

Editorial

We are happy to introduce the 2012 year with several important pieces of Congressional Testimony related to workplace incentives for people with disabilities in America. For many years now the Social Security Administration through the Ticket to Work and the Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (TWWIIA, Public Law 106–170) legislation has been working to help thousands of people with disabilities stay at work and be able to take full advantage of employment. Benefits specialists have been trained in large numbers in every state with the plan to enhance the economic outcomes for persons with disabilities.

In the latter half of 2011, the U.S. Congress invited several leading experts in the country to come to Washington D.C. and present the status of work place incentives and benefits counseling efforts on behalf of people with disabilities. These experts represent leadership in a university, a large state federal state vocational rehabilitation program, a large corporation and the leading advocacy group for persons with developmental disabilities. We believed that their testimony was so important and relevant to the field in these difficult and stressful economic times, that we asked these experts if they were willing to commit their testimony to an early 2012 edition of the Journal to which they all graciously agreed. In this testimony, APSE readers and other subscribers to JVR will find a wealth of highly relevant and timely information that provides our field with the status of workplace incentives and suggestions for how to improve outcomes.

These testimonies are based on a significant amount of time and research and clinical perspective. These opinions are important because they shape the policy and thought process for how to continue to improve the legislation and practices associated with the legislation.

Additionally in this issue we are able to publish an excerpted part of the National Disability Rights

Network (NDRN) report on segregation of persons with disabilities in sheltered workshops. The use of sheltered workshops as a medium of work for persons with disabilities has become increasingly controversial over the years and the Bates-Harris led report provided some startling statistics and commentary on the state of segregation and exploitation in the U.S. of persons with developmental and psychiatric disabilities, especially. This paper is ‘must read’ for APSE readers in the different states, as well as readers throughout the world that are trying to understand the present role of sheltered workshops and their impact on the lives of persons with significant disabilities.

Our field has come a long way. More and more people are going to work, transition to competitive employment is becoming the first choice, parents and are becoming more knowledgeable about their choices and technology is constantly empowering students to expand their capacities.

One almost feels we need to get out of the way and let, especially those young people with disabilities be allowed to show their potential and lead us in the field. The training techniques are there, the technologies are exploding and more and more businesses are opening their doors.....the time is now for everyone with a disability to work competitively if they want, using workplace incentives to the fullest level that they can.

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