

Promoting Partnerships and Employment for People with Disabilities

Virginia Board for People with Disabilities and Virginia Commonwealth University,
Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports and Job Retention

Success Stories

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Mr. T is a 63 year old white male with Cerebral Palsy. He currently works for the State of Virginia as a Governor's Special Advisor for disability issues and workforce. He works full time in a salaried, benefited position and has been on the job for 19 months. Mr. T works 4 days a week on workforce issues and 1 day a week with the Secretary of Health and Human Services on all kinds of issues such as Olmstead, and Money Follows the Person Project. His charge is to make sure the state lives up to their responsibility with Olmstead and working and hiring people with disabilities.

Mr. T was previously employed by RRTC (Research Rehabilitation Training Center) for 14 years as a Training Associate. This was a full time position and he provided education and support for three audiences. He assisted people with disabilities in understanding their employment rights. He helped individuals to navigate the DRS/ESO systems as well as the Social Security Administration system. He assisted the business community in overcoming their fears of hiring individuals with disabilities and helped them with ideas of how they can accommodate individuals on the workplace. His third audience was Vocational Rehabilitation providers, helping them learn effective ways to work together as a team focused on the same goal and provide consumer directed services. Mr. T transitioned to his next job by working part time with RRTC and part time as the Governor's Special Advisor. He has also worked as a political activist during Governor's Kaine administration as Richmond Mayor. Mr. T was able to develop a good relationship with Mayor Kaine and address issues related to disability equality.

Mr. T ambulates with a power wheel chair and his speech is difficult to understand until one gets use to it. He has limited upper extremity mobility due to the Cerebral Palsy. Mr. T receives supports and accommodations on his current job. He has a personal job work support person at least 5 hrs of the day. His assistant is paid for by the state, but Mr. T is her boss. She has been working with Mr. T for 1 year as of March 2008. Mr. T uses special software on his computer to slow the keyboard keys to "CP Speed" as he explains. He uses telephone headphones that his assistant can listen at the same time to help with communication. The office door handles in his building were changed to accommodate his needs as well.

Mr. T feels he does not experience many challenges in working for the state and if he does he is not bashful about letting his needs be known. He feels the state is very accommodating in providing the supports he needs to do his job. When Mr. T speaks with HR managers he uses the old saying "Don't judge a book by its cover." "When I speak, folks listen because you have to really listen to understand me" he explains. His job has impacted his life by allowing him the opportunity to work directly with people who make state policy. He educates and helps them see the benefits of certain policies and how it relates to people with disabilities.

Mr. T's boss Dan LeBlanc says he calls upon Mr. T all the time for advice and really appreciates his suggestions and ideas.



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