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Best Practices in Action - South Dakota-
Leading the Nation on Jobs for People with Disabilities

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>> All right. Good afternoon and welcome to the RespectAbility webinar for June 6th 2016. My name is Phillip and I am absolutely delighted to share where you best practices in action. The focusing on South Dakota. This is the first of our series of summer learning opportunities and we're very glad that you could join us today. As you know, RespectAbility is an organization focused on empowering Americans with disabilities to pursue the American dream.

We do this by advocating and educating around policies and best practices that are driving the needle forward and helping more people become empowered and we're pleased to shine light on the state which is leading innovation for employment outcomes for people with disabilities. That state is South Dakota and I have the honor to introduce secretary Gloria Pearson who is going to talk about her work and her governor's work. I want to thank you our sponsor for this. JP Morgan Chase has been helping us provide these opportunities.

>> Good afternoon, thank you everyone for enjoying us.

I am the cabinet secretary of the Department of Human Services in South Dakota I was appointed by Governor Daugaard and began as secretary in November. I've been in the field for 28 years and most of my experience is in the private sector. I'm very pleased to serve a governor so committed to those with disabilities. Also with me is Eric Weiss. We have been invited to share innovation on best practices and very excited to be here.

After the PowerPoint Eric and I will be available for questions. I'd like to start with a little background information. 51% of South Dakotans with disabilities are employed. Making the state number one in terms of having the highest employment rate of any state in the nation and earlier this year, I was delighted to learn that our state was ranked number one and perhaps there is a correlation with our state's initiatives. We hope so. We do have employers from every sector from airline to supermarkets from banking to construction, all working together to break down employment barriers for people with disabilities. And although we're proud of South Dakota's employment rate of people with disabilities I want to note that we don't take credit as a division or a department for the state's performance. We'd like to but there are just so many other factors like the availability of jobs for instance. And the state's low unemployment rate that also play a role in the state's performance in these measures. And also noted on the slide, in bullet two, you see that in 2014, 34% of U.S. civilians with disabilities between the ages of 18-64 were employed compared to 75.4% of people without disabilities and that's a gap of 41%. It also points out that there's variation in the ratings of employment between the states. They vary from a high of 50.1% to a low of 25.6%. This slideshow South Dakota's performance compared to the national average over a several year span. Survey results also show that South Dakota ranked fifth in the nation in the difference between the respective employment rates of people with and without disabilities. These statistics are from the American community survey the American community survey which we call ACS is an ongoing survey which provides information on an annual basis about people in the U.S.

Every year, the US Census Bureau contacts over 3.5 million households across the country to participate in the survey and there is information about the survey online that covers sample size, data quality and other details if you're interested. The ACS disability related data can also be found in the annual disabilities statistics compendium. The compendium gathers the most recent statistics on people be disabilities.

The compendium provides current statistics and time trends related to the prevalence of those with disabilities as well as health, community living and other outcomes of importance in monitoring the well-being of individuals with disabilities. There are also a number of tables and so forth available with report. This slide is from the disabilities statistics annual report. Americans with disabilities are still facing disproportionately low rates of employment compared to Americans without disabilities. So as you can see, there's still a lot of work to do. This slideshow shows the employment gap comparing South Dakota to the rest of the nation. This is the difference between the respected employment rates of people with and without disabilities. And as I mentioned, in 2014, the gap was 75% employment rate for people without disabilities and 34% for people with disabilities. A gap of 41%. As we confront some of the broader challenges around developing our workforce and creating jobs it's important to keep in mind that not everyone is affected equally. Individuals with disabilities should have to the extent possible the same opportunities as others do to live close to family and friends, to live independently and safely and contribute to their communities and to engage in productive employment. So why is it important to close the employment gap? There are many reasons this makes sense. Just to name a few there's the willing workforce. People with disabilities have demonstrated ability. And are an untapped resource. It's also the smart thing for government to do. Individuals with disability are heavily reliant on government benefits and when people with disabilities are employed they're less reliant on government payments. And they contribute to the economy. It also makes very good business sense. Individuals with disabilities are a valuable asset for business. There are business model throughout the United States with proven results. Before we share information on some of the recent initiatives that have taken place in South Dakota I'd just like to highlight a few things. South Dakota has benefitted from strong leadership from the top when it comes to employment for people with disabilities. Governor Dugaard first did this in the NGA. He lead an initiative with Governor Dugaard called a better bottom line employing people with disabilities.

Governor Dugaard initiated South Dakota's work task force in 2014 that was formed to make recommendations aimed at increasing the employment rate of people with disabilities in South Dakota.

The governor has since helped out with our ability to help higher campaign that provides resources and technical assistance to businesses. And he also annually hosts the Governor's awards. A ceremony that recognizes the achievements of employers, individuals with disabilities and other South Dakotans for their contribution towards the rehabilitation and employment of people with disabilities. The employment works task force was a big step in the right direction. The group considered programs in South Dakota that were working in terms of ploy - - employing people with disabilities and they also identified areas of needs. Formulating recommendations and action steps that we could use to increase employment.

Of South Dakotans with disabilities. The findings of the task force included first of all, that we should find and support businesses to employ people with disabilities. That -- and second that we should connect businesses to employees with disabilities. Three, that we eliminate disincentives that exist. Four that we develop flexible systems and promote promising practices and, five, that we educate the public, providers, employers, and people with disabilities. I think we're beginning to reap the benefits of the seeds planted by that task force which grew into the employment works initiative. Okay. Now to some of the initiatives that have

been designed to impact the employment rate here in South Dakota. First, we recognize there is a need to support businesses and their efforts to hire people with disabilities. The ability for hire campaign was started because we heard that some businesses were ready and willing to hire people with disabilities but just didn't know where to start. This campaign includes the ability for hire website, advertising and hard copy information that is designed to support businesses who want to hire people with disabilities. Through this campaign we've been identifying businesses who have championed the cause. Common sense tells us that businesses are more trusting of other businesses than they would be of a government agency. So businesses like Camille's Sidewalk Cafe in Sioux Falls are already spreading the word. They've already given their own time to help.

In the coming year there'll be more outreach to other businesses and we will add more testimonials to the website. Focusing on what people can do is the key and that is how we change perception of disability. Not only in our state but in the country. We think it's how together we will increase the employment of people with disabilities. And through the ability hire -- ability for hire campaign we can shine a spotlight on what people can do. Here are three videos that were created for the ability for hire campaign. This first video features Kendra. She is employed in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

>> (Video).

>> Our second video that we'd like to share features the governor of South Dakota, Governor Dennis Daugaard. The last video we'd like to share with you features the Sioux Falls business Camille's Sidewalk Cafe that I mentioned. The department has created campaign materials and graphics for our social media sites as well. We post the material on social media and videos on our YouTube channel. As you can see by the numbers, we're reaching a large group through Facebook for the size of our state, anyway, and we're hoping to see this grow. We do think that more and more we are seeing social media as an effective outreach tool. We also heard from the task force that businesses value an incident point of contact. Someone that can help make a business make things happen. The division of rehabilitation services created a business specialist position with this purpose in mind. This is similar to what other VR agencies are doing in other state to treat businesses as their customers as well. We feel it's important to reach out to our employers. Our vocational rehabilitation staff have become increasingly involved in non-disability related business organizations like the local chambers of commerce. This offers additional avenue to connect businesses to potential employees with disabilities. VR helps to support business to business organizations in larger communities too. These organizations help to provide education and technical assistance in areas where there is a large concentration of businesses. We refer to these organizations as business resource networks. The business resource networks provide businesses with education, awareness and resource to promote the successful hiring of people with disabilities. And by clicking the link at the right at the bottom of the page it will take you to the business resource network website. As we all have found, sometimes the internet can be a powerful tool for individuals with disabilities when finding employment. We've enjoyed some success with our ability to hire campaign. Recently the department nominated Camille's Sidewalk Cafe in Sioux Falls for the Ruderman Best in Business Award. This award is given to those who hire, train and support people with disabilities. We also received three awards for this campaign. The highlight of a couple other initiatives. First of all vocational rehabilitation has offered contracts to community support providers to increase the capacity of their community

employment programs. These funds were made available through our RFPs and they support a portion of new employment specialist salaries for the limited period of time. 17 community providers were awarded funding to expand services and vocational rehabilitation helps with the oversight, training and technical assistance for these. In order to develop the quality of job developers in the state, we now offer a higher fee per service rate for employment specialists who receive their certified employment support professional credentials through the association of people supporting employment first which, as you guys know is called APSI. As a part of this this helps with the one time cost of the exam and the ongoing training needs for the employment specialist too. So we went from zero certified employment specialists to 75 as a result of this. A more recent partnership has developed with the South Dakota retailers association. This is a 3,900 member statewide business organization that provides services to and represents the interests of retail businesses. They understand the role that people with disabilities can play in meeting the workforce needs in their businesses in South Dakota. They've welcomed vocational rehabilitation to provide training to businesses. They've promoted the department's initiative in their news letters and most recently were one of the three organizations nationwide that was selected for a pilot program with the office of disability and employment policy that is aimed at increasing workplace inclusion of people with disabilities entitled getting down to business.

Also included is the division of developmental disabilities. This is the division that manages our home and community base waiver that provides support for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The division has incentivized employment in the community system for those supported. They provide resource to the community providers and facilitating discussion on employment. To highlight a few things they have done. First of all they increased the supported employment rates. And secondly, they worked with rehabilitation services on the establishment grants to fund the employment staff of community providers. Third, they've created some tools that have been helpful to providers in the employment area. One in particular called person-centered employment guide and we've also eliminated a disincentive to work that existed in the waiver. Schools all across South Dakota have participated in what we call Project Skills. That provide paid work experience to students with disabilities.

Schools provide the job development, job coaching and follow along. Vocational rehabilitation pays the wages and the students gain soft skills that prepare them from high school to the workforce. So I would just like to thank you for your attention and for given the chance to share these initiatives. We're available now for any questions that you might have.

>> Secretary, this is Jennifer president of RespectAbility and I just could not thank you enough not only for this terrific presentation but far more importantly for this breakthrough work which really sets a national standard. I want to personally congratulate you because the outcomes that you're getting with your very high employment levels compared to other states really give inspiration to all the other states that have half the outcomes that it is indeed, possible when we look at states like Vermont or Maine or West Virginia. Some of the other states where they're getting, you know, not nearly the outcomes that we're getting from your case. You provide an inspiration for everyone. But listening to your presentation, I had sort of three questions that I wanted to ask. The first of which is what sort of surprised you in this process? You know, what was the unexpected process or piece of information as you went through it and, secondly, did you get any money back

through ticket to work or anything else because you were able to get people off of federal benefits? I know, for example, that the state of Wisconsin got tremendous amount of money from the Social Security administration because they got so many people off of benefits by getting jobs so my second part was did you see any financial benefit from doing this and my third piece is about the moving conversation in Washington around criminal justice reform. That we're seeing a real bipartisan consensus that a lot of the nonviolent offenders who have been in prisons and jails for so long in America should be released. We know at RespectAbility because we're working very deeply on a white paper on these issues that we're going to be releasing on June 20th that the prisons and jails are absolutely filled with those with disabilities. Are you thinking through how that might impact your work if a large number of individuals become returning citizens and need services to get jobs as they reenter into the communities. Thank you for your work. We're really excited about the process that you're making in your state.

>> Well, thank you, Jennifer. For your very kind words. I appreciate that and we are more than happy to share anything that we've learned with what we benefitted from our experience and make it their own. As far as surprises, I'm not sure if you mean in the process of kind of compiling this information or just in general since we have been doing this. But I guess, you know, I haven't had a lot of surprises. I have been very happy with the cooperation and the wonderful interests that we've found among employers and just all the different stakeholders who are so willing to step forward and help with anything that we're trying to do and that's been wonderful. Your question about the Ticket to Work. We have absolutely seen financial benefits. I don't have the numbers right in front of me but I know it's over a million dollars and more than that in terms of money that we have received for getting people to work. And, you know, your comments about the criminal justice system, I am aware of those issues and I do know that like all of our rehabilitation programs are probably going to need to be a part of the success of getting people back to work. I don't know much about that in our state right at this point but we certainly have had some criminal justice reform as well which is a making a big difference in the lives of people. I want to give Eric Weiss a chance to mention a couple thoughts he has as well.

>> I'll just mention one more thing, thank you, Gloria. You know, when it came to the employment works task force and the input from employers in particular that helped to create some of the recommendations that Gloria shared earlier. If employers were pretty specific about what they thought the landscape was of hiring people with disabilities in South Dakota and they were outspoken in what they felt was key to moving that initiative ahead.

>> I know we have a question in the chatbox but, operator, do you want to remind folks how to answer a question by phone.

>> Participants can press 7#. That's seven followed by the pound sign on your telephone keypad to indicate that you'd like your line unmuted. That's 7# on your telephone keypad.

>> Great, do we have any phone questions? Because I know we have one in the chatbox.

>> Not at this time.

>> All right so Jenny asks is there a type of business prevalent in hiring those with disabilities such as restaurants perhaps? Secretary, you want to take that first?

>> Sure, we'll go ahead and answer this and Eric has some thoughts he'd like to share on this.

>> You know I think we see in the state and it's come through in recent state plan that there's some high demand occupations in the state. And probably that's similar in states across the nation. So those are positions, a lot of times these are entry level positions. And there are opportunities there for people with or without disabilities. You know, I think -- so, you know, the question asks about a type of business that is prevalent in hiring people with disabilities such as restaurants. And I would say, yes, that's an opportunity that is a lot of times readily available for people, like I said with or without disabilities to, you know, to find employment. But I think there's other businesses out there as well that are look -- that have workforce needs and they're not looking for entry level positions as much but the middle management positions. The skilled employees that they need to fill their workforce demands.

>> Yeah, I apologize we don't have our charts in front of us but we do chart this data at the end of the year in terms of where people have found employment in which sectors of the economy. And as I recall, it is fairly broad. I mean, there's some manufacturing, some management, some retail and a variety of things. But can't give you the specifics today. Sorry.

>> No, you still talk great things. We know, this is Phil Pauli from RespectAbility. We know that there's been great outcomes, training youth with disabilities to go into hospitality jobs, health care jobs and jobs in elder care. The sky is the limit when properly training and preparing people. I interacted with deaf forklift operators in distribution center down in Las Vegas. With the right training and supports people can really achieve whatever they want to.

Now next we have a question from Pamela M. who asks, what is this minimum wage in your state and what is the average wage of people with disabilities who get jobs?

>> The minimum wage right now is 8.55. I don't believe I have the average wage on hand right now.

>> Do you have some minimum wage, a lot use minimum wage through the workshops or is it predominantly are you working towards the competitive integrated employment and how do you balance that?

>> There are about 17 or so sheltered workshops in the state that are paying minimum wage. I just heard recently that one has made the decision not to do any subminimum wage work and we are doing a lot of work with our providers to educate them and to work toward eliminating the subminimum wage. Also our state developmental center has made the decision not to do any subminimum wage work as well. It's a work in progress I would say.

>> Definitely. Great. So we have another question online which is from Steve A. who works in VR from another state and his question is, how did you get the governor to lead this initiative is it because of his personal connection because of his parents?

>> His personal connection certainly does make him very interested in the field and it really did not take much coaxing. He's just very interested and wants to make sure people with disabilities have opportunities in this state. He firmly believes that people with disabilities work harder than people without disabilities because they have to and that they are a tremendous untapped resource that we want to make sure, you know, we give every opportunity that we can.

>> And then the next question back on the subminimum wage issue from Kendra is asking is South Dakota supporting people with disabilities who are participating in shelter programs and getting to achieve competitive integrated work.

>> Yes. Because we're a small state, we don't have as many providers as most

states. But all of the providers that we do have that have shelter workshops or subminimum wage also have an active supported employment program and that is their preferred service. But they, you know, obviously not everyone's in it. That is where those relationships that we talked about where rehabilitation services contracted with those providers to help them beef up their supported employment staff in order to grow that part of their business.

So, again, that is a work in progress but I think that they're headed in the right direction.

>> Great. Well thank you for answering that. Now I have a slightly different question. Talking about employers and job sectors where people with disabilities can succeed, some of our listeners may not know about section 503 of the rehabilitation act where new regulations require contractors to have a certain percentage of those employees be those with disabilities. Have you had any successes with partnering with them to get them trained for jobs?

>> This is Eric Weiss and, no we haven't done a lot of outreach to federal contractors in South Dakota. We have done some through our business specialist who's working with all businesses in South Dakota to get information out to federal contractors and to make vocational rehabilitation a resource I guess when it comes to connecting those businesses with people with disabilities. But in terms of specific campaign or outreach targeting federal contractors we haven't got to that point yet.

>> And then another question with that is we know the power of high expectations and supporting youth with disabilities to start thinking about what happens when the school bus doesn't come anymore. I'm curious have you had any efforts about outreach to parents and supporting them and working with them to help their kids become successfully employed when they're still in school and out of school?

>> That's a good question and something I forgot to mention earlier. When it come to employment works task force that was another thing that came through loud and clear not from the businesses but from the parents on the task force. They recognize the need to reach out to families to reach out to people with disabilities, and do so at a young age in order to change the mindset and to change the expectations of not just the people in the community but -- or the individuals with disabilities themselves but the family members at a young age.

>> Great. Operator, do we have any phone questions?

>> No one waiting on the phone.

>> I see a note in the chatbox about reverse integration.

>> Sorry I misread the question. So can you speak to the reverse integration piece?

>> Well, you know, I don't know that there's a concerted effort with that going on right now. What I can tell you is that there is some interest in opening venues and I will just use the example because it's the best one that we have. Art centers where artists come in and paint or sculpt or do what they do and those are integrated with other artists and there's a real partnership and then they have like a retail opportunity for selling their art and so forth. Now that wasn't really what the question was but that's the kind of an example I can give of something that is going on in the state.

>> Great. So something I know we haven't touched on that always weighs in is there's a lot of rural states out there that really struggle with access to transportation and for many people transportation is a critical area to employment. What are you doing around the access to transportation, anything like that.

>> This is Eric again, when it come to rural states you're right. Transportation is something we hear about as a need, we hear about it from the centers for independent living. We hear about it from surveys that we do to other groups of

people with disabilities. And there's not a lot of easy answers out there. And you know when it come to vocational rehabilitation it's something we can help with on the short-term and we can also give people skills to, you know, help them develop skills to access public transportation. But in some of those more rural communities, there simply aren't any options and so that's when it comes down to being creative using some national supports and figuring out a way to get from point A to point B.

>> And then, so, I'm curious, I really loved the video that you did of the sidewalk cafe and really getting that business perspective on what it's like hiring people with disabilities. I'm curious, like, are there any specific struggles that you've had with getting small businesses on board with hiring the diverse talent that people with disabilities bring?

>> You know, when it came to the businesses that you see in those videos these were the ones that were -- that really championed the cause like Gloria mentioned before. Camille's has been, for instance, has just been awesome and I think my recommendation to other agencies, other states that are interested in doing something similar is to look for those -- look to those small businesses first. Because it was easier at times to get them on board than some of the larger businesses who have more levels of bureaucracy and it takes a while for them to get permission to get involved in something like this. Where at Camille's Sidewalk Cafe for instance just said, yep, we'll do it and took off from there.

>> Any phone questions?

>> Not at this time.

>> All right. Anymore questions from our, let me ask them.

[Pause].

>> Another question I'm curious it sounds like you've got a very involved developmental disability council that's been working very hard on these issues. What is your relationship been like with them. Advocates in the community, what role can they play in further expanding job opportunities for people with disabilities?

>> That's a good question. Yes, we do have a good relationship with our council to small states and so they're just kind of right down the hall and they lend their support to many things that we'd like to do. You know, I think that the fact that we are such a small state sometimes the referrals are just come through friends and neighbors and contacts and it's really easy to kind of get things done when there's so few people involved that you have to work with. There just aren't a lot of layers of bureaucracy that way.

>> All right. All right. Any other questions from the phone audience?

>> No questions on the phone.

>> All right. All right. Eric and Daniel and Gloria, I'm curious, are there any kind of final parting thoughts that you would like to leave our audience with? Any key takeaways that you want to take them away with their work.

>> Nothing come to mind I just thank you all for your time it's been a pleasure talking to you all and if anybody wants to contact us in the future for any information our information is on the slides and we'd be happy to help anyway we can.

>> Eric?

>> You know, in addition to that I would just -- you know, you can find information on the employment works task force and other resources out on our website at [DHS.GOV](https://www.dhs.gov). I'm sorry, [SD.gov](https://www.sd.gov), yes.

>> Fabulous. All right, well, on behalf of RespectAbility, thank you so much team South Dakota we love what you're doing and we hope other people and states will learn from you about what's working and what's really effective and empowering

people with disabilities to pursue the American dream. This will conclude today's webinar. Next I would like to invite everybody to check out the next webinar next week June 15th at 1.30 PM eastern standard time. We're going to talk about renewing the commitment guide. Showcasing the work of the Chicago community trust and our lovely speaker on June 15th is going to be Irene bow win. President of ADA One LLC. This will talk about the requirements of ADA on nonprofits and we're really excited to offer this webinar for free due to the generous support of JP Morgan Chase and here is your contact information if you ever need to reach out to us. Please ask questions. The links to the download are in the chatbox and we'll post everything on the website shortly. Thank you so much for joining us and this concludes today's webinar.