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Iowa Disability Access Committees

Highlights

- The State of Iowa has codified a Committee to the State Workforce Development Board called the **Disability Access Standing Committee**, which, by law, is chaired and vice-chaired by the leadership of both State VR Agencies.
- This committee is replicated in constituency in each local area, though representation may be by counselors rather than leadership staff.
- The focus of committee activity is as follows:
 - Physical Access of the AJC (Workforce Center System);
 - Programmatic Access of the AJC (Workforce Center System); and
 - Guidance and Support to all Workforce Partner staff to support their comfort and capacity to fully include individuals with disabilities in service.

Description

The State of Iowa has created, in its own code, a committee to its State Workforce Board which focuses on Employment and Disability. This committee, in turn, has established local committees with the same focus and similar make-up for each of the American Job Centers in the state. The state committee provides guidance and support to each of the local committees.

Recognizing the strong emphasis in WIOA guidance for an employment system that is fully inclusive of and responsive to people with disabilities, the Iowa State Workforce Development Board and Core Programs established a Disability Access Standing Committee (<https://www.iowawdb.gov/about-disability-access-standing-committee>) to the Board in State legislation. In the Iowa Code, the Chair and Vice Chair of this committee represent both of the Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies in Iowa: Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Iowa Department for the Blind.

This committee advises the State Workforce Development Board with regard to the State Plan and strategies to include individuals with disabilities effectively in employment services and in the state's labor pool. The Disability Access Committee has established the strategy to replicate committee activity in local areas through the development of local access committees that respond to the local Workforce Development Boards. These local committees have the same structure (chairs are VR agency personnel) and similar charges, while being supported by the collaborative representatives of the Core Programs at the state level.



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Local Committee Operation

The activities of the local committees are maintained in a separate folder on Google Drive to support the state level in their oversight and support to all areas. There is a Program Coordinator at the state level who works with Core Partners to provide this support. Guidance to the field is provided collaboratively, as well as activities and meeting agendas designed to maintain progress and focus for all teams. Timelines are provided to each committee for specific activities to support meaningful progress in the state's strategy to achieve programmatic access and full inclusion of people with disabilities in AJC career services.

As these local committees operate, they provide a good venue for ongoing partner connection to address overall customer service issues as well. For those areas that have developed a practice of collaboration in their operation together as a Ticket to Work Employment Network, this committee is a good structure to support strategies in increasing service outcomes and investing Ticket resources in ways that will continue to improve customer service for individuals with disabilities.

Examples of Activities of the Local Disability Access Committees include the following:

1. Focus Groups
 - a. Staff
 - b. Job seekers
2. Accommodation Checklists
3. Accessibility Reviews and Transition Planning
4. Identification of Staff Training Priorities using the following:
 - a. Staff survey
 - b. Checklist

The Major Three Components of Current Focus for Local Committees:

1. Physical Access
2. Programmatic Access
3. Staff Comfort and Capacity in Serving People with Disabilities (Training)

Tools/Activities to Address those components

- Guidance
- Checklists
- Templates
- Deadlines
- Structure
- Iowa Code
- Partners – VR Led



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The training components are designed with face-to-face training, short guidance documents and recorded training through Zoom. Field staff may receive this training as a group in Wednesday morning meetings. The way the training is provided is established by local office supervisors and varies from office to office. New staff will have access to recorded training as a part of their new employee orientation.

The activity of the Access Committees is established in the Iowa Code and will be sustained as long as it continues to be in the Iowa Code. Note: This section of the Iowa Code is going to go through some changes, however, as the local area designations are currently going through changes in Iowa. How this will impact the operation of these committees in local offices is yet to be determined.

Evaluation and Potential Impact

1. Expected Increase in career outcomes for Individuals with disabilities served by the collaborative system
2. Recognized return on investment for all partners in infrastructure cost sharing and co-enrollment

For More Information

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