of physical access are issues related to those persons who have Multiple Chemical Sensitivity. A policy has been developed and adopted by the Maine Department of Labor and this policy should be applied to all CareerCenter sites. Physical barrier reduction and removal is an ongoing issue that includes such a variety of issues from snow removal to paint colors and chemicals; these issues require continued evaluation and amelioration as they are identified in phase two years. Education and outreach will be targeted at employees, customers, and diverse communities in a coordinated and effective manner following the implementation of each new policy to encourage systemic behavior change.

## **Conclusion:**

The Maine Ability Partnership, planning phase, has assessed the CareerCenter system in Maine for its current ability to fully serve people with disabilities in such a way that is meaningful, effective, and equal to the services provided to all other customers. The strengths identified through this process include staff commitment to community, active local workforce investment boards and committed economic development professionals. Areas of significant concern surfaced with regard to inter-agency and partnership collaboration and confusing lines of communication, lingering disability stereotypes and lack of awareness of access issues, technological obsolescence, and infrequent and inconsistent training and professional development.

Throughout this report, in detailing some of the specifics required to increase the capacity of the system to its fullest potential for all, several people with disabilities are quoted and examples are cited. The quotations included in this report reflect only a small portion of the full measure of people whose opinions were obtained during this planning year and outreach was performed to people belonging to the full spectrum of disability population groups. Complete transcripts from each of the community forums, all returned questionnaire responses, other information gathered, and copies of all materials distributed are on file with the State Accessibility Coordinator. For many people with disabilities, the proposed overall changes in system-wide attitudes and behaviors, or culture, will go a long way toward extending the “welcome mat.” Staff members from all partnerships expressed a keen desire to learn more about access issues and will need to have an opportunity to discuss access issues on a regular and ongoing basis with each other and with management.

The Maine Ability Partnership (MAP) phase two must begin with policy development and the building up of existing partnerships so that the lines of communication within the system are clear and an emphasis on capacity building is established. Ongoing rotating professional development should continue on a regular and consistent basis throughout the system during each year of the implementation of the MAP and resource development efforts conducted to continue this beyond the initial implementation phase are critical to the plan’s overall success.

However, as stated by one forum participant, access comes down to one simple thing: “It’s always about the attitude.” As with any culture change, changing attitudes about disability will not be accomplished by a single event, initiative or policy. Creating a system in which the provision of equal access to employment services happens naturally and without barriers will require an ongoing, incremental wearing away of myth and stereotype while building up skill sets, supports, and tools that will eventually complete a fundamental change in the entire culture of the system. One forum participant suggested that a statement regarding the progress the CareerCenters are making toward access be made public:

“I must take exception to the statement on your web page that the CareerCenters are accessible to all job seekers. They just aren't. I realize

that you're working on it but it might be more honest to make a statement like, "Working towards accessibility for all."

Publicizing the CareerCenters' accomplishments toward accessibility while acknowledging and working to correct deficiencies will assist in gaining public support for CareerCenter programs.

Each person who enters a CareerCenter is an individual, with or without a disability, and each enters the Center on the basis of some life-changing event. The person has lost a job...or has just moved to the community...or has recently finished a training program...or wants to earn better wages to support a growing family...or begin career exploration in school... or any number of individual possibilities. Everyone who comes into the CareerCenter has a personal story. Disability is simply a factor added onto these life experiences. It is, however, a factor that can easily become a barrier to employment and, therefore, to the individual's overall quality of life. By increasing the access available at CareerCenters, the system will be better able to assist its customers in the breaking down of all employment barriers. Again, the most important number becomes one.



The Maine Ability Partnership

Attachment I:

Text of PowerPoint Presentation





Attachment I: Text of PowerPoint Presentation  
(Slide 1)

Maine Ability Partnership  
Drawing the M.A.P. To a Culture of Inclusion  
In One-stop Employment Services

Shell Moore,  
M.A.P. Coordinator

(This presentation contains some illustrations that cannot be captured by a screen reader, and you will find them described in your handouts. If there is anyone who would like me to describe the illustrations as I go through the presentation, please let me know.)

The background illustration behind each slide is that of a topographical map. This background was chosen to reinforce the fact that the end result of this year's planning grant activities will be a plan, or map, that will clearly list the need areas and changes required to achieve the project's mission.

(Slide 2)

The Maine Ability Partnership Is:

A one-year U.S. Department of Labor planning grant

Focused on Maine's 23 CareerCenter sites

Involves all Employment Service partners, including  
Private Non-Profit Partners:

Training Resource Center  
Coastal Economic Development  
Western Maine Community Action  
Training and Development Corporation  
Aroostook County Action Program

Bureau of Employment Services

Bureau of Rehabilitation Services:

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
Division of Deafness

## Attachment I: Text of PowerPoint Presentation

### (Slide 3)

#### What Is This Planning Grant Planning?

ACCESS  
ACCESS  
ACCESS  
ACCESS  
ACCESS  
ACCESS

Maine's CareerCenter system is not fully accessible to people with disabilities. Using the planning process as a tool the Maine Department of Labor will apply for implementation funding in order to achieve greater access to the services available at CareerCenters.

### (Slide 4)

#### Maine Is Already A Leader In Its Work Toward Inclusive One-stop Employment Service Delivery !!

Many states are struggling with the process of co-locating their service partners as required by the Workforce Investment Act and have as many, and in some cases more, barriers to accessible employment services than Maine. However, just because we are doing better than some does not mean that our services are accessible. Our most current data suggests that only 1,323 people with disabilities received employment services from their local CareerCenters last year, but more than 65,000 people with disabilities were unemployed during this time period. We do not have an accurate tracking mechanism in place at this time, but it is clear that there is a lot of work left to do to make the CareerCenter system the One Stop Employment Resource it is required to be.

The illustration is of two men on a ladder made of an arrow pointing up on a graph. The illustration is meant to reinforce the concept that Maine has already made great strides toward meeting the goals of the Workforce Investment Act and the ADA even though there is a lot of work left to do.

### (Slide 5)

#### There Is Still Work to Do And We Have Not Yet Reached Our Goal !

"Access is increased when service providers begin to understand that disability is an environmental phenomenon. In other words the "problem" lies not with the individual who happens to have a disability but rather with the environmental barriers (physical and attitudinal) that exist within our homes, workplaces, and communities."

Deon Locklin, Director, Program for Rehabilitation Leadership. Workforce Boards in Action Vol. 3, No. 4 (June 2003)

## Attachment I: Text of PowerPoint Presentation

I know a woman whose favorite T-Shirt has written on the back "Don't Dis My Ability!" This shirt, she told me, conveys the message that her disability is only a disability when someone else believes it to be. When employment services are provided with the focus on a person's abilities, everyone wins. This is the way that people who do not have disabilities seek employment. One does not, generally, apply for a job by listing their shortcomings. A person who is looking for work lists their skills and abilities and it is from this selective information that an employer must choose the most appropriate candidate.

The visual image on this slide is of three people standing on each other's shoulders and working together to reach the moon.

### (Slide 6)

#### All Means All

How can we address systemic barriers that may exist within CareerCenters in Maine? The longer answer is that we have to start getting even more creative than we have already been in the provision of employment services to our customers, especially those who have disabilities, because we are all engaged in the process of removing barriers TOGETHER. Simply, it means that "all" really does mean "ALL!"

I recently attended a conference where one of the speakers, Bobby Silverstein, the director of the Center for the Study and Advancement of Disability Policy, said that when we talk about providing services to customers we must remember, simply, "All means All!" This statement struck me because it very concretely addresses the heart of the issue. All people, with and without disabilities, deserve to be treated in the same welcoming and respectful manner.

The visual image in this slide is of a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic puzzle.

### (Slide 7)

Universal Access Does Not Have to Be a "Myth," but It Requires a "Culture of Inclusion" in Order to Succeed

Bridging definitions of "culture" (attitudes and behaviors) and "inclusion" (barrier-free access) within the CareerCenter system in a tangible and effective way is possible and can improve morale, productivity, and create a positive image for businesses, organizations, and the state of Maine itself.

### (Slide 8)

What Does a "Culture of Inclusion" Mean for Employment Service Providers?

Inclusion is a top priority and regularly discussed

Inclusion as a principle and disability as an "environmental phenomenon" are accepted by all members of the team, top to bottom and inside out

## Attachment I: Text of PowerPoint Presentation

Inclusion is anticipated and well supported

Inclusion is learned and taught whenever an opportunity presents itself

“Disability is an environmental phenomenon,” so when we look at creating a culture of inclusion in employment services, what we are talking about is creating an environment where a person’s abilities are more important than the things that they cannot do. A major league ball player may not be able to complete his taxes without the assistance of an accountant, while his accountant may not be able to hit a baseball at a speed of 95 miles per hour. Employed in the positions where each has the most skill and ability, neither is considered disabled, but put the ball player in the accountant’s chair or the accountant in the ballpark and they may have some serious problems. The same is true for people who have disabilities. A person who is blind is not going to be able to read flat, 10 point Times New Roman Text, but that does not mean that this person cannot read or cannot be very well employed. A person who is deaf is not going to be able to hear on the telephone, but this does not mean that the person cannot communicate or cannot be very well employed. People who have disabilities also have abilities, just like the ball player and the accountant. Changing the environment into one where abilities are recognized and supported is the first step toward a Culture of Inclusion.

(Slide 9)

So, How Do We Get There From Here??

Collect Information From:

CareerCenter co-located staff members

People with disabilities, their family members, support systems, self-advocacy groups, and others

Local Workforce Investment Boards and employers

Create an implementation plan based upon the collected information!

The illustration is of four people moving in four different directions and reinforces the question and that what we are trying to achieve, support, and reinforce is not achieved without careful thought and planning.

(Slide 10)

We Will Only Succeed If We Work TOGETHER

Work together to finalize a plan that builds on our current strengths to increase the ability of CareerCenters to serve the employment needs of all people and employers in Maine

Work together to reduce and remove barriers wherever they exist for Maine’s workers and employers

Work together to obtain implementation funding to put our plan into action

Attachment I: Text of PowerPoint Presentation

**(Slide 11)**

Maine's CareerCenters Are The Bridge Between Employers and Employees!

Accessible Services In CareerCenters Will Ensure A Richly Diverse Workforce

The illustration on this slide is of a bridge being built over a maze by two people working together from opposite directions to complete the bridge

**(Slide 12)**

What Is the Bottom Line?

People With Disabilities Make GREAT Employees And Companies Who Hire With Diversity In Mind Benefit In Many Ways

The images on this slide are of many different people who have different abilities presented in work related activities such as using a computer, reading, painting, or conversing with colleagues. The visual images are intended to be representative of the diversity within the larger community of people who have disabilities

**(Slide 13)**

Shell Moore  
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E-mail: [shell.moore@maine.gov](mailto:shell.moore@maine.gov)

Please contact me with your thoughts, concerns, ideas, and best practice information regarding CareerCenters



# The Maine Ability Partnership

## Attachment II:

### Staff Questionnaire





Maine Ability Partnership  
CareerCenter Staff Questionnaire

There is no judgment of you or your center attached to these questions- they are asked solely for the purpose of understanding current CareerCenter issues. If you wish to answer anonymously, you may print the questionnaire and send it to Shell Moore Maine Ability Partnership SHS 150 Augusta ME 04333-0150. Please answer as candidly as possible. Your answers will help to shape the plan for barrier free employment services and your role in its development is crucial to its success. Thank you for your input. (This questionnaire is available in alternate format upon request.)

- 1) Do you feel comfortable serving someone who might have a disability? If you do not feel comfortable, is there some training or something that would help you to serve someone who might have a disability?
- 2) What kinds of specialized equipment are available at the CareerCenter where you work for use by people who have disabilities? Can you assist someone else in using this equipment if you were asked?
- 3) How does your CareerCenter track the use of the center by people who have disabilities?
- 4) Specific to serving people who have disabilities, what do you believe your most significant training needs are?
- 5) Do you know whether people with disabilities have been successful in accessing employment services at the CareerCenter where you work? If not, what are the barriers that you are aware of?
- 6) Do people who have disabilities participate in employment groups, testing, career exploration, or training programs provided by the CareerCenter where you work? If not, why not? If so, have any issues regarding access to these services come to your attention?

Attachment II: Staff Questionnaire

- 7) If only one issue or problem about the current ability of CareerCenters to serve people with disabilities could be addressed, which would you choose and how would you address it?

**Additional Comments:** (use the back or additional sheets as necessary)

# **The Maine Ability Partnership**

## **Attachment III:**

### **Breakdown of Staff Questionnaire Responses by Question**



## Attachment III: Breakdown of Staff Questionnaire Responses by Question

### Staff Questionnaire Data Breakdown

#### Question # 1

**Do you feel comfortable serving someone who might have a disability? If you do not feel comfortable, is there some training or something that would help you to serve someone who might have a disability?**

- "I feel comfortable if the counselor explains what they want from the Information Center, and what they expect the client to accomplish. Often in the past, customers have been dropped at the door with no direction and no understanding of what tests or analysis the VR counselors wanted. If I know what they want and what their limitations may be in accomplishing that, I usually can serve them just fine."
- "Verbal Communication with someone that has English as a second language or is hard of hearing or deaf is awkward for me." "It would be nice to have a standard policy to use in these situations."
- "Yes. I often use the expertise of the VR counseling staff when I need support that I'm not sure about. We work very well together, I believe."
- "Mostly, except with deaf or visually impaired."
- "As a VR counselor, I am quite comfortable and have training regularly."
- "In general, I feel comfortable; when necessary I consult w/ fellow VRC s who have expertise in the area I need help"
- "Yes. However, further training is always helpful to aid understanding + levels of quality service."
- "Yes. I would feel at a lost (sic) trying to assist someone that is blind."
- "In general comfortable-yes – but as [name left out] said at the meeting, I could probably do a much better job w/ some training"
- "I feel comfortable serving a client with a disability."
- "I am uncomfortable providing services to people who suffer from mental illness or head injury. This is not in all cases, but in general, the barriers faced by people with these disabilities require a level of service that goes beyond what we can offer in the CareerCenter setting. I would appreciate training for staff so we understand the diagnosis better and would like to identify service strategies that we can offer along with appropriate referrals to partner agencies. We are more comfortable when we are prepared for a visit by a person with a disability, such as a referral from Rehab. Services counselors. Being ready for anyone who 'walks in the door' is more challenging. On-going education and training for all staff will help with that."
- "Yes, I feel comfortable helping disabled people in the CareerCenter."
- "Yes, somewhat, I feel comfortable in the areas that I have former training in such as visual impairments, hard of hearing/deafness, mental retardation or developmentally disabled, TBI, and those disabilities that my family members have." Re: training "Yes, with mental health issues (i.e. mental illness). I think it's important to be updated about any changes (i.e. vocabulary, terminology, current technology, or commonly used programs). For example, it's pretty bad when the folks in the special education office in (Augusta) think and admit out loud that they though O&M (orientation and mobility) meant *organizational management*."

### Attachment III: Breakdown of Staff Questionnaire Responses by Question

- "We serve a number of people with disabilities on an on-going basis. The type of disability can vary a great deal. If there is an area that we could probably use some help/training on it is working with people with both sight and hearing problems."
- "I generally feel comfortable- I often worry about offending them by 'over-helping'"
- "I would feel more comfortably (sic) if I know the nature of disability a little bit in advance, so I can adjust myself to it."
- "Most usually; Deafness poses a problem for me as 1) I don't sign myself 2) I don't have some readily available to sign."
- "I'm fine with it. But for my VR work I could use training in brain injuries, CP and MS."
- "Yes and No. I feel comfortable enough to attempt service, but not confident that I could provide adequate service to all disabilities. Recently we have had several instances of people with emotional/mental health issues needing assistance and I feel training in diffusing and calming a person would help."
- "Most- training to work w/people who think the don't have disability/disagree with documentation required for adequate voc rehab services"
- "I write from a VR program so am very comfortable"
- "I and most other Counselors are comfortable assisting individuals with disabilities."
- "I feel comfortable enough but it is more of frustration would be if I failed communicating with the customer. Don't know what training would help."
- "I have a fairly high comfort level with all people, disabled or not, especially if I can communicate in some fairly effective way-"
- "I certainly don't mind helping someone with a disability, although I probably am not well equipped enough to know what to do in every situation. For example, I don't know how to use the TTY phone."
- "Absolutely. We all should be trained so we are equally able to deal with PWD. This should not be delegated nor defaulted."
- "Yes, I feel very comfortable serving somebody who has a disability. They are just like the rest of us."
- "Yes, I do feel comfortable serving someone who 'might' have a disability. NOTE: I WORK IN THE CAREERCENTER AS A CAREERCENTER CONSULTANT. When meeting customers in the information Center, the majority of people who have disabilities do not want to let you know that the disability exists. The disability may not be 'noticeable.' I would need to have training or advice on how to properly 'serve' a client who has a physical or mental disability once it is recognized or declared. I would also need to learn what resources are available (other than Vocational Rehabilitation) that we can or should access to better service these clients in relation to the 'world of work.' Knowing that a person has a disability; how the limitation of this disability relate to the work environment; and having access to knowledge of available resources, may help staff to provide better service to the disabled client/customer."
- "Although I fell very comfortable serving someone who might have a disability, training in specialized equipment would be helpful."
- "Yes; however, people with wheelchairs are the most uncomfortable to serve."
- "I don't feel comfortable only because there are a lot of things I don't know about...one training that may be useful is to learn about different 'disabilities' and what there (sic) effect are on the individual. Also what limitations this disability might make...characteristics of a person possessing a certain disability...like if there was a handbook or something to refer to that has common characteristics of disabilities...I also



### Attachment III: Breakdown of Staff Questionnaire Responses by Question

know that there are programs out there (internet) to find out what jobs people with certain disabilities may be able to perform...but I don't know where to find it. A cross training from VR to other agencies would be useful. Oftentimes, clients are pushed off to VR (not necessarily by myself, but in general) and I feel like it is because of the staff's inability to help the individual. Being more prepared, may make this slowly stop..."

- "I feel comfortable. I have students who are either deaf, wheelchair bound or blind."
- "No problem here! That ole Rehab. degree/background comes in handy :)"
- "Yes, but we do not see many people with disabilities. We try to team cover + the best person available will take over."
- "Most of the time, but not for visually impaired. I can obtain an interpreter but I'm not sure how to help blindness."
- Yes, but I have limited knowledge about adaptations for nearly all disabilities."
- "I think that training would be helpful regardless of comfort level."
- "At times yes, other times no. The more knowledge or tools given the better."
- "Do feel comfortable. But more training + tools are needed –"
- "Yes, I feel comfortable with most customers. However, I have not served many with severe problems and would be less comfortable in that situation."
- "I have had limited contact w/ people w/ disabilities and therefore feel nervous when serving them. Awareness trng. Of the variety of disabilities would be helpful."
- "I am comfortable with this. If I wasn't due to lack of resources, I seek out other agencies to partner with."
- "In the 3+ yeas I have worked at the Center I have not experienced any situation I did not feel comfortable handling. I have had extensive experience working with people with disabilities and find very little difference in what they need. Like any individual the method of how they get it may, however, vary slightly."
- "Yes, I work with Veterans who have a number of disabilitys (sic)"
- "As a VR counselor, I generally feel pretty good about seeing anyone who does walk through the door. I do tend to be a bit less capable when the person does not understand me due to language barriers (including ASL)."
- "I have worked with disabled people at the career center for 21 years off & on and never had a problem."
- "Yes Training"



## Question # 2

**What kinds of specialized equipment are available at the CareerCenter where you work for use by people who have disabilities? Can you assist someone else in using this equipment if you were asked?**

- Response listed Optilec, TTY, TV/VCR with CC, lift at front of building, ramp at side of building, bathrooms, touch screen at lower level, large computer monitor, some Braille materials, and print magnifier. Person stated use of Optilec and lift, but discomfort using TTY.
- "I am unfamiliar with these and would not personally be able to help since I have not received any training."
- "Our Information Center has magnification software on one or two of the pc's. We have a CCTV for visually impaired folks and if we need assistance with a person who's hearing impaired, if we cannot communicate in the speaking or lip reading way, we either write messages back and forth and/or we recruit a VR person who can interpret for us. We also have TTD availability. Yes, I can [assist someone]"
- "TTY + several things in the Info. Center for visually impaired, etc." Response to question regarding ability to assist someone in using this equipment was simply, "no."
- "TTY, Zoom Text computers, Braille texts."
- "TTY- no idea how to operate it. Several devices for vision impaired- again no idea how to use it."
- "They could use at least one two-piece keyboard for computer." [assist someone]"Yes"
- "TTY-yes; H.C. access entry- no; large visual display, CCTV- so so"
- respondent primarily addressed section 8, but did not suggest a particular level of comfort with currently available equipment and, in fact, pointed out discomfort using equipment as a previous customer without much assistance from Information Center staff.
- "We have TTY, Zoom Text, and we are wheelchair accessible." [Assist someone- not answered]
- "None that I am aware of- I work at TDC"
- "I am not sure what type of equipment there is at the CareerCenter. No, I could not assist anyone."
- "TTY- yes I can help"
- "Unsure? Only thing that I can think of is the TTY machine"
- "I confess this is my weakness. TTY...I could get through. The screen that magnifies is currently out of order in Belfast Center."
- "We have the TTY Phone and I am comfortable answering that. At this time I don't think we have other (hard) tools. I do have the number to get an interpreter if a non-English speaking person comes in."
- "None that I am aware of"
- "A TTY and CCTVs, a copier to enlarge print for low vision folks. " RE: assist- "Yes"
- "We have a number of vocational rehabilitation people assigned to the career center who deal with people with disabilities on a daily basis and are experts in this arena."
- "We have TTY + large viewing screens. I can operate the TTY phone."
- "As I concern, (sic) we have TTY with one person who knows how to use it."
- None other than a magnifier for reading found in Iris office, co-located"

### Attachment III: Breakdown of Staff Questionnaire Responses by Question

- "The specialized equipment is limited to TTY, lowered desk for touch screens, and automatic door out front. We could use equipment for hearing impairments especially (FM receiver, loop, etc.) The rooms are also quite loud with the air circulation system and causes clients with hearing impariments (sic) difficulty. I need refresher on TTY."
- "TTY, enlarged print on computer." RE: assist- "Yes"
- "TTY, Zoomtext on pc in info. Center. I know how to use both devices and feel I could instruct depending on individuals level of aptitude."
- "TTY, computer touch screen-can't always see w/vision disability"
- ""There remains a great reluctance of many CareerCenter staff to adequately use a TTY."
- "TTY & large screen computer. All Counselors were previously trained on TTY but few have had occasion to use the TTY. Our Receptionists need TTY training. They are first contact for TTY."
- "TTY machine, the low vision-magnifying machine, and yes I could help with the low vision and limited help on the TTY."
- "TTY, Optelec (magnifying screen) Braille signs, Staff."
- "We have the TTY, on which I'm trained. We now have access to interpreters (again, thanks for the contact numbers) and distance technology, and I feel pretty comfortable using those technologies or asking for help."
- "We have a machine for people to read text who are visually impaired and we have the TTY phone. I am unfamiliar with both."
- "No equipment for people who have disabilities. We have multi media presentation of all basic information- print, audio, video, computer based."
- "TTY, Large Print, Auto Door Openers." (re: Assist) "Of course."
- "We have a TTY and I am one of the few people who are quite comfortable with it. Training on the TTY has been done but it is so seldom used that the training is forgotten but I am available to help anyone should they have a need. We also have a large print machine but I am very unfamiliar with it but I would try to assist somebody if necessary."
- "We have the 1.) TTY (teletypewriter), 2.) Optelec, 3.) Large screen computer monitor in the information center, 4.) Automatic 9touch-button) front door openers, 5.) Signage with braile, (sic) 6.) Door 'levers' instead of door knobs. I have had training in the use of the TTY, however, I dread the thought of having to answer this machine if I had to. Maybe some type of frequently used hands-on-training would be good. Becoming familiar and comfortable with the TTY requires a lot of practice in order for the user to become more familiar with it and comfortable with its use."
- "I know there is specialized equipment available but have not been trained. I have only been here a short time."
- "I would need a refresher in some of the software programs."
- "Because I primarily work with individuals one-on-one in my office, I am not fully aware of the specialized equipment. I know in the Information Center there is TTY and JAWS, and am able to use those, but not proficiently. I really don't know what else is available, but that may be from lack of exposure."
- "I have a classroom designed for easy use is a Deaf environment. I have tables that rise to accommodate wheelchair users. I have a variety of keyboards and pointer devices (mouse) to accommodate such needs. I sign (ASL). Jaws and Zoom Text are installed on two computers. A mouseless windows class is available. Dragon speak is available on two computers."
- "TTY, large screen computer for job searches. Yes. I can assist."

### Attachment III: Breakdown of Staff Questionnaire Responses by Question

- "Technology for the blind/visually impaired I would be able to help with."
- "TTY, yes. Wheelchair accessible computer. Staff with ASL ability. We have been trained on how to approach hearing impaired clients."
- "TTY, JAWS, screen enhancement, programs within computer for visually empaiored (sic) – The usual door handles, enlarged doors, ramps, etc,"
- "TTY, Unknown there may be others"
- "TTY, an enlarger for reading materials, Yes."
- "Telephone for deaf and viewer for visually handicapped Need some training on use of equipment."
- "TTY – a few people are trained to help individuals on this."
- "TTY – magnified PC screens – Some Large Print Publications – is there more available?"
- "TTY – yes, as long as I have access to the instructions. Spectograph – yes (ditto sign made under access to instructions) "
- "Optilec —There is a need for trng. TTY—Instructions posted on machine."
- "TTY phone, OPTELEC machine and staff. I could use the equipment if necessary."
- " TDY phone, large screen monitor, visual aid screen as well as the Center is totally accessible."
- "TTY phone/ Optelec/ touch screens lowered for wheelchair access....yes" (yes in response to assist portion of question)
- "TTY Large Print Reader Large Screen Computer"
- "In our office in Saco, we have TTY which I am aware of how to use. I could not transfer a call immediately, but I know that directions are near the TTY so I could answer them. I have changed font on the computer to help persons with a variety of visual issues and have printed information on different colored papers for some."
- "TTY machine, Oplettec Focus, Zoom Text X-tra tutorial and level 1, Work text read please 2003."
- "TTY – yes"



**Question # 3**

**How does your CareerCenter track the use of the center by people who have disabilities?**

- "Not sure, VR and front desk probably handle that"
- "I don't believe we do"
- "I don't believe we are tracking at all. We do however hook people up with resources as needed either internal or external"
- "no idea, probably not done except by who is referred to VR"
- "It doesn't"
- "Don't know"
- "VR tracks our cases separately."
- "Good Question!"
- "At this point in time the only people we track are the ones that use our services here in the center"
- "I don't know if we do this"
- "Not that I am aware of"
- "OSOS- The only way we track at this office (unless voc rehab does otherwise)"
- "The first tracking would be at time of Labor Exchange registration. The intake WIA services asks for information about disabilities as well. Reports could be run from that data."
- "To my knowledge we don't at this time."
- "Through the OSOS system we have a question on the application regarding any disabilities people might have. Counselors also discuss this question with people as they are meeting with them."
- "We typically do not tract (sic) people with disabilities any more than we track people by gender or any other measure. Since we tend to register people and work with them on a one-on-one basis, we treat everyone the same and a particular disability that any might have becomes a non-issue. As people are registered we do ask if they have any disabilities that might impair their ability to work at a job and their file is annotated accordingly."
- "Not sure-usually by knowing customers who are working with BVR + DBVI- also those who identify their disability."
- "We have sign in sheet where we mark what agencies and services were used. I don't believe it is very explicit or accurate although."
- "Everyone is asked to sign in at the front desk, but only thru seeing they have come to see me would anyone know they might have a disability."
- "I'm not sure"
- "Referrals to voc rehab"
- "Currently none unless the VR clientele was counted."
- "We don't track people with disabilities other than if it impacts their working situation (according their opinion) is recorded in the common registration."
- "The same as all customers; door beeper/counter."
- "Regular traffic is not counted. Some of the case managers, like myself, have a number of customers with disabilities on our caseloads. Sometimes the customer's disability had made her/him eligible for services. In that case, the disability is documented in the file, but otherwise, I don't think any formal "counts" are kept."

### Attachment III: Breakdown of Staff Questionnaire Responses by Question

- "Through OSOS [One-Stop Operating System] I do not know how accurate or reliable that tracking system is."
- "Not directly. The data base includes questions concerning disability relating to ability to work and services questionnaires (sic) ask what services people want."
- "individual programs keep count of their clients"
- "I don't believe we do any type of tracking. Why would we want to track anything like that? As far as I am concerned, they are no different that somebody who has no disabilities."
- "A question on the 'Self-Service' applicant intake computer screen (CareerCenter Registration) asks applicants: 1.) 'Do you have a disability' and 2.) 'If yes, does it substantially limit your ability to work?' I know that this information is collected, however, I do not know how it is used."
- "I am unaware of how clients with disabilities are tracked."
- "We do not track the use in any formal manner."
- "I think this would be quite stigmatizing. Other than people coming forward to apply for VR services, I don't think this is currently being tracked...and don't think it should be."
- "I have no idea beyond my department (Division for the Blind & VI)"
- "I do not think we do, other than within the labor departments 'LABOR EXCHANGE' registration for the touch screens."
- "WIA app, LEX registration. I don't think we're capturing nearly all the #s"
- "The intake form if they fill it out, otherwise there is no way to track them unless VR is working with them, WIA only tracks customers and not all do intake."
- "We have a sign-in sheet in Information Center and services computer screen"
- "no tracking mechanism in place"
- "I don't believe we do –"
- "We don't for gen. customer usage but do for WIA enrollments and Labor Exchange enrollments."
- "WE don't, we wouldn't have any way to do this, most disabilities are not something you can see and we don't ask. WE don't have any reason to know unless the person disclosed the information for a particular reason."
- "I do not know if there is a tracking requirement. I serve all customers the same, meeting special accommodations as requested. I would go to the Center Manager if there was a request I could not meet."
- "FREQUENT SURVEYS/COMPUTER DATA"
- "All customers make out customer service surveys/ the system tracks those who register as well"
- "Sign in Sheets for All People using the Center, but we do not track Different Groups of Persons."
- "At our site the VR office is separate from the rest of the Career Center. We don't really track the folks who come that I'm aware of. WE do send persons who are lost in the right direction as well, whether to the Social Security office or Career Center or University area, etc. Also we do refer people to the Career Center for a variety of services as well."
- "As people come in there is a sign up sheet. Usually they are referred to a counselor. We evaluate as best we can and in some instances refer them to V.R."

#### Question # 4

**Specific to serving people who have disabilities, what do you believe your most significant training needs are?**

- Awareness of and access to resources - "Are there publications, tapes, videos, etc. that should be part of the Information Center? Are there newspapers or Web sites that are more appropriate? Is there a computer mouse that works better for some people?"
- "Need standard procedures and to be trained on them. Need to know what is classified as a disability and where to refer them."
- Response cites difficulty of person with visual disability assisting person with auditory disability. "I also think that if there are indeed 'rights and wrongs' about how to address and speak to people, maybe we need some kind of inservice to just focus on that. Otherwise, I believe we're quite adept at seeking out resources that will assist us and the customers we serve."
- "Disability etiquette"
- "Need someone who signs in the I.C."
- "Cross training with CareerCenter partners."
- "They are taken care of in VR"
- "available resources + how to access them"
- Respondent did not specifically address this question but made significant mention of the need for regularly updated and accessible materials in a variety of formats in the Information Center.
- Having a contact person or company that does interpreting of any kind. To train us in say the use of sign language, we don't have enough call for it so we would forget how to use it in time.
- "Mental Health. Also, knowledge of appropriate referral sources for other assistance."
- "Serving blind"
- "Knowledge of employers-and employment settings that would more meet the needs of those with disabilities"
- "I would need some signing training."
- "I have the hardest time serving mental illness people. I can serve them in the office fine and say all the 'right things,' but I do wonder what happens to them when they leave. Are they really getting the jobs?"
- "Who to call to assist"
- "Keeping informed and updated about new technologies, Laws pertaining to ADA, mental health issues, motivational strategies for adult learners. Getting in services from the other departments that way you know who those people are and who you can call on. We used to have state conferences but not any more. At the Bangor office we had Jan DeVinney talk to us about hard of hearing and that was very good. We had some folks come and present about drug abuse/addiction. That was interesting but having local folks would have been better because they will be our immediate resource. If you plan to change the culture and take the 'dis' out of ability then in-services relating to culture is a must. (Like reading Tuesdays with Morrie.)"
- "Working with sight and hearing impaired people."
- "How to use Assistive equipment- also disability awareness training."

### Attachment III: Breakdown of Staff Questionnaire Responses by Question

- "I believe everybody is important especially if they are interested in working. We get people (not necessary (sic) with disabilities) that are coming here because it is some sort of obligation they have to their service providers and they are not interested in working at all."
- "Deafness/ signing probably, but not using it, the info probably wouldn't stick either!"
- "I think that training on mental health issues would be good for our career ctr partners (I'm from VR). So much of MH is perception, and once educated it's less scary for people. They do a great job anyhow, but I think it'd help to improve it from there. We actually have a training we've arranged in conjunction with them with our consultant neuropsychologist."
- "Continuing to learn resources that can be of assistance to people with disabilities to help them with financial difficulties or assistive technology available to accommodate them in school/work."
- "Training to raise staff awareness on etiquette, simple accommodation and appropriate referral direction (if necessary.)"
- "-lack funding, lack effective accommodations, meeting space"
- "Again this is coming from VR. However, I am pulling together mental health disability awareness training for WIA/BES staff from a neuro-psychologist."
- "No specific training is needed"
- "To make communication flow easier between the customer and myself"
- "Awareness of referral services."
- "Use of existing equipment; knowledge of procedure for working with someone with a mental illness or another condition such as autism or Down syndrome."
- "What resources are available beyond our own?"
- "Everyone in this building needs to be refreshed on the law, the agency responsibility and available resources in the Career Center."
- "Just keep us informed as needed."
- "Recognizing who has a disability if it is undeclared by the client/customer and is not a visible observed disability."
- "Specialized equipment"
- "Sensitivity training and training on resources available."
- "Sign language, interpreters, awareness, cross-cultural, customer service in general"
- "I would like to sign better."
- "If I were working specifically with deaf or hard of hearing or visually impaired people, I would like to know adaptive equipment I could recommend to clients."
- "My training needs are very specific to keeping up-to-date on blindness/visual impairment issues. Other than that, I do enjoy occasional workshop/presentations relative to other disabilities that my clients might also have (i.e., head injury, deaf/blind issues, stroke patients, etc.)"
- "Experience actually working with a disabled customer."
- "disability ediquette (sp?) and sign language."
- "Awareness of how to best assist people w/various disabilities. Basic ettiquette, (sic) myth busting to some degree."
- "Resources"
- "Counselors handbook including for each disability; questions to ask to discover abilities, interests, and limitations; jobs successfully held by people with this disability; adaptations; accommodations (sic)."



### Attachment III: Breakdown of Staff Questionnaire Responses by Question

- “Testing, connecting with interpreters, etc.”
- “Knowledge of resources – Sensibility training –“
- “Issues relating to Mental Health diagnoses.”
- “A general overview of disabilities limitations and guidelines to serve people in an acceptable manner.”
- “Knowing all of the partners that may have additional resources to assist if necessary.”
- “As occasional backup to the receptionist, I need to brief myself on how to answer the TDY phone periodically.”
- “CROSS TRAINING – TO KNOW WHEN /WHERE TO DIRECT CUSTOMERS”
- “How to help those with ADHD or anxiety for example. How to place them in the proper work environments or assist them in building their skills to the point where they feel confident enough to become a part of the workforce.”
- “Hmmm. I actually don’t have an immediate answer to this. I think we need some other adaptive equipment available and training to use it and teach another how to use it. But some of that would require equipment in a room with a door. For example, a Kurzweil reading program for persons with LDs so they could scan the pamphlets or other materials and have them read to them. This could also help persons with other disabling conditions.”
- “I feel the most important thing we can do is listen. Make sure we understand what they need and try to provide it.”
- “How to deal with diverse disabilities. Communication- Tools- Knowledge of barriers + how to overcome.” **Access for All** publication mentioned



Question # 5

**Do you know whether people with disabilities have been successful in accessing employment services at the CareerCenter where you work? If not, what are the barriers that you are aware of?**

- "I believe some people have been successful, but others not. One person that is visually impaired wanted the Unemployment Blue Book in large print, which is not available."  
"We have had deaf come in that are very frustrated because they are job searching and no one in the Information Center can communicate with them." "I have had a hard of hearing client that claims this is a barrier to [the client's] job searching, yet I do not have a full grasp of why it is a barrier."
- "I think it can be a challenge, but I don't think people with disabilities identify anything differently than those who do not have barriers. The only issue I've come across in the 8 years I've been here is the communication barriers for people who have difficulty verbalizing their needs and usually, we can figure out what we need to with a little extra time and effort."
- "Not enough interest + ability tests for the computer illiterate but mostly no problems"
- "For the most part, accessing appears to be successful. But then it's hard to know without feedback. Testing can cause problems. We can't always guarantee one-on-one help, depends on how busy the I.C. is. Would hope VR counselors would make arrangements for clients who need help with testing."
- "My [VR] clients receive great assistance in the Augusta CareerCenter."
- "I know of several hard of hearing people who have had a problem as far as I know. A good number of Deaf people have had difficulty accessing Info. Center services. Communication barrier; fear on the part of staff."
- "We have helped mentally challenged folks- re: appointments, etc."
- "I am not aware of issues to this point"
- "I believe they run into many of the same barriers as those w/out disabilities. It's an employer's market w/a lot of competition for jobs."
- "The voc.rehab.persons help people in finding jobs."
- "There have been successes. We also know some folks who tried a job and were not successful, but that is true of many job seekers. We sometimes are faces with a customer who is mandated to look for work by Workers' Comp., for ex. Who actually will tell us the he or she does not feel able to work. That is very tough for us. There is fear of losing benefits and fear of pain and failure. Any suggestions for those situations? That is different from the person who wants to find suitable employment."
- "I think overall we are very successful serving disabled people in the Belfast CareerCenter, we have a wide variety of disabled people coming in and accessing our services."
- "Yes, I have seen people with Mental Health issues, hearing loss, loss of use of limbs be very successful in accessing services and getting into training and jobs as well."
- "The entrance is not handicapped accessible to the Ellsworth Career Ctr. And neither is Bangor office. The computer touch screen is not helpful to someone who is visually impaired. Not sure if all the offices would be able to accommodate a person using a wheelchair. Some computer equipment and software is way outdated. Some Spanish signs for the migrant workers."

### Attachment III: Breakdown of Staff Questionnaire Responses by Question

- "As I stated before, we have many people who come in with various types of disabilities whom we work with to provide various Career Center Services. I am not aware of anyone who had a problem in this area."
- "To my knowledge they have not had difficulty"
- "I have some youth with learning disabilities who were successful on a job and in school"
- "I meet my goal set by VR supervisor, most usually in getting someone employed; however, I believe having the funds to fire our own VR job developers instead of provider agencies, there would be a higher # of employment stats. Other agencies also have their own internal agendas."
- "Computer literacy of our clients is a huge issue, many of our clients are of low income so they don't have their own computer, and many have not had much exposure to them. That's in addition to the learning disabilities/anxiety/MH and cultural issues which would also impact them. Again, our partners do well assisting people as necessary."
- "As far as VR, they have been successful. Barriers in the info center could be not enough staff to give individual attention on job searching or workshops."
- "Yes access has been successful, I believe due to good communication."
- "Barriers-transportation-availability for low income/wheelchair accessible –equipment needs: cars, computers, hearing aids"
- "Of course they can be successful!"
- "I (sic) sure there must be some barriers which I am not familiar with but we had some customers thru the CareerCenter successfully."
- "Yes, I think they have been successful."
- "Yes- in this respect, we are proud to be able [to offer] these kinds of services to all customers."
- "I know we have people with mental challenges who have used the CareerCenter with some success as long as they are aided by a knowledgeable person. I do not know how we fare overall, because – again – I don't know how reliable the tracking system in OSOS is regarding people with disabilities."
- "Many individuals with work related injury are forced to change occupations. We often help. We have very few significantly disabled who look for work."
- "Yes." [Re: barriers] "Snow is not always cleaned off as well as it could be. Services to blind/ vis. handicapped not apparent. LD people are unaware readers could assist them."
- "Yes, we have been successful with people accessing employment services."
- "Many customers of Vocational Rehabilitation Come thru the CareerCenter. I personally have recognized a client with a disability or have been approached by clients that have stated that they have a disability and have referred them to vocational rehabilitation counselors in the CareerCenter or have made arrangements to meet with a Voc. Rehab."
- "Most clients coming to the Career Center are here to see Voc. Rehab."
- "Yes – very successful. Having VR as a partner helps"
- "Not sure...with the diverse population we work with, I think that we are placing fairly well, but that is just my perception."
- "My students have been successful."
- "Snow removal has been an issue for not only clients visiting the career center, but also many staff with disabilities."
- "Speaking of blind/visually impaired clients, they have been able to access the center. There are some physical features that could make the building more accessible/visually friendly!"

### Attachment III: Breakdown of Staff Questionnaire Responses by Question

- "Since June 2002 about 10 people in wheelchairs some multiple times. In all cases needs were met + experience was positive. Emotionally disabled have been served but it is hard to evaluate results. Very few hearing impaired have been in."
- "Yes- deaf/hard of hearing, emotional, learning, behavioral, physical, etc. Our initial needs assess is written – we need to look at this"
- "Yes. However, some barriers are the tests required by employers that everyone take prior to being hired. An (sic) employers requiring everyone to perform all jobs."
- "Yes, some have been very successful."
- "No- No survey was ever taken. This always seemed to be geared toward V.R. Being on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor- Not a good building to have CC in."
- "Building – equipment – employee training"
- "Yes, many have been successful."
- "Yes, they have been but what we don't know is how many may have left w/out being served."
- "I believe all customers can be successful in accessing services."
- "I feel we serve all customers well."
- "Not aware of any barriers. WE serve all of our customers to the best of our ability. Customer service is our #1 priority."
- "I think I would say yes to employment services."
- "Yes, people have been successful because they have reported being so. I have taken people there to use some of the programs and access some of the services. The folks there are excellent."
- "We have placed people who did not have huge barriers. If we could not help we have refer (sic) them to V.R., Vet Center etc."



Question # 6

**Do people who have disabilities participate in employment groups, testing, career exploration, or training programs provided by the CareerCenter where you work? If not, why not? If so, have any issues regarding access come to your attention?**

- "Testing is usually assessed by the VR counselor. Regarding more obvious physical disabilities, they infrequently use services and I'm not aware of specific issues regarding access. I'm not sure if the hearing impaired have attended workshops and employment groups or not, but they would find it difficult without an interpreter."
- "Communication barriers and lack of alternate formats"
- "We have worked with numerous folks in job search, assessment, career exploration workshops, as well as training programs. Sometimes, training institutions are challenged in terms of how to assist people in the academic world and either our staff or VR staff have been good about serving as consultants to the institutions."
- "Groups in the info center are too fast and too formal for some VR clients. My clients do us some of the testing and the pc s. They only qualify for training funds very occasionally."
- "All of the above services are available to anyone who wants to attend. Again, no feedback to know who has attended that is disabled."
- "Not many. Workshops currently offered are too fast + impersonal for many VR clients. VR has had those services in the past but we have difficulty getting clients and counselors to participate. Not an accessibility issue."
- "Limited participation for folks with learning disabilities, anxiety disorders, etc. Would need to change the training for them."
- "I am not well informed of such services. Voc. Rehab's Career Exploration workshops have been difficult for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people to benefit from and access."
- Respondent suggested that the Information Center is not an accessible or welcoming place for people with disabilities. "...Out of 15 customers in the last 3 weeks I've talked to, only 3 used the CareerCenter. The others didn't use it because they either couldn't figure out how to use it or couldn't easily figure out what it could offer them, or they were intimidated." This suggests that only 2% of this respondents clients felt welcome at the Information Center.
- "I would say yes, most of the assessments are done in Augusta as we [Waterville] are only an itinerant site."
- "I think the problem is not as much those w/ disabilities not participating, but a majority of people in general who need/could use our services, do not participate in these programs. I think people w/ disabilities who are assisted by voc rehab or are veterans are aware of and participate in our programs more because they are aware of them."
- "They readily participate in the groups. I don't believe there are access issues. One example that we resolved was a man in a large wheelchair who wanted to take a GATB, General Aptitude Test Battery. His chair did not meet the table and we struggled with how to test him using that instrument. We worked with him to problem solve the testing set-up. It was a good experience for us. He was able to test with some modification to the shelf on the chair."
- "Yes, we do have people with disabilities access our workshops and testing sessions. If they need any accommodations we do ask them to notify us ahead so we can accommodate. Past situations have been raising a testing table up for someone in a

### Attachment III: Breakdown of Staff Questionnaire Responses by Question

wheelchair, asking for a wooden chair for one of our people that is allergic to all metals and fabrics, getting a mouse ball for a person in a wheelchair that has a hard time with his hands. I think we are a very accommodating center to meet the needs of all people coming in whether or not they have a disability."

- "Yes, we try to be sensitive to each individual's needs and work with them in a way that is appropriate to their needs."
- "I'm not aware of this. However, I send out surveys for client satisfaction and I don't feel that the large print format meets some of the client's needs. Something I addressed to my supervisor."
- "Yes they do so on a continuing basis with no known issues in this regard."
- "Yes, I have had several customers use our services"
- "Anybody is welcome to participate. One of the criteria for Youth program eligibility is whether youth have a disability. In case of yes, they are automatically eligible for our intensive services."
- "I test my own people personally as I think there is more that goes into taking a test than the score—attitudes, conversations, noting anxiety, etc."
- "Somewhat, they've had difficulty with the hearing piece at times, but we have good relationship with our partners and they're willing to make accommodations when we've asked for them, such as being tested individually."
- "Yes. I had an issue with trying to schedule someone who was deaf (reads lips, got a cochlear implant 1 ½ yrs ago) into a career aptitude placement test (CAPS). While we were in the info center asking to have an individual test, the person called someone and then told us this was not offered as an option, so the mom was upset and I ended up giving it myself. There has been a couple staff who have been willing to do the TABE on an individual basis. Have asked about LMI, interviewing resume workshop and have just been told this is offered on a monthly group schedule. So, for those unable or uncomfortable in a group format, I have been trying to cover these necessary informational/skill development kinds of stuff or asking my job developer to."
- "I think participation is limited. I am aware of issues around accessible format ie: no [interpreter] for deaf participant and possible refusal to get one."
- "People w/MR/Mental illness may lack the cognitive skills/judgement to benefit from group activities unless slower paced/ 1:1/ small group/ simplified to meet career abilities and aspirations."
- "I am aware of glitches in PWD participating in CareerCenter workshops, and this is why I am (sic) setting up some awareness training, which has also prompted questions around protocol—who does what when and that is relieving some confusion."
- "Most individuals with disabilities are comfortable in and can access group training and testing. Barriers include the inability to read or write. I believe this and cases of severe disability need to be addressed individually, on a case by case basis, by the Clients Counselor."
- "We try to treat all customers the same regardless, I have not come across someone who could not participate in any of our activities except one, and that was due to educational disability."
- I have had terrific success with youth with disabilities. Barriers, however, include inaccessibility/lack of accommodations, and fear. Also, sometimes, because of confidentiality, I may not know the 'full scoop.' Let me give you an example: a young man whose OCD revolved around food- I placed him in a work experience in a restaurant!!!!!! Had I known, I never would have done that- I merely was going on what

### Attachment III: Breakdown of Staff Questionnaire Responses by Question

information I had and the fact that he said he'd like to try a restaurant! Oooops...my biggest gaffe- but caused by restrictions, sometimes, on sharing info."

- "Yes, I know of people with mental illness who have tested in our Information Center."
- "Yes, however, limited to those who feel ready to work."
- "Obviously, handicapped people are often dumped on VR to deal with."
- "ANYONE is invited to participate. We do not discriminate against anyone interested in our services."
- "Yes, some testing and career exploration services are provided to Vocational Rehabilitation Clients in the information center."
- "Yes – often through VR; but not exclusively."
- "Again, I work one-on-one, so I don't really know what service people are accessing."
- "My students have participated"
- "Yes. GATB is offered as well as any workshops or use of the information center."
- "I do not personally know?"
- "Yes, but the population using the Rockland CC is quite small"
- "Yes, workshops and career exploration and training."
- "Yes – V.R. does refer and we do have people who have disabilities that just utilize the services at the CareerCenter."
- "Groups are a problem – do not always know before who one audience will be – Testing (no)- even in demand."
- "Yes. Many customers have a disability."
- " Yes they do participate & we try to offer alternatives to testing."
- "Everyone is offered the same services, sometimes services are modified depending on the individuals abilities."
- "All of our customers are encouraged to participate. I'm not aware of any problems with those who come through our doors."
- "I have sent people up for some of the testing such as GATB and others. For the most part it hasn't been an issue. However there was an occasion where the individual was not able to sit consistently for the testing due to the type of chairs available."
- "We have had some people participate, some feel shy and we work with them 1- on-1."



**Question # 7**

**If only one issue or problem about the current ability of CareerCenters to serve people who have disabilities could be addressed, which would you choose and how would you address it?**

- "Purchase more publications, videos, and handouts for vision and hearing impaired"
- "There is too long of a waiting list for these people to meet with trained [VR] Counselors. It is probably unrealistic for the career counselors to become experts on all the barriers that may exist for this population when considering employment and training. What services can be offered to them while they wait for VR? Can the waiting list be eliminated?"
- "The communication issue would be the biggest goal. If we were able to have more access to VR folks in the Info. Center, it might work better. I've always felt that VR counselors can play a valuable role in the information centers. I also realize that all of us are stretched to the limit with our workloads. Sign language classes would certainly be one way to address the issue." [Respondent cited significant difficulty in communication between staff with visual or hearing disability and customer with opposite disability as a major communication barrier.]
- "More training for staff in disability awareness and etiquette with follow ups for new hires."
- "Hire or school current employee to sign."
- "Less division from 'If you're disabled go this way. If not, go the way.' Don't know the answer!"
- "Offer more Career Exploration workshops for disabled."
- "Training for Info. Center + Employment program staff on various disabilities + how to provide access."
- "It would be very helpful that as soon as you walk in the door that there is a 'map' (paper/brochure you can take and carry with you and a large sign you can just look at and attached headphones) of the CareerCenter with words, colored sections and pictures and labels showing what/where things are, what you can do with them. When you walk into a CareerCenter now, it is intimidating, confusing and no obvious direction on how to use things or necessarily where things are and what you have access to. One staff person isn't enough when most people have to ask questions because there is no other way to find your way around the use of the CareerCenter."
- "The interpreters"
- "More education re: serving specific disabilities."
- "I think we could all benefit from education and training."
- "Time. Anyone/almost everyone who visits the CareerCenter would benefit from more intensive one-on-one vocational counseling so that we could address the needs of that individual more effectively. Two large barriers stand in the way of this. 1. With the volume of job seekers- especially on very busy days we don't have the staff + resources to help each individual intensively- especially as this pertains to follow-up and fostering that individuals continued education about how to gain + maintain sustainable employment. Possibly voc rehab addresses this with them... 2. Many/ most job seekers will not participate in the classes/workshops/testing etc. that we provide due to their variety of different barriers to learning etc. or even not knowing that these options are

### Attachment III: Breakdown of Staff Questionnaire Responses by Question

available to them. Many express interest in the workshops when told about them, but then fail to sign-up. Also, many who sign-up then do not show-up."

- "Starting with the entry to the Career Centers to make them accessible.
- "Service strategy within CC setting...how do we provide the intensive level of support that may be needed within our program parameters? I would like to strengthen the community of providers so we work as a team with the job seeker more effectively than we do now."
- "I would get a computer for the visually impaired to use in our centers. This way they could look through jobs without us having to read the jobs to them when they register with us."
- "All staff to learn ASL"
- "I haven't seen anything that leads me to a specific problem."
- "1) Many clients complain they can't find our phone number in the phone book, especially for the Division for the Blind. (Most people find us through the IRIS Network.) Why is the Div. For the Blind in the Career Ctr and not with Education? 2) The entrance is not handicapped accessible. Put in an electronic handicapped accessible entrance."
- "While I think we do a fairly good job helping people with disabilities as far as assisting them with their job search etc., the real issue is trying to find employers who will hire them. IN this economy employers are working with less not more and they expect the people they hire to be multi-tasked/fast paced and capable of doing the work of two or three. It is very hard for people with significant handicaps to compete for jobs in this environment. This is the brick door that we always encounter and I believe that this the (sic) area that needs the most attention."
- "Making room + making visible our specialized equipment."
- "Good question. I guess it'd be improving the lighting and air filtration system to be better and quieter."
- "Communication between staff and consumers. Communicating needs and solutions would go a long way to keeping issues from becoming too large. Communication would need to lead to action on agreed solutions."
- "Community Transportation in Rumford area; Long term supports for MH/MR"
- "On-going communication-staff need to talk to staff about whatever the problems are."
- "Individual accommodations can be made provided the Counselor takes the time needed and is willing to communicate and 'listen to what the Client is saying.'"
- "Patience, and I am not sure how to address it."
- "TTY training would be good to have."
- "...Some folks need more practice/exposure around disability 'etiquette.' We like to think that we treat all customers equally, but customers with mental health issues, people in wheelchairs...I get a sense that some of us are 'afraid' or not as comfortable communicating. I personally address this by making sure that if that happens and I'm aware of it, I sort of 'take over' with that customer. It's interesting-there are some here who aren't as successful communicating with people with disabilities, and those same people can't talk to teenagers either! Fear???"
- "Lack of knowledge on how to use existing equipment. I think an afternoon of training on these would be very helpful."
- "Lack of public awareness of services available through CareerCenters."
- "Eliminate Voc. Rehab. WAIT LIST"



### Attachment III: Breakdown of Staff Questionnaire Responses by Question

- "The one problem that I see serving people with disabilities in Aroostook County is the lack of interpreter's (sic) in the area. The closest interpreter's (sic) are in the Bangor area. There really isn't any way to address it because we had two previously but they couldn't make a living waiting for people to call so they have since found full time jobs."
- "Recognition of clients with disabilities so we can properly provide service and referral to proper agencies, i.e. Vocational Rehabilitation Services."
- "Training on available specialized equipment."
- "To integrate the job search and placement services of the BES and WIA staff with VR. Too often non-VR customers do not receive the best service because BES/WIA job developers do not have the knowledge base. The BES/WIA staff have the job openings, but not the skills in preparing/adapting the job for the person w/a disability."
- "To teach our employees that people with disabilities are PEOPLE first."
- "I would interview the individual who is limiting my choices to a single solution"
- "More handicapped spaces with easy access into the building, (flat ground, separate area away from the street)"
- "Interpreters for deaf- Braille for blind- Sign language for me."
- "Need handbook"
- "Need more staff and all staff need to participate – not just a few."
- "Testing- Universal Accessibility"
- "It would be great if a rehab counselor was part of our staff in the info center (not jut co partnered)"
- "General awareness & proper guidelines to serving customers w/ disabilities."
- "The door opens very hard for folks in a wheelchair or lacking strength in ones arms. The walkway is difficult to maneuver in the winter."
- "CROSS TRAINING CAREERCENTER EMPLOYEES ON HOW TO DEAL WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND WHEN/WHERE TO DIRECT CUSTOMERS FOR SERVICES."
- "How to find employment for those with emotional problems."
- "I would like to see a Audio Read for the OSOS system"
- "Again I find myself without a real answer. I think we could all use some other equipment in our centers. But how easy it would be to ensure it was used well... Just an awareness of the need for occasional simple fixes like changing font or color of paper for some presentation of info would be good. And ways to assist a person with hearing impairments that make sense would be good."
- "I feel that with our new facility in Springvale we really addressed most concerns. This building is all handicap accessible."
- "Education"

**Additional Comments Section:**

- "Some basic training is needed for employment counselors on working with people with disabilities, as well as knowing what services are available. How do employment counselors identify someone's disabilities? Right now if they score low on assessments (TABE & CareerScope) we might send them to remedial education. Emotional issues may never be revealed. Standard practices should be developed. Periodic meetings between co-located agencies would be helpful, i.e. choose a topic of the month to address. New staff, as well as seasoned staff, need this training. I remember my first few weeks here. I had never worked in a social service function and was verbally attacked by two different clients. It was something I had never been exposed to and I took it personally. It would have been nice to have been trained in dealing with irrational, confrontational people before I was put before the public. Same holds true for dealing with any other disability. I would like the training before the occurrence so I am better prepared to serve the customer."
- "When we first got co-located we formed teams to address how VR and the CC would work together. It hasn't happened! Occasionally we share clients and some of our clients use the information center but I feel totally clueless about what happens 'on the other side of the building.' I don't even know how to refer to the non-VR employees! In theory we are all 'The CareerCenter' but there seems to be a division. One of the committees I was part of looked at ways we could join forces to provide workshops on job hunting, career exploration, etc. We couldn't get half the people to show up for the meetings. The ones that did seemed to disagree with our methods and said they didn't have time for the 'warm, fuzzy' methods. They are directed to in, get them out and get a job asap. VR focuses more on choice, careers instead of jobs, being self paced, longer training programs, etc. I find it deplorable that so much of the VR budget goes to employment services when we should be able to get most of those services right here in our own department. I seldom hear of any of my consumers actually getting to talk to CC employee about interviewing, the job market, etc. It seems like if they don't fit a category like 'displaced workers,' all they get is information center resources. It seems to me that if we all truly worked together our clients would get better service for less \$. I have my doubts however, that it is possible!"
- Respondent provided constructive criticism of presenter's presentation style, which helps to develop later presentations.
- "I appreciate your coming to see us. It was very informative and though I have had some training in this area it is always helpful to have these reminders that this is an issue we need to be remembering when working with people."
- "As a side note: When I was first hired as a state employee I was very surprised and disappointed that the salary was so low. Unlike in education if one has additional training, he/she is recognized for that or it helps with an increase in one's salary. After a while, those skills that I once had are not being used or recognized. I feel some state employees get a certain mind set that further training is not needed because it's not going to be recognized (sic) or used often. Sadly to say, I think I'm falling into that mind set. I get excited when I can use my little bit of sign language but it at least it's a connection to the other person who has a disability and uses sign language. And when a state employee who's fairly new in the system or has new ideas it's not uncommon for older folks who are close to retirement, look at you like and say, 'why bother,, don't ruffle any feathers.'"



### Attachment III: Breakdown of Staff Questionnaire Responses by Question

- "I would like to have more training in all aspects dealing with disability as well as in using TTY and other equipment that we might have."
- "1) Child proof play areas with toys available for moms to relax more and concentrate during interviews if they can't get the sitter to come to their homes. 2) Physical accessibility between closed off public/work area – door is heavy. 3) Have a deaf counselor or interpreter advertised to be in office certain days of the week to serve that population."
- "Specific to Lewiston, there is only one exit which is handicapped accessible (sic). The back door is manual and doesn't have mechanism for opening automatically. We have disabled staff who can't use the back door, what are they supposed to do in an emergency. They shouldn't have to rely on others, the building should be accessible (sic). Noway is not wheelchair accessible (sic) at all!!!"
- "Overall, I think the Career Centers are accessible to individuals regardless of disability but each individual employed by the Career Center must follow 'the Golden Rule.'"
- "Our Center could benefit from a formal assessment of our facility to insure (sic) it is barrier free. Staff should from time to time have training in serving persons with disabilities."
- "Some Career Center staff do not want to deal with handicapped clients. Some staff deliberately avoid working with handicapped and place added burdens on coworkers. Career Center should minimize perception that computer skills are prerequisite to client use of services. Some clients are computer phobic."
- "I feel we serve people with disabilities the same way we serve other people especially with our limited resources."
- "One of the things that amazes me most is that in my job I'm asked to go do site evaluations (schools and occasionally work sites or nursing home facilities.) I assess the environment for things that would make it visually more friendly & safe (or in a few, small ways (because so few ADA requirements are written for Low Vision Folks!) ADA accessible. Yet, my own wonderful work site lacks so many of these "highly recommended things." Things like a color contrast strip on the first and last step in each set of stairs (!ESPECIALLY THE FRONT ENTRANCE STEPS that quickly take you down 4 steps upon a short entrance from the exterior. This can be very challenging for low vision folks. Their eyes have barely adjusted and they are met with down steps!). I'm not so sure that many of our plate-glass doors/windows have something on them to denote them as doors (or in some cases as even glass. Low vision folks (and sighted folks for that matter) have been known to walk into plate-glass! And lastly, as mentioned in a previous e-mail, I hear word that the room number signage up stairs is not ADA signage (Braille, raised print, high color contrast) and the signage is not in the recommended location (door handle side near the door frame). These are just a few of the features that I find so odd...I go out and tell schools they should implement these features for everyone's safety, including the blind/vi student, yet at my own work site, we don't practice what we preach! Unrelated to that, I also think that somehow it would be far more 'friendly' if we could get a Metro bus that would come down the hill closer to our work center (back on Forest Ave the bus stopped directly in front of our center) now, hopefully a disabled person is physically able to 'do the Elm street hill' to reach our destination!?!"
- "While we are doing many things well there is a great deal of room for improvement."

### Attachment III: Breakdown of Staff Questionnaire Responses by Question

- "I really think that a good way to reach the employers is to make presentations at Chambers of Commerce – Notarian (sic) Clubs etc. A good way to connect and get the word out to employers and educate them about hiring individuals with disabilities."
- "Can we find testing (assessment) that will be Universally Accessibility (sic)?"
- "The Zoom text works with OSOS, but that is the only thing for vision disabilities, If the person is Blind, Zoom text is of no use."
- "Implementation of a Rotary Club type of monthly meeting establishing advocacy in the Employer Community should be researched and put into action. Start with supporters and let word of mouth or incentives build the Program."



# The Maine Ability Partnership

## Attachment IV:

### Forum Questionnaire



### Questions for MAP Forums

1. When and how did you first learn about the CareerCenter?
2. What services/assistance do you feel *you* need in order to get (or keep) a job that you are interested in?
3. Of the services listed above (just discussed), which do you believe the CareerCenter does provide? Are there others you feel the CareerCenter *should* provide?
4. What has been your most satisfying/useful experience with the CareerCenter?
5. What technology or equipment have you found at the CareerCenter to help you access services or information on your own (or independently)? What *additional technology or equipment* would you like to have available to help you get services or information on your own?
6. If you could make changes or improvements to the CareerCenter, what would they be and why? (This question has been modified through the forum process and will be changed as follows: If you had a magic wand and could make the CareerCenter perfect for all people tomorrow, what changes would you make?)
7. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience with the CareerCenter that might help us better meet your needs (as stated in question #2)?







