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Center for Persons With Disabilities

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PROGRAMS AVAILABLE TO HELP THOSE WITH DISABILITIES GAIN EMPLOYMENT

October 22, 2009 by cpehrson

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and the theme is Expectation + Opportunity = Full Participation. It is intended to urge employers, as they seek to fill positions, to embrace and consider the talents of all workers, including workers with disabilities.

President Obama has announced several new initiatives that will support the millions of people in this country with disabilities who are working or who want to work.

In President Obama's words: "My Administration is committed to ensuring that all Americans have the chance to fulfill their potential and contribute to our nation. ... As the nation's largest employer, the Federal Government and its contractors can lead the way by implementing effective employment policies and practices that increase opportunities and help workers achieve their full potential. We must also rededicate ourselves to fostering an inclusive work culture that welcomes the skills and talents of all qualified employees."

Included in the new initiatives will be a day-long Federal Government-wide job fair for people with disabilities. The Fair will take place in early spring 2010 throughout the country and will include workshops throughout the day on a variety of topics that will support and inform potential employees with disabilities.

Utah's Governor Gary R. Herbert has issued a declaration drawing attention to this "untapped resource" in Utah. He states that there are "23,000 people in Utah's workforce with a disability," and that the "estimated unemployment rate of working age (25 to 61) civilian men and women with a disability in Utah is 55%.

The Center for Persons with Disabilities, in collaboration with the Utah Department of Health and other state agencies and organizations, has worked to increase the employment outcomes for people with disabilities in Utah through a project called Work Ability Utah. Its purpose is to enable people with disabilities to find and retain competitive employment by providing information and resources to both the perspective employees and employers.

Another project funded through the CPD for several years, The Supported Employment Specialist Training (SEST) project, prepares specialists to serve as job coaches to adults with developmental disabilities who want to work but often need support to achieve job readiness. Supported employment specialists also assist others who are ready to enter or re-enter the workforce and already possess marketable skills and educational backgrounds, but need assistance with their job search.

In these economic times, it is good to know that there are programs that offer those with disabilities the best chance possible to attain and maintain employment.