
ICED NEWS

STATE INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

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ICED CELEBRATES 30th ANNIVERSARY

The Co-Chairs of the Interagency Committee on Employees with Disabilities, Rocco J. Claps, and Carol L. Adams, Ph.D., cordially invite you to attend the ICED 30th Anniversary Event, which will be held September 15, 2004, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Springfield. Registration information is available on the Committee's website (www.state.il.us/ICED) or from Susan Allen, of the Committee. Contact information appears on the back of this newsletter. The event will consist of conference workshops addressing ADA developments, as well as other legal requirements, entertainment from the Schools for the Deaf and the Visually Impaired, and the ICED awards ceremony. There is no charge for the event.

People with Disabilities Face High Unemployment

Fourteen years after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, only one-third of adults with disabilities are employed. Alan Reich, president of the National Organization on Disability (NOD) said economic progress has been slow and that people with disabilities are "pervasively disadvantaged." The NOD/Harris Survey of Americans with Disabilities found that people with disabilities are poorer than non-disabled people – three times as likely to have annual incomes less than \$15,000 – and twice as likely to have had dropped out of high school as non-disabled people. Lower incomes mean that people with disabilities have problems with transportation and inadequate healthcare,

according to the study. Of people with disabilities who are employed, 20% said they experienced job discrimination. That was an improvement from four years' ago, when 36% of people with disabilities said they encountered employment discrimination.

Decrease of Federal Employees with Disabilities

In the last ten years, the number of federal employees with severe disabilities has dropped by almost 20%. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), from Fiscal Year 1994 to Fiscal Year 2003, the numbers of federal workers with serious disabilities fell from 31,860 to 25,551, a 19.8% decrease. According to Catherine McNamara, an EEOC attorney, this decline is particularly important because the federal government has always been a model employer with jobs available for everyone. "The community of people with disabilities is a huge, untapped resource of many, many talented, qualified people who are not being drawn into the workplace, McNamara said. "And as the federal government faces more and more of a challenging world and it is dependent on its employees to meet those challenges, we're going to need to tap as many areas of talent as we can." The explanation for the falling numbers of workers with disabilities in federal jobs is not clear. Possible reasons are that more employees with disabilities retired or left for jobs in the private sector, that federal recruiting efforts have decreased due to a shrinking federal work force, or fewer employees are disclosing their disabilities.

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Number of State Workers with Disabilities Declines

As the overall number of state workers decreased over the last few years, the percentage of state employees with disabilities declined even more sharply. From October 2001 to July 2003, state government workforce declined by 16%, while the percentage of state employees with disabilities was reduced by 29%.

The State of Illinois practices affirmative action in employment of people with disabilities, and each year state agencies examine their workforces in relation to the availability of people with disabilities in the Illinois labor force. Currently, about 5% of the state workforce is made up of people with disabilities, while about 11% of the Illinois labor force has disabilities. State agencies that are underutilized by people with disabilities set goals for this group as a part of their annual affirmative action plans. There are specific programs, including the Severely Disabled Option, that the Department of Central Management Services uses to place employees with disabilities.

Educational Programs on Disability Issues

There are many web-based programs and other distance-learning programs on disability issues that should be of interest to agency ADA Coordinators, EEO/AA Officers, and employees with disabilities. The first is an introductory web course on the Americans with disabilities Act, proving basic principles and core concepts about the law. This course can be accessed through the following website: www.adabasics.org.

The Disability Law Research Project sponsored a series of webcasts on ADA issues, which is archived on the website: www.ilru.org. These programs, which were presented earlier this year, can be played or reviewed through a transcript. Sessions include the following: *Lane v. Tennessee*: Implications for Title II of the ADA; Challenging Accommodation Issues: Ask the Job Accommodation Experts; Pre-Employment and the ADA – Disability Questions and Medical Exams; and Smart Disability-Related Employment Policies. Handouts from these programs are also available from the website.

A series of distance learning sessions on the ADA is sponsored by the Great Lakes ADA and Accessible IT Center (www.adagreatlakes.org). The monthly programs are connected to remote sites via the telephone, and the sessions are available in Chicago, Springfield, and Carbondale through the auspices of the Department of Human Services. Find out more about these programs from the Great Lakes ADA Center's website. To attend one of these programs at a DHS site, call (312) 793-0034 (V), or (312) 793-3597 (TTY).

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Note: This newsletter is available in alternative formats upon request.