



A Collaborative Publication from MSCDD, DRMS, and IDS

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Employment Matters in Mississippi

Welcome! Thank you for reading the fifth issue of FUSE, a joint publication of the Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities (MSCDD), Disability Rights Mississippi (DRMS), and the Institute for Disability Studies (IDS) at The University of Southern Mississippi. All three agencies are funded by the federal Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities to ensure that people with developmental disabilities receive services as required by the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. You can learn more about the agencies by researching their websites, listed on the agency pages of this newsletter.

The collaboration among our three agencies continues to expand and increase to benefit people with disabilities in our state. The more closely our agencies work together on issues to create the change that ultimately improves the lives of people with developmental and other disabilities, the greater the impact for all of Mississippi. We continue to collaborate with self-advocates, families, and professionals as evidenced by some of the work highlighted in this edition.

Governor Phil Bryant Signs the Competitive Employment Act April 23, 2015

Gov. Phil Bryant's signing of the Competitive Employment Act will further expand the growing emphasis on employment opportunities for Mississippians with disabilities. The act focuses on promoting policies that explore and develop meaningful jobs for people with disabilities based in the community that have living wages comparable to those earned by people without disabilities.

For more information, see the article on page 3.





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Breaking Down Barriers and Opening Minds

The North Mississippi Regional Center (NMRC) has received the grant, “Overcoming the Wall by Building a Solid Foundation for Increasing Community Employment for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities,” from Mississippi’s Council on Developmental Disabilities (MSCDD) for over two years. The grant’s emphasis is on employment, specifically, community employment. Ms. Edith Hayles, NMRC’s Center Director, and the staff in the Community Support Services department (CSS) actively strive to “promote the independence of” and “enhance the abilities of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities” (IDD) through their continuous efforts of facilitating or advancing employment opportunities.

NMRC employment advocates routinely face “decision makers” misconceptions and misinformation as barriers for individuals with IDD. This grant has transformed those “decision makers” into employment advocates for individuals with disabilities (Zaxby’s, Chili’s, Belk Stores, and others). MSCDD’s funding of this grant has afforded NMRC’s CSS department the opportunity to provide information at all levels in the business arena (Mississippi Manufacturers Association, Mississippi Economic Council, and Mississippi Economic Development Council), city/county board meetings, and economic/civic groups (Chambers of Commerce, Economic Councils, Partnerships). The project provides opportunities for current employers and employees to voice their positive experiences, educates potential employers of the facts versus fiction of the realities of employing individuals with IDD, and conducts outreach through employment advocates using various resources from print to media.

Because of the three main components of the grant (education, outreach, and exposure), this initiative has had a positive impact on increasing employment for the individuals currently receiving services from the NMRC as well as a statewide impact for all individuals with disabilities as this work continues.

Mississippi disAbility

MegaConference
June 16-17, 2016
Jackson Marriott



Keynote Speaker
Toby Willis

<http://msmegaconference.org/>

Additional Employment Resources

Employment Resources in Mississippi, Hiring People with Disabilities, Working with People with Disabilities, National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and a link to the MS Partnerships in Employment website: http://www.msccd.org/docs/MississippiEmploymentResources_Interactive.pdf

A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities: http://www.msccd.org/docs/NGA_REPT.pdf

Other employment resources: <http://www.msccd.org/resources>



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House Bill 836 –Competitive Employment Act signed into law!

During the 2015 Legislative Session, thanks to the support of a number of key legislators, including Sen. David Blount, Sen. Terry Burton, Rep. Carolyn Crawford, and Speaker Phillip Gunn, a key bill related to employment of people with disabilities passed and was signed by the Governor on April 23, 2015. This Act, referred to as the Competitive Employment Act:

- Declares that it is the policy of the state that **competitive employment in an integrated setting** shall be the first and priority option when offering or providing services and support to persons with disabilities of working age.
- Applies to state agencies that serve people with disabilities and/or provide employment services.
- Provides for oversight by reestablishment of the Disability Resource Commission (2005). The Commission includes self advocates, family members, state agency representatives, and disability advocacy organization representatives.

When to Discuss Your Disability with a Potential Employer - Tips and Resources

Deciding when to disclose your disability to a prospective employer depends on your type of disability, how you are positioning yourself for a particular job, your type of personality and temperament, and the type of employer you are targeting. In other words, there is no easy answer to this key question, especially if you have a hidden disability. But, every job seeker with a disability eventually needs to personally come up with a strategy for addressing this issue. Under the ADA, you are *not* required to disclose your disability to an employer. And, if and when you do, you are not required to tell *everything* about your disability. Here is a helpful link that provides strategies on 1) getting your foot in the door, 2) disclosing your disability to a prospective employer as soon as possible, and 3) positioning your disability as a competitive edge:

<http://blog.gettinghired.com/Home/tabid/159/entryid/72/when-to-discuss-your-disability-with-a-potential-employer.aspx>.

Keep in mind that once disclosed, the employer may ask additional questions about your disability and/or require information regarding your ability to safely perform the essential functions of the job. In general, the information revealed does have to be kept confidential. Remember, you should focus on your abilities to perform the essential functions of the job, not your disabilities. There is a useful question and answer section from Kent State University's career services center page that further addresses this issue and provides valid information. It can be found at: <http://www.kent.edu/career/jobs/interview/disabilityfaqs.cfm>.

DRMS STAFF NEWS

In 2014, DRMS added Managing Attorney Joi Owens to its staff. Ms. Owens is a Mississippi native and graduate of Mississippi College (MC) School of Law. She co-leads the Community Integration Team, focusing on systems advocacy, juvenile justice, and policy.

In May 2016, Micah Dutro, also an MC graduate, will relocate from the Delta to join DRMS as a Managing Attorney to supervise individual casework. DRMS is excited to have these energetic, dedicated, and experienced attorneys on board.



Institute for Disability Studies

Project SEARCH Southern Miss

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For several Hattiesburg High students, the first-day-of-school jitters were different than for most seniors. Instead of starting their last year of secondary school studying customary classwork, these students began a new pilot program in Mississippi called Project SEARCH Southern Miss. On Monday, August 17, 2015, these students began a journey toward independence, adulthood, and employment.

Project SEARCH Southern Miss is an eight-month training program that consists of daily employment preparatory skills training, community development, mentoring services and work internships. The goal is to increase the number of young adults with intellectual/cognitive and other developmental disabilities to obtain competitive, community-based employment.

Project SEARCH is driven by collaboration with strong Hattiesburg community partners. The University of Southern Mississippi serves as the host business. The Hattiesburg School District provides a full-time teacher. The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services supplies two job coaches, and the Mississippi Division of Medicaid offers waiver services for long-term support. The coordination and development of the Project SEARCH Southern Miss Program is funded through a grant from the Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities.



Project SEARCH students and staff with Dr. Rodney Bennett, President of The University of Southern Mississippi.

Project SEARCH® began in 1996 when Erin Riehle, director of the Emergency Department at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center, took her frustration of having high turnover jobs and turned it into a creative and innovative employment program for people with disabilities, especially those with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. Project SEARCH Southern Miss is the first program in Mississippi, joining over 400 programs across the United States and additional programs internationally.

For more information on Project SEARCH Southern Miss, contact Project SEARCH Coordinator Jin Joo Crosby at 601.266.6037. To learn more about the Institute for Disability Studies, call 601.266.5163 or visit: <http://www.usm.edu/disability-studies>.



2016 MISSISSIPPI DISABILITY MEGACONFERENCE

The Mississippi disAbility MegaConference is the state's largest conference for people with disabilities, their families, and professionals. A preconference event, DREAM NIGHT at the Jackson Zoo, will be held on June 15!



June 16 - 17, 2016
Jackson Marriott Downtown
<http://msmegaconference.org/>

Featuring Zac Anner

Zach Anner is a comedian, TV show host, fitness instructor, and writer. He has cerebral palsy. He won his own show in 2011 from the Oprah Winfrey Network—"Rollin with Zach." Zach likes to make people laugh and maybe even inspire them.

Taylor Carley Named First Self-Advocacy Coordinator at Institute for Disability Studies

Taylor Carley of Hattiesburg has been named self-advocacy coordinator at The University of Southern Mississippi Institute for Disability Studies (IDS). Carley is the first to hold this newly created position which highlights IDS' commitment to promoting self-advocacy in Mississippi with a focus on youth and young adults.

Carley began volunteering at IDS in 2012 with the STEP UP to Leadership Council and with the youth-focused programs. Later in 2012, he began his first service year with the TRIAD Service AmeriCorps Program, an inclusive service program that initially was focused on supporting the transition to adulthood for youth and young adults with disabilities. It was during this service year that he began to find his voice and had his first opportunity to share his story at an autism support group in Oak Grove. Since that first year, Carley has served two more years of national service. He has served as the co-president and is co-treasurer of the STEP UP Council and was honored with the first Breaking Barriers Award presented by the Mississippi Special Education Advisory Panel in 2014.

Carley has spoken at several local and state events and represented the STEP UP Council earlier this year at a regional higher education meeting and a self-advocacy council meeting, both held in Atlanta. He has presented at three state conferences on topics such as self-advocacy and employment for people with disabilities. Taylor recently began hosting a YouTube-based interview show called Chit Chat Thursday, which can be found at: <https://www.usm.edu/disability-studies/chit-chat-taylor>

Through his role as self-advocacy coordinator, Carley will be able to represent self-advocates and educate his peers on the various opportunities as they transition to adulthood. He will continue serving on the STEP UP Council as well as the Mississippi State Self-Advocacy Team. He plans to continue promoting his motto that "a disability is an ability, and I am just like everyone else."



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What can you do to make your community stronger, healthier, and more inclusive?

Register to vote, get to know your candidates and election dates, then CAST YOUR VOTE!

If you have a question about voter ID, call your local circuit clerk to find out the status in your area and where you may obtain a photo voter ID if you do not currently have one.



Looking for services in your area?

Mississippi Community Resource Directory

is a free, user-friendly database searchable by subject, county, or key words. The Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities currently manages the website. If you know of any services that are missing or need correcting, please use the “Contact” section of the MSCRD website to submit updates. We want to make this a great resource for families.

www.mscred.org

FUSE is a collaborative publication of the Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities, Disability Rights Mississippi, and The University of Southern Mississippi Institute for Disability Studies with funding from the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

Alternate formats may be requested.

The Campaign for Disability Employment

is a collaborative effort to promote positive employment outcomes for people with disabilities by encouraging employers and others to recognize the value and talent they bring to the workplace. Visit this site to find out what you can do to increase opportunities for individuals with disabilities:

<https://www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org/>

We want to hear from you!

If you found FUSE to be informative and wish to receive it by e-mail, please call 1-800-772-4057 and provide your e-mail address.