

For Immediate Release
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Five Non-Profit Provider Agencies Awarded up to \$2.5 Million as Regional Employment Collaboratives under new *Work Without Limits: A Massachusetts Disability Employment Initiative*

(Worcester, MA) - - - The University of Massachusetts Medical School and The University of Massachusetts Boston, in collaboration with the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Health and Human Services, is pleased to announce a total of up to \$2.5 million via a grant from the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to support the development of five Regional Employment Collaboratives under *Work Without Limits: A Massachusetts Disability Employment Initiative*. Located across the state, the Collaboratives bring together the work of non-profit vocational services agencies, regional state disability and workforce and economic development offices, and private industry partners to increase the successful recruitment and retention of workers with disabilities. These five Regional Employment Collaboratives will streamline services for job seekers and employers in order to bring more individuals with disabilities into the state's workforce. This initiative aligns with Governor Deval Patrick's goal of enhancing the economic well being of all Massachusetts residents through job creation and economic growth.

The five regional lead agencies have far-reaching experience in serving individuals with disabilities and were selected from 24 applicants in a competitive, panel-review bidding process. They are:

Berkshire County Arc, Pittsfield (Berkshire County)
Employment Options, Inc., Marlborough (Metro South West)
Jewish Vocational Service, Boston (Greater Boston)
PRIDE, Inc., Taunton (Bristol County)
Riverside Community Care, Dedham (South Central)

Each agency will receive \$100,000 in start-up funding; an additional \$200,000 is available to the lead agencies during each of the following two years, contingent upon performance and availability of funding.

"Every one of these agencies has proposed innovative and effective approaches to improving the employment rate of individuals with disabilities through a collaborative service delivery and business engagement model," said Dr. Jean McGuire, Assistant Secretary for Disability Policy and Programs at the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services. "With technical assistance from the University and close involvement with state agencies, it is expected that these Collaboratives will demonstrate new approaches to dramatically improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities," said Dr. Jay Himmelstein, Principal Investigator of the CMS grant and Professor of Family Medicine and Community Health at the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

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The Collaboratives will work to improve competitive employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities through enhanced teamwork, communication and coordination among employment service providers, state agencies, employers, and people with disabilities. Spanning catchment areas across the state in Boston, Greater Boston, as well as in the Western, Southern, and Central portions of Massachusetts, these Collaboratives will integrate service systems to deliver the maximum support to people with disabilities seeking employment. The over-arching goal is to connect these potential employees to a job in a mainstream, integrated workplace where they are paid a prevailing wage.

As specified in the request for proposals, Collaboratives will:

- Aim to improve the employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities within regions of Massachusetts.
- Establish partnerships among employment service providers to engage with and meet the needs of businesses and employers.
- Optimize partnerships with local workforce boards and Career Centers to enhance.
- Identify clear processes for engaging local employers;
- Use regional labor market data to inform Collaborative work.
- Work in partnership with the Initiative in technical assistance, training and evaluation.

The Collaboratives seek to: increase the number of people with disabilities who are employed; improve high wages and receipt of employer benefits such as health insurance; improved job retention rates among workers; and diversify job opportunities for workers.

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About – Work Without Limits: A Massachusetts Disability Employment Initiative - This initiative is a public/private partnership bringing together people with disabilities, policy researchers, state policy makers, employment service providers, businesses and employers, and other stakeholders to create an environment that maximizes work opportunities for youths and adults with disabilities and strengthens the Massachusetts workforce. Work Without Limits is funded by the Massachusetts Medicaid Infrastructure and Comprehensive Employment Opportunities (MI-CEO) grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services through the UMass Medical School (CFDA No. 93.768). The grant is managed through a partnership with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Commonwealth Medicine Center for Health Policy and Research at UMass Medical School, and the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston. For more information about the MI-CEO Grant, please visit www.mi-ceo.org.

About the University of Massachusetts Medical School

The University of Massachusetts Medical School, one of the fastest growing academic health centers in the country, has built a reputation as a world class research institution, consistently producing noteworthy advances in clinical and basic research. The Medical School attracts more than \$200 million in research funded annually, 80% of which comes from federal sources. UMass Medical School is the academic partner of UMass Memorial Health Care, the largest health care provider in Central Massachusetts. For more information, visit www.umassmed.edu.