

For immediate release

Date: October 24, 2022

Contact: Office of Government, Policy and Public Relations, cdle_pr@state.co.us

Website:

CDLE Expands Pilot Program Providing Customized, No-Cost Career Services to Workers with Disabilities

Disability Employment to Population Ratio Remains more than 30 Percentage Points Below People Without Disabilities

Denver – After a highly successful pilot year, the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) is expanding the [Disability Program Navigator](#) (DPN) program statewide. CDLE's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and Workforce Development Programs (WDP) in partnership with four local workforce areas, launched DPN earlier this year. The program connects individuals with disabilities to both DVR and workforce development programs to increase training opportunities and help individuals obtain competitive integrated employment.

"The DPN program excelled this year because of the strong partnerships between WDP, DVR, and local workforce areas, and for that reason, I am happy to announce the statewide expansion of the DPN Program," said Elise Lowe-Vaughn, Director of Workforce Development Programs. "The Colorado workforce system staff have the vision to ensure full access to services for individuals with disabilities. We want all Coloradans to have the opportunity to participate in services such as work-based learning to reskill and upskill. The scope of offerings through the local workforce areas will create career pathways to promote high paying, quality, competitive employment opportunities for job seekers with disabilities in Colorado."

The Disability Program Navigators currently operate in the following workforce areas:

- Adams County Workforce and Business Center
- Arapahoe/Douglas Works!
- Denver Workforce Services
- Jefferson County Business & Workforce Center
- Employment Services of Weld County
- Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development
- Pikes Peak Workforce Center
- Workforce Boulder County
- Colorado Rural Workforce Consortium

The DPN positions work directly with customers with disabilities to ensure access to services and resources across various employment and training programs. The DPN program supports a

wrap-around service model, effectively coordinating highly trained staff to enable participants to succeed in those programs.

At the same time, DPNs educate workforce center case managers, partner service providers, and business partners on disability-related issues. This pattern of service will, in turn, increase diversity, equity, inclusion, and access in the workforce by promoting the untapped talent of job seekers with disabilities to meet the needs of businesses seeking workers.

“DVR is grateful to the workforce areas and WDP for this partnership, which is leading to better access to services and quality employment for people with disabilities. We have a dream goal of working with our partners and stakeholders to decrease the prosperity gap for people with disabilities by 10% in 10 years,” said Kristin Corash, Director of DVR. “Through grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education, DVR provides support for people with disabilities to achieve employment and independence.”

This initiative is a cost-neutral program that will significantly benefit the disability community by boosting spending power, reducing the need for public benefits, and increasing state revenue through employment taxes. DVR funds the DPNs via a non-federal match program that allows DVR to maximize access to federal funds. This match program will serve as a model for employment and training service providers in states across the country.