

disabilities is a form of discrimination reflects two evident judgments. First, institutional placement of persons who can handle, and benefit from, community settings perpetuates unwarranted assumptions that persons so isolated are incapable or unworthy of participating in community life. Second, confinement in an institution severely diminishes the everyday life activities of individuals, including family relations, social contacts, work options, economic independence, educational advancement, and cultural enrichment.” Olmstead, 527 U.S. at 600–01 (emphasis added)(citations omitted). This decision affects not only all persons in institutions and segregated settings, but also people with disabilities who are at-risk of institutionalization, including people with disabilities on waiting lists to receive community-based services and supports.

On June 18, 2001, President George W. Bush issued Executive Order 13217-Community-Based Alternatives for Individuals with Disabilities (the Olmstead Executive Order), in which he extended application of the Supreme Court’s Olmstead decision to all Americans with disabilities, and called upon selected federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Labor, to help support governors in their implementation of the Olmstead decision.

In March 2002, the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, Tommy G. Thompson, submitted a report to President Bush, titled *Delivering on the Promise*, on behalf of the Departments of Labor (DOL), Justice (DOJ), Education (ED), Health and Human Services (HHS), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Transportation (DOT), Veterans Affairs (VA), the Social Security Administration (SSA), and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). This report detailed actions being planned by the aforementioned agencies to eliminate barriers and promote community integration. See <http://www.hhs.gov/newfreedom/final>. In this report, the DOL and other federal agencies noted that successful planning and implementation efforts regarding the Olmstead decision must include competitive employment and employment-related supports.

ODEP Actions to Date

For the past two years (federal Fiscal Years 2001 and 2002) ODEP has funded two types of employment demonstration grants (“Customized Employment” and “WorkFORCE Action”) for persons with significant disabilities. The distinguishing characteristic of these grants has been the application of a

philosophy of “customizing employment” services, with enhanced coordination of these customized services with multiple community and state partners, especially One-Stop Career Centers. Documenting and supporting these demonstration grants with technical assistance on “customized employment” strategies has been the responsibility of ODEP’s National Center for Workforce Development for Adults with Disabilities (with access online at www.onestops.info and by telephone through the toll-free number 1-888-886-9898).

As a result of these and other customized employment efforts, improved employment outcomes for persons with disabilities are being realized. These promising results offer the possibility of increased employment outcomes for all organizations serving the employment needs of persons who are chronically homeless. In view of this potential, DOL is soliciting Cooperative Agreement applications from eligible organizations to demonstrate the expanded potential of “customized employment” strategies for persons who are chronically homeless.

It is worth noting that the term “customized employment” as a philosophy espoused in this SGA, along with its associated strategies (see definition for “customized employment” in Section VII), is not without precedent for groups serving the employment needs of persons who are chronically homeless. The principle of “individualizing” or “customizing” employment services, based upon the person’s individual needs, interest, and abilities is central to individual development planning approaches, which have long been recognized as necessary and advantageous when responding to the employment needs of persons who are chronically homeless. An added advantage of the “customized employment” approach, as defined in this SGA, is to increase the number and variety of employment strategies and options made available through the workforce development system in cooperation with organizations serving homeless people. In addition, these service strategies are also customized for the employer. This SGA attempts to bring the workforce development system and organizations serving persons who are chronically homeless into a closer alignment with effective disability-related employment methods and expertise.

Many strategies exist for creating and expanding competitive employment opportunities for persons who are chronically homeless. Many effective

strategies have emerged through decades of research and demonstration projects, and through other public and private activities promoting increased choice and self-determination for people with disabilities. These include multiple “customized” employment approaches such as supported employment and supported entrepreneurship; individualized job development; job carving and restructuring; use of personal agents (including individuals with disabilities and family members); development of micro-boards, micro-enterprises, cooperatives, and small businesses; and the use of personal budgets and other forms of individualized funding that provide choice and control to the person and promote self-determination.

ETA has supported demonstration efforts under the Job Training for the Homeless Demonstration Program, authorized under Section 731 of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987. The effort focused on a wide spectrum of housing options and supportive services that are needed by homeless individuals to be successful in completing training and securing and retaining employment. Evaluations of these efforts revealed successful strategies on how those services can be provided directly by employment and training agencies or arranged through linkages with public or private service providers. Most importantly, that effort revealed that neither housing nor employment services alone would help the homeless become self-sufficient; the two in combination are essential for their full reintegration back into the community.

ETA also administers Work Incentive Grants designed to provide seed monies to support the development of the One-Stop Career Center infrastructure with an objective of achieving model, seamless and comprehensive services for people with disabilities. These grants incorporate multi-program and cross-agency coordination at the state and local level and provide for increasing staff capacity to ensure access to multiple services and supports needed for successful entry or reentry into the workforce.

VETS has supported various homeless veterans grant programs and initiatives. The Homeless Veterans’ Reintegration Program (HVRP) was the first nationwide Federal program that focused on placing homeless veterans into jobs. Historically, VETS has held annual grant competitions for urban and non-urban grants. These grants have provided valuable information on approaches that work in the different environments. The HVRP program is