



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

DEPARTMENT ON DISABILITY SERVICES

PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Jocelyn Harris, 202-730-1687; jocelyn.harris2@dc.gov

Department on Disability Services Celebrates Disability Employment Awareness Month

D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray applauds local businesses for inclusive hiring practices

Washington, DC— Mayor Vincent C. Gray encourages all businesses based in the City to acknowledge October's designation as National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), the national campaign seeks to raise awareness about disability employment issues and foster a more inclusive workforce. Throughout the month the Department on Disability Services and the Office of Disability Rights will celebrate the varied contributions of workers with disabilities.

Because of the efforts of the Department on Disability Services and its partners, the District of Columbia is a leader in the Employment First initiative, a concept of the U.S. Department of Labor for the full inclusion of people with the most significant disabilities in the workplace and community. Under the Employment First approach and shifting expectations for a cultural transformation, community-based, integrated employment is the first option for employment services for youth and adults with significant disabilities. Through its Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) the Agency has successfully helped more than 1,700 people with disabilities secure and maintain employment over the past three years. Said Mayor Gray, ***"The Department on Disability Services, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has done an excellent job not only in helping people with disabilities gain access to the tools and resources needed to live productive, independent lives, but also in educating businesses and potential employers about the added value people with disabilities bring to the workforce."***

Throughout the year, the Business Relations Unit of RSA hosts employer awareness workshops to dispel myths associated with people with disabilities. Andrew Reese, deputy director of RSA noted that "hiring people with disabilities is not just a good thing for businesses to do, it is good for business. People with disabilities are as productive and committed employees as their non-disabled colleagues."

During October, the Department on Disability Services will sponsor and participate in several events to educate businesses and residents about employment opportunities and challenges for people with disabilities. DDS Director Laura Nuss acknowledged that the Agency's ongoing employer education sessions keep the issue of employment for people with disabilities in the forefront. Said Nuss, "Too often, people without disabilities underestimate the skills and the talents of people with disabilities. There is dignity in work and so much untapped ability in the people we serve. It is our responsibility to ensure that people with disabilities have access to every possible opportunity to pursue their aspirations and dreams, and others will soon learn that our success will in turn have a significant impact on society and our city."

-30-