



FAMILY EMPLOYMENT NEWSLETTER

Developed by the NH Employment Leadership Committee

April 2020

<https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcbcs/bds/employment.htm>

Volume 1, Issue 1

Sponsored by Best Buddies NH

The mission of the Employment Leadership Committee is to advance inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the workforce through collaboration, education and advocacy.

NEW HAMPSHIRE'S STRATEGIC INITIATIVE ON EMPLOYMENT (SIE)

The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Bureau of Developmental Services (BDS) established the NH Employment Leadership Committee (ELC) over a decade ago to advance inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities and acquired brain disorders in the workforce. In the last year, the ELC has gone through significant changes to better align its mission and focus with the Division of Long Term Supports and Services (DLTSS) at DHHS.

As a result of the good work of the ELC and the significant need to strengthen supported employment for individuals with disabilities in NH, the DLTSS, in partnership

with the ELC has developed the 2020 Strategic Initiative on Employment. "The Strategic Initiative on Employment is a critical next step in moving our employment efforts forward," said Sandy Hunt, Bureau Chief of the Bureau of Developmental Services. "This initiative is a 'first' for our Bureau and our Division, and it represents a comprehensive, strategic support plan that focuses on education, collaboration, advocacy and outcomes. I want to thank the members of ELC and family members across the state for their leadership and support of employment efforts in New Hampshire."

The NH Family Employment Leadership Committee is honored to release this 1st Edition of the *Family Employment Newsletter*



Special Thanks to
Best Buddies
New Hampshire
for sponsoring the
Employment Family
Newsletter!

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Thank you to the amazing team at Omni for supporting & hiring individuals with developmental disabilities

Voices from Omni's Executive Team

"These associates are an incredible resource to Omni."

"To see the breadth of development is really encouraging."

"It's important to understand their personality and find a match."

"It's tough not to be positive, when everyone else is so positive."

"If we have struggles, it might not be a best fit, so we try really hard to find the right person. We can also modify the job."

"Be creative. No, they cannot do this, but they can do that. Take chances."

"Retention is phenomenal."

"Everybody needs a chance. Someone gave me a chance."

"Yes, they may need training. But we can train them, and they make up for it with their positive attitude."

PAUL

By Jessica Smith, Vocational Services Manager
Northern Human Services



Paul working as a Steward in the main kitchen at Omni Mount Washington, Bretton Woods, NH

“Common Ground and Omni share the philosophy that inclusion drives innovation for individuals with disabilities to be gainfully employed in their communities.”

Paul Orlando stands in the kitchen at Omni Mount Washington Resort located in Bretton Woods, NH laughing and talking among coworkers while they wash dishes as a team. Paul is a direct hire with Omni Resort and receives job coaching supports through Common Ground, Northern Human Services. Paul has worked at the Omni Resort since February of 2017 and is well-known throughout the resort for his kind, polite personality.

Paul’s main role in the kitchen is washing dishes and sorting silverware however, he’s taken the initiative to learn other roles throughout the resort. Paul has been requested to work without notice in other parts of the resort such as the employee cafeteria and he agrees without hesitation. Paul jumped right into his position with such ambition to learn he’s often asked to train new staff who join the Stewarding team. Paul is known for his shy, respectful personality however, with this employment he has gained confidence, social skills and independence from his job coach that he now works over ninety percent independently with merely transportation and check-ins.

Common Ground has built a partnership with Omni to help assist with job applications, job placement and job

retention with over 25 individuals - 15 of whom are year round employees. Common Ground and Omni share the philosophy that inclusion drives innovation for individuals with disabilities to be gainfully employed in their communities. Through this partnership, individuals much like Paul, reflect such an important role that diversity validates workforce success.

Why is inclusion and diversity so important for individuals like Paul? In 1991, with the help of a federal class action law suit, the Laconia State School was closed and New Hampshire became the first state to have no institutions for people with developmental disabilities. The area agencies were developed and individuals with developmental disabilities and acquired brain disorders were given supports and services in the community rather than locked up like "inmates." New Hampshire became the first state in the country to have a total community based system of supports and services. Individuals were provided the same vocational opportunities as other community members which has created workforce inclusion across the nation.

EMPLOYMENT DATA REPORT STATE FISCAL YEAR 2020 , QUARTER 2

Below are a few highlights from Quarter 2 on employment information of individuals with developmental disabilities and acquired brain disorders served by the Area Agency System of NH.

People Receiving Services (Ages 21-64)	4,257	Statewide Hourly Wage	\$9.06
Total Employed (Excluding self-employed)	1,436	Statewide Median Age	33
Employment Rate (of individuals served by Area Agencies)	33.7%	Average # of Hours Per Week (by worker)	12.6
Average Weekly Pay (for worker with 1 job)	\$117.59		

The complete Employment Data Report can be obtained at:

<https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcbs/bds/employment.htm>

EMPLOYMENT LEADERSHIP AWARD



What are the New Hampshire Employment Leadership Awards?

The Employment Leadership Awards are presented each year to five New Hampshire businesses who demonstrate their commitment to recognizing the skills and contributions that people with disabilities bring to the workforce. These businesses are promoting and adopting inclusive policies and hiring practices that allow people with physical, mental, and/or developmental disabilities, to fairly compete and excel in gainful employment.

Nominees are submitted by businesses, NH Vocational Rehabilitation staff and Community Rehabilitation Providers, as well as other New Hampshire disability and mental health organizations and the general public. Nominations are evaluated based on the company's efforts to:

- create opportunities that assist people with all types of disabilities to develop and expand their skills in competitive employment;
- adopt inclusive hiring and training practices that

allow people with all types of disabilities to fairly compete for employment;

- engage community partners to become a more diverse workplace within communities

The 2019 Winners were: CVS Health, Fisher Auto Parts, Five Guys, Margarita's and RJ's Motorsports.

Notification of the five 2020 winners will be made by **July 16 2020**. This is the 12th anniversary for the Employment Leadership Awards. The Gala ceremony

will be held Thursday, **October 15th from 4:30 to 7:30 pm at the Executive Court Banquet Facility in Manchester, NH.**

Please contact Vanessa Blais at 603-271-7040 or vanessa.blais@ddc.nh.gov if you have any questions or concerns.

NH Vocational Rehabilitation Customer Toolkit
https://www.education.nh.gov/career/vocational/documents/customer_handbook.pdf

PROJECT SEARCH NEW HAMPSHIRE

Project SEARCH is a program that provides job readiness training, resulting in employment for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. By offering total workplace immersion in the host site, this program facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration and on-the-job training and support.

In the last decade, Project SEARCH has:

- *Graduated over 300 participants*
- *Achieved a statewide job placement rate of approximately 80%*
- *Provides a cost-effective alternative to adult employment programs and high school transition options*
- *Strengthened workforce & community engagement*
- *Partnered with 5 NH hospitals as training sites:*

Cheshire Medical Center, Dartmouth Hitchcock Center - Keene

Concord Hospital

St. Joseph Hospital

Portsmouth Regional Hospital

Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center - Lebanon

Project SEARCH New Hampshire celebrates unique partnerships that include: *Vocational Rehabilitation, School Districts, Area Agencies, Service Providers, Community Colleges, Businesses and Hospitals.*

For more information, contact the Statewide Project SEARCH Coordinator, Tina Greco at tina.greco@doe.nh.gov

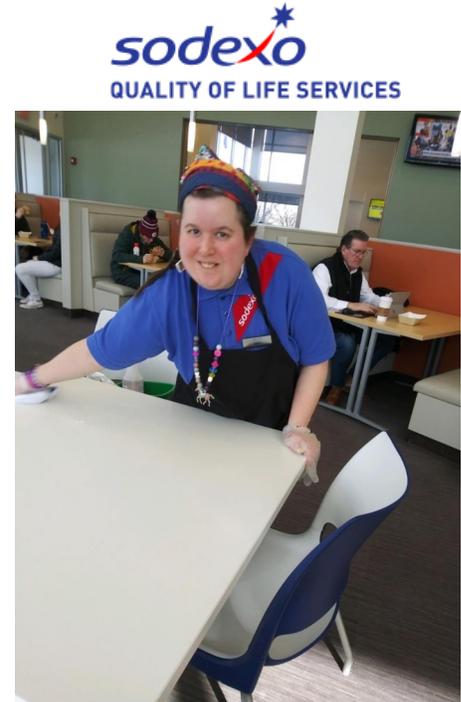


EMILY

By Miranda Brown, Senior Manager of Employment Services
The Moore Center

Say Hello to Emily! Emily has been working at Sodexo since 2016 and she absolutely loves her job. She works four days a week at Sodexo at the Dining Center on the campus of Southern New Hampshire University. Emily's job is to make sure the tables and other surface areas are neat and clean for the students who dine there. In the process, she has developed a lot of social skills, greeting students and finding ways to ask peers and coworkers for help. Throughout her time at Sodexo Emily has also become very independent and confident with her job and she can accomplish all her tasks with minimal staff assistance. "Hey Emily, how about those Red Sox!" The B' Sox are Emily's team with J.D. Martinez being her "designated favorite" says Mike Heffernan, Dining Room Manager at Sodexo. Emily prides herself on doing a good job and is very thorough. Mike added, "you can easily spot Emily all the time with her signature ribbons and bows in her hair and a smile that never seems to go away." Emily says, "I love working at Sodexo, it gives me something good to do and I love talking with all the students!"

The NH Employment Leadership Committee and Sodexo have entered into the first National-State partnership in Sodexo's history. Sodexo continues to rank #1 in their inclusion practices offering employment opportunities for individuals with different abilities and creating an environment where one feels a sense of belonging and feels like a valued part of the community.



"I love working at Sodexo, it gives me something good to do and I love talking with all the students!"
Emily



BEST BUDDIES NEW HAMPSHIRE

By Sarra Dennehy, State Director
Best Buddies New Hampshire

<https://www.bestbuddies.org/newhampshire/>

Best Buddies NH supports one-to-one friendships between individuals who experience IDD and those who do not in schools throughout the state as well as for adults in their communities. They also focus on Leadership Development, Jobs and Inclusive Living. Their current programs positively impact nearly 7,920 individuals with and without disabilities in New Hampshire. "Best Buddies is honored to sponsor and support the NH Family Employment Newsletter," said Sarra Dennehy, State Director of Best Buddies NH. "Our Best Buddies office here in the Granite State will be adding a focus on employment to our work in the coming year and we are pleased to be partnering with the NH Employment Leadership Committee on this work."

TOP 5 MYTHS ABOUT WORKING ON DISABILITY - DEBUNKED!

By Angela Haynes, Granite State Independent Living

2020



Securing today
and tomorrow

How Work Affects Your Benefits

<https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10069.pdf>

Myth #1: You can't work while receiving disability benefits.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) – the two federal disability cash benefit programs – have special work rules called “work incentives” that allow individuals to work while receiving cash benefits. Under the SSI program, SSI is only reduced by \$1 for every \$2 of income you earn; under the SSDI program, the Trial Work Period allows you to earn as much as you want and keep your benefit for 9 months.

Myth #2: If I start working, I will lose my disability benefits right away.

The work incentives available for both SSI and SSDI mean that most individuals do not lose their Social Security benefits immediately when they start working. Someone on SSDI starting a full-time job would have to earn above \$1,260 per month for 3 years and 9 months before they would be terminated from SSDI. Individuals who are on SSI and working can continue SSI eligibility for years, even if they earn too much to get a cash benefit.

Myth #3: If I start working, I will lose my medical coverage (Medicare and Medicaid).

There are work incentives available to protect medical coverage. There is a special work incentive available for people who are terminated from SSDI due to work, allowing them to keep their Medicare for years after their SSDI has stopped. There are special Medicaid programs that allow individuals who are working to keep their Medicaid.

Myth #4: If I work, Social Security will decide I am no longer disabled and take away my benefit.

Social Security will not make a medical disability determination because someone has returned to work. If you are due for a medical re-evaluation, it will happen regardless of whether you are working or not. If you continue to have a significant disability and are meeting all the other requirements for eligibility, you will continue to receive your benefits.

Myth #5: I won't be able to get ahead financially if I work, so what's the point?

You can absolutely get ahead while working and receiving disability benefits! There are programs available to support people with disabilities in earning more, and saving more money. Medicaid for Employed Adults with Disabilities (MEAD) allows working individuals to earn up to \$4,785 for an individual and \$6,465 for a couple per month and have up to \$29,927 for an individual and \$44,888 for a couple in resources. STABLE accounts allow individuals with disabilities to save up to \$100,000 in a special investment account.

We encourage you to speak with a trained benefits counselor prior to beginning work. Feel free to contact the Benefits Counseling program at Granite State Independent Living at 877-809-7029 or benefits@gsil.org.

RESOURCES

Work Incentive Resource Center, <https://nhwirc.org/>

NH Vocational Rehabilitation, <https://www.education.nh.gov/career/vocational>

NHWorks, <https://nhworksjobmatch.nhes.nh.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>

NH Family Voices, <https://nhfv.org>

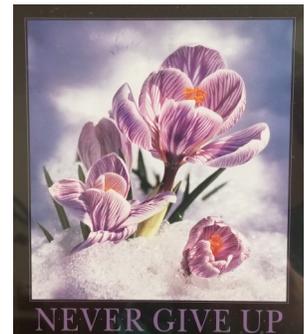
Maneuvering Through the Maze, <http://nhfv.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2019-Maneuvering-Through-the-Maze-Final.pdf>

NH DHHS COVID-19, <http://nh.gov/covid19>



Never Give Up! “Go over, Go Under, Go Around, or Go Through. But Never Give Up.”

The Family Employment Newsletter (FEN) is developed by the NH Employment Leadership Committee (ELC). ELC member, Lauri Jean Pevear, serves as the Editor & Manager of the newsletter. Lauri Jean is a brain injury survivor. In spite of some acquired deficits in memory, balance, speaking & organization, she has, with perseverance and an “I love a good challenge” attitude, re-learned to read, write, cook, crochet and type. She enjoys sharing her creative talents by crafting marketing materials for small businesses.

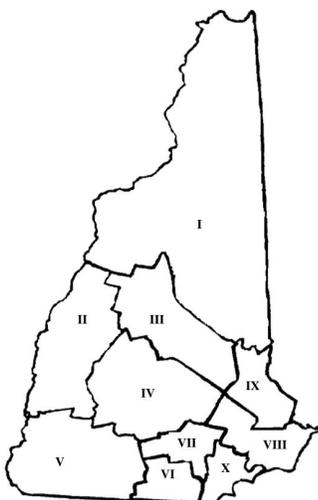


AREA AGENCIES ACROSS NEW HAMPSHIRE



An Area Agency is an entity established as a nonprofit corporation in the State of New Hampshire, which is established by rules adopted by the NH Department of Health and Human Services. In NH, Area Agencies may provide employment services directly to individuals with disabilities or they may contract with service providers/vendors to provide these services.

There are 10 Area Agencies across the Granite State, below is the contact information for these Area Agencies:



REGION I	Northern Human Services	(603) 447-3347
REGION II	PathWays of the River Valley	(603) 542-8706
REGION III	Lakes Region Community Services	(603) 524-8811 or (800) 649-8817
REGION IV	Community Bridges	(603) 225-4153 or (800) 499-4153
REGION V	Monadnock Developmental Services Inc	(603) 352-1304 or (800) 469-6082
REGION VI	Gateways Community Services	(603) 882-6333
REGION VII	The Moore Center	(603) 668-5423
REGION VIII	One Sky Community Services	(603) 436-6111
REGION IX	Community Partners	(603) 749-4015
REGION X	Community Crossroads	(603) 893-1299