

# APSE ECHO

Employment Choice Hope Opportunity



Fall 2005



Tom Jennings, DVRS Director

## NJ APSE Hosts Networking Breakfast

By Jennifer Joyce

Nearly 80 interested Executive Directors, Supported Employment Coordinators, and other Supported Employment professionals gathered at the Scotch Plains Campus of UMDNJ on Thursday, October 20, 2005 to hear Tom Jennings, Carol Grant, and Kevin Martone share their thoughts on Supported Employment in New Jersey.

Tom Jennings, the Director of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS), was the first speaker of the morning. After reviewing the mission of DVRS, Jennings provided the audience with an update on DVRS services that included information about new forms of documentation, the increase in fees for job coaching services from \$44 to \$51 per hour, and a new format to review supported employment programs. In

addition to sharing statistics on the number and types of programs funded through DVRS and the number of individuals receiving job coaching services, Jennings proceeded to discuss the additional funding received to increase the number of individuals with mental illness receiving supported employment services. This additional one million dollars will be designated for 450 new referrals with mental illness. Jennings expressed a need to increase funding and reach out to more individuals who can benefit from SE services, mentioned the tightening up of federal funding and the impact that the movement to cut 50 billion Medicaid dollars would have on SE in New Jersey, and spoke about a vision to get a Cost of Living increase annually in the budget.

The discussion continued with Carol Grant, the Director of the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD). Grant highlighted the fact that employment for people with developmental disabilities was a large part of the national dialogue conducted at the Alliance for Full Participation Summit held in Washington, D.C. in September. Grant shared that people with disabilities having meaningful work is a priority with DDD and that they are currently surveying the system to determine what services are provided. She referenced a recent survey DDD conducted with students with developmental disabilities ages 16-21. Although the results showed that nearly all surveyed had some sort of work experience, Grant expressed concern that the support to maintain these experiences is not available in the adult service system. She appeared optimistic that the move toward self-directed services, and the funding attached to those services, could provide the necessary supports to those individuals who want employment. Grant shared a desire to “continue the dialogue with APSE because I think it’s very important” and emphasized the importance of partnerships between the state agencies. She received applause when mentioning the need for a formal budget line for supported employment.

Recently appointed Assistant Commissioner of the Division of Mental Health Services (DMHS), Kevin Martone, identified the occurrence of similar themes among the speakers and spoke about the significance of the spotlight mental health has received through the efforts of Acting Governor Codey and the Task Force on Mental Health. As a member of the task force who had an opportunity to hear from the community through three public forums, Martone pointed out, “People want practical things [a place to live, addressing poverty, and jobs] to help them live gainful lives in the community.” Martone believes a push in the agenda of wellness and recovery and a need to be more in tune with evidence-based practices are important. He committed to continue to embrace the roadmap provided by the task force by focusing on increasing supported employment, playing a larger role in transition, and providing access to post secondary education for people experiencing mental illness.

The panel of speakers ended the session by answering questions from the audience. Transportation, housing, and the need to educate employers were among the topics discussed as a result of audience questions. The event was an overwhelming success and put employment back in focus for providers and state government.

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## **SE FUNDING: Where does it come from and what does it mean?**

By Leslie Long

*This article is the first in a series defining terms and funding for supported employment services in New Jersey.*

### **Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.**

Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 authorizes a federal-state Vocational Rehabilitation Program to provide services to persons with disabilities to prepare for and engage in gainful employment. States receive federal money and are required to provide state matching dollars based on a formula that considers the state population and per capita income.

New Jersey administers its VR program through the Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS). Funds are provided through the U.S. Department of Education's Title I grant program.

Title I was recently reauthorized as part of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The 1998 amendments to the Rehab Act required that the US Department of Education establish and publish evaluation standards and performance indicators for the Vocational Rehabilitation program. Monitoring of performance is done through Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) that is currently undergoing a restructuring that will take effect by October 1, 2005.

The Rehabilitation Act requires state Vocational Rehabilitation agencies to enter into cooperative agreements with other state workforce investment system partners. The workforce investment system includes a One-Stop system be set up in each state. New Jersey has One-Stops throughout the state. (For a listing of New Jersey's One-Stop Career Centers, go to [www.wnjp.net](http://www.wnjp.net).) State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies are also required to coordinate with public education to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to work.

*Next Issue: Home and Community Based Waiver Services through Medicaid*

## **New Jersey Events December 2005 – March 2006**

### **NJ APSE**

For information:  
(732) 831-1114

<http://www.njapse.org>

**12/1**—*Job Development: Lessons from the Corporate Sales World*—Mullica Hill

**2/16**—*Social Skills*—Hamilton

**3/30-3/31**—*Annual Conference: Facing the Future XIV* – Hilton Woodbridge, Iselin

### **THE BOGGS CENTER**

For information:  
(732) 235-9325

<http://rwjms.umdnj.edu/boggscenter>

**12/13-12/14** – *Employment Specialist: Advanced Level*—The Boggs Center, New Brunswick

### **RRCEP II**

For information:  
(716) 829-3934

<http://www.rcep2.buffalo.edu/>

#### **Location – Harrison**

**12/13** – *Counseling Skills for Direct Service Providers*

**1/9** – *Orientation to Supported Employment*

**1/19** – *Managing Challenging Behaviors*

**2/2-2/3** – *Job Coach I*

**2/7** – *Documentation & Record Keeping*

**3/15-3/16** – *Job Coach II*

#### **Location—Princeton**

**12/14**—*Orientation to SE*

**1/11-1/12**—*Job Coach I*

**2/15-2/16**—*Job Coach II*

#### **Location – New Brunswick**

**1/18-1/19**—*Addictions: The Bio-Psychosocial Aspects*

#### **Location—Cherry Hill**

**3/22**—*Working with Consumers with Traumatic Brain Injury*

#### **Location – Tinton Falls**

**12/14-12/15** – *Maximizing Client Choice Through Effective Goal Planning*

#### **Location – Camden**

**3/21**—*Addressing Potentially Dangerous Behavior*

### **CONFERENCES**

**3/9** – *Disability Law Conference: Protecting the Rights of People with Mental Disabilities* – Ancora Psychiatric Hospital (609) 292-5326 – <http://www.NJCivilRights.org>

**3/10** – *Thriving with a Disability: An Awareness of Health & Wellness* – Somerset Holiday Inn – (609) 989-6468

**3/23** – *Disability Law Conference: Protecting the Rights of People with Mental Disabilities* – Bergen Community College (609) 292-5326 – <http://www.NJCivilRights.org>

# The Latest News

## Disappointing Findings

By Jennifer Joyce

A series of reports released in October by Cornell University in collaboration with the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), provided disappointing information about workers with disabilities. According to these reports, the employment gap between workers with disabilities and workers without disabilities has widened, the poverty rate for people with disabilities rose, and the employment rate for people with disabilities declined.

Researchers found that the employment gap between those in the workforce with disabilities and those without went from 39.7% in 2003 to 40.3% in 2004. This increase indicates that there are fewer people with disabilities in the workforce relative to the total number of employed Americans. Andrew Houtenville, director of Cornell's Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Demographics and Statistics (StatsRRTC), states, "The rise in the employment gap suggests that people with disabilities are not participating in the recovery from the 2001 recession."

The reports have also shown that the poverty rate for people with disabilities has increased from 23.3% in 2003 to 24.1% in 2004. This rate rose more for people with disabilities (.8 percentage points) than those without disabilities (.2 percentage points). Some Cornell researchers suggest that these findings may be attributed to what they refer to as the "poverty trap" created by the federal regulations that cause people with disabilities to remain essentially unemployed in order to continue to receive government benefits. These researchers point out that the support they

receive is not significant enough to keep them out of poverty.

In addition, the reports indicated that the employment rate for working-age (ages between 21-64) Americans with sensory, physical, mental, or self-

care disabilities has declined from 37.9% in 2003 to 37.5% in 2004. This rate increased for workers without disabilities from 77.6% in 2003 to 77.8% in 2004. Some researchers believe that this decrease is due in part to the outsourcing abroad of positions often filled by workers with disabilities, but Andrew Imparato, president and chief executive of the AAPD says, "The employment rate for people with disabilities hasn't improved in the last twenty years, even when times were good."

According to Houtenville, Cornell plans to issue these reports annually at the beginning of October in an effort to "fill a pressing need for timely and relevant statistics about people with disabilities." These reports are available online at

<http://www.DisabilityStatistics.org>.

*"...the employment gap between workers with disabilities and workers without disabilities has widened."*

APSE ECHO is produced by the Communication/Outreach Division of NJ APSE.

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If you are interested in joining this division contact Jennifer at (732) 246-2525 ext. 32 or Glori at (908) 685-1444 ext. 225.

## Government Accountability Office (GOA) Reports on VR Programs

By Leslie Long

The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO), the audit, evaluation and investigative arm of Congress, released a report on the outcomes of more than 650,000 individuals throughout the country that exited Vocational Rehabilitation programs in fiscal year 2003.

According to the report, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs provides \$2.5 billion annually nationwide for federal-state vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs to assist individuals with disabilities in becoming employed. For fiscal year 2003, New Jersey reported 32.9% exited the VR program with employment after services were provided under an individual plan for employment (IPE), 14.2% exited during the application phase, 31.6% exited after limited services and 21.3% exited without employment after receiving services under an IPE. Of the 31.6% exiting with limited services, the report does not distinguish whether the individual became employed on his/her own after exiting the system.

In Fiscal Year 2003, NJ DVRS received \$41,337,069 in federal funds and provided a state match of \$11,187,796. In FY 2003, NJ DVRS average expenditure per person who exited with an employment outcome was \$12,952 compared with the national average of \$15,544.

In 2003, the GAO placed federal disability programs on its list of high risk programs because many of these programs have not kept up with scientific advances and economic and social changes. The GAO prepared this report to assist policy makers in determining how federal disability programs could more effectively meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. To view a complete copy of the report, go to <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05865.pdf>.



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*Submit Articles:*

*If you have articles, information, or upcoming events to add to the newsletter, please e-mail them to Jennifer Joyce at [jjoyce@arcnj.org](mailto:jjoyce@arcnj.org)*

**NJ APSE Presents:**  
**Training Opportunities**

**Topic:** **Job Development: Lessons from the Corporate Sales World**  
-The win/win approach in developing job opportunities.  
-How to meet the employers goals while winning the job?

**Speaker:** **Mr. Peter Odell, Corporate Sales Training Consultant**

**Date:** **December 1, 2005 (RSVP by 11/25/05)**  
**10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.**

**Location:** **Mullica Hill Library**  
**389 Wolfert Station, Mullica Hill**

**Topic:** **Social Skills**  
-How do we teach the intangibles of the workplace to ensure success for the people with disabilities we support?

**Speakers:** **Dan Baker, The Boggs Center, & Scott Elliott, Executive Director Progressive Center for Independent Living**

**Date:** **February 16, 2006 (RSVP by 2/10/06)**  
**Time:** **9:00 A.M. – 11:00 P.M.**

**Location:** **Allies Headquarter, Hamilton, NJ**

*Call NJ APSE at (732) 831-1114 to sign up now!  
APSE members free, non-member training fee \$10.00*

**FY 2007 Budget**

By Michael Prendergast

New Jersey APSE has again joined forces with the Disability Budget Coalition to communicate the importance of improved funding for supported employment services in New Jersey. Over the upcoming months please look for Action Alerts regarding these issues. Successful realization of these goals can only be accomplished through the ongoing assistance of our membership.

The following is an excerpt of the NJ APSE recommendations from the proposal.

**Recommendations**

- Appropriate additional funding to the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services Grant-in-aid budget totaling \$4 million. Specifically:
  - Add \$4 million to Supported Employment Services for increased long-term follow-along services for participants who are not eligible for services from a secondary funding source, making the total for Supported Employment Services \$6.55 million.
- Appropriate additional funding to the Department of Human Services for Supported Employment Services to facilitate employment for individuals with disabilities totaling \$11.5 million. Specifically:
  - Increase funding to the Division of Developmental Disabilities by \$6.5 million to serve individuals with the most severe disabilities in employment who are priority on the Waiting List and students who are aging out of special education services.
  - Increase funding to the Division of Mental Health Services by \$5 million in order to serve an additional 1000 people in Supported Employment services.
  - Appropriate \$1.5 million to the Division of Mental Health Services for a critical new program to provide Supported Employment services to students transitioning from school to work. Funds would assist approximately 300 students with mental illness.

To become a member of the Governmental Affairs Division, please email Michael Prendergast at [mprendergast@arcnj.org](mailto:mprendergast@arcnj.org).