

Minnesota's Disability Employment Initiative (MN DEI) is an innovative partnership among key MN youth-serving stakeholders focused on increasing the number of youth with disabilities, ages 14-24, served through Minnesota's youth workforce system. Its overall goal is to link MN youth with disabilities to gainful employment through individualized needs assessment and comprehensive services such as career planning, postsecondary career education, systems linkages and service coordination, and other promising practices.

The program model proposed by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) has been developed in consultation with multiple state agencies, Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs), content experts, and advocates for youth with disabilities and their families. It is also built upon a strong foundation of past program successes, working relationships with community-based organizations, and cross-agency commitment to serving Minnesota youth with disabilities.

MN's DEI program will serve **youth with disabilities, ages 14-24**. It is anticipated that a large percentage of youth served will have disabilities such as Emotional Behavioral Disabilities, Learning Disabilities, and Autism Spectrum Disorders or other Developmental Disabilities. In addition, MN DEI will target youth who have at least **one additional at-risk factor in addition to disability**, such as foster youth, homeless youth, out-of-school youth, teen parents, or ex-offenders. To address MN's unacceptably high achievement gap, MN DEI will actively recruit and serve youth with disabilities from diverse cultural communities.

MN DEI activities will increase the capacity of MN's WIA-funded youth programs to effectively meet the needs of youth with disabilities facing multiple challenges, for whom strategic interagency collaboration, blending and braiding of funding streams, and service coordination are critical to success. Because of the project's focus on serving youth with disabilities who may have multiple service needs, MN DEI will use ODEP's *Guideposts for Success* as a strategic model for assessing, planning, and coordinating supports needed by youth to reach their employment goals

MN DEI implementation sites will provide case management services to at least 30 youth with disabilities per site per year. At least 600 additional youth, parents, employers, advocates, and youth professionals will also benefit each year from the MN DEI tools and resources.

In addition to the ***Guideposts for Success, Expanded Partnership and Collaboration, Integrated Resource Teams*** and **Local Disability Resource Coordinators** are the project's key service delivery strategies. The project also incorporates strategies to increase enrollment and improve services to youth with disabilities highlighted by DOL in 2011. Implementation sites will utilize strength-based assessment and career planning tools and will engage in active outreach, education, & relationship-building with local employers to ensure that MN DEI youth participants have access to a range of work experience opportunities. Customized individual support to front-line staff to increase their capacity to meet the career development needs of youth with disabilities will be provided by the PACER Center, a nationally-recognized parent training center currently a partner in the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth.

Specific objectives of MN DEI are to: 1) improve collaboration with state and local partners leading to improved education, training, and employment opportunities and outcomes of MN youth with disabilities; 2) help youth with disabilities make successful transitions to college and careers using the *Guideposts for Success* as a framework to guide service delivery; 3) increase the capacity of Minnesota's youth workforce system to effectively serve culturally diverse youth with disabilities; 4) enhance staff capacity to serve youth with disabilities with one or more additional risk factors; 5) expand the use of benefits counseling by MN youth and their families and the use of Social Security work incentives, such as Ticket to Work (TTW) by young adults with disabilities receiving SSI; and 6) demonstrate the feasibility and benefits of MN WorkForce Centers becoming active TTW Employment Networks.

MN DEI LOGIC MODEL

