

Competitive Employment for Individuals with an Intellectual Disability

May 22, 2015

The Department of Human Services (DHS)' proposed FY 2015-2016 budget includes \$500,000 to provide additional supports to promote competitive employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual disability. This initiative is a collaborative effort between DHS' Office of Developmental Programs (ODP), the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), and various disability advocacy groups.

FY 2015 2016 Proposed Budget Initiative

- \$2,347,000 to assist Pennsylvanians with an intellectual disability to secure or maintain community-integrated, competitive employment. Funding includes:
 - \$500,000 in state funds from DHS' Office of Developmental Programs (ODP), allowing for \$1,847,000 in federal Vocational Rehabilitation matching funds through OVR

"Independence, choice, and opportunity are values that all Pennsylvanians want, including those Pennsylvanians living with an intellectual disability," said DHS Acting Secretary Ted Dallas. "Our goal at DHS is to help as many people as we can realize these goals by helping them make their own contribution to the community in which they live and work."

Many individuals with an intellectual disability are able to work, but do not have access to employment opportunities. Through increased funding and collaboration between ODP and OVR, this initiative will lead to more individuals with an intellectual disability securing or maintaining competitive employment within their communities.

Pending the approved budget, this joint ODP-OVR initiative will enable OVR to build staff capacity with intellectual disability expertise, and allow existing vocational rehabilitation counselors to carry smaller, more specialized caseloads for this population. This initiative will also allow for the possibility of expanded training and job-readiness programs, paid work experience for high school students with an intellectual disability, person-centered and customized employment demonstration projects, and increased outreach to parents and families.

Impact: Competitive Employment

Virginia started working at the YMCA in April 2013, and is responsible for keeping the YMCA clean for its members. When Virginia began at the YMCA, she worked 1 day a week, but due to her spectacular abilities and positive attitude she increased her schedule to 3 days a week, and then to 4. Virginia does such an outstanding job that she has been asked a few times to cover for her supervisor. As Virginia approaches her 2-year anniversary at the YMCA, she continues to play a significant role at her place of employment, not only to her co-workers, but to the members that utilize the services.

