

LIVE. WORK. ACHIEVE.

Mississippi Partnerships for Employment of Youth and Young Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

www.mspeidd.org

June 2015



**It's
Time**

It is declared to be the policy of this state that competitive employment in an integrated setting shall be, to the extent practicable, considered the first and priority option when planning or providing services and supports to persons with disabilities who are of working age.

Mississippi Competitive
Employment Act
April 23, 2015

The Mississippi Partnerships for Employment (MSPE) project, established four years ago, has worked to gather and share employment information with policymakers, business and community leaders and families, including people with disabilities.



Joining Governor Phil Bryant for the signing of House Bill 836 on April 23, 2015, were, from left, Dr. Jerry R. Alliston, Ann Maclaine, Bobbie Singletary, Christy Ashley, Cindy Singletary, Trust Jones, Irma Jones, Jane Smith, Cindy Dittus, Dr. Beth Bryant-Claxton, Joi Owens, Reagan Ratcliff, Tony Norwood, Representative Carolyn Crawford and Senator Terry Burton.

Employment Act to Improve Opportunities for People with Disabilities

"I'm very proud that Mississippi is recognizing the abilities of its citizens with disabilities to contribute to the state," said Cindy Singletary, a self-advocate and leader from Biloxi. "Putting inclusive employment as a goal for state agencies means more opportunities for me and others with disabilities to be active members of society."

The Mississippi Competitive Employment Act, as signed by Governor Phil Bryant, will further expand the growing emphasis on employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The Act focuses on promoting policies that explore and develop meaningful jobs for people with disabilities based in the community that pay living wages comparable to those earned by people without disabilities.

Advocacy organizations and state agencies serving with self-advocates on the MSPE Consortium are as follows:

- Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities
- The University of Southern Mississippi Institute for Disability Studies
- Disability Rights Mississippi
- Mississippi Chapter of the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)
- The Arc of Mississippi
- LIFE of Mississippi
- Mississippi Parent Training and Information Center (MSPTI)
- Client Assistance Program (CAP)
- ABLE (Advocates Believing in Living Empowered)
- Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services
- Mississippi Department of Mental Health Bureau of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- Mississippi Department of Employment Security
- Mississippi Department of Education
- Mississippi Division of Medicaid



Key Project Accomplishments

- **The Mississippi Competitive Employment Act** adopted by Mississippi Legislature on March 31, 2015, signed by Governor Phil Bryant on April 23, 2015
- **Executive Order on Disability Employment Partnerships** issued by Governor Bryant on January 14, 2014
- **Increased collaboration** among disability and employment agencies serving youth and young adults with I/DD, including Memorandum of Agreement for Employment Services between the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Mississippi Department of Mental Health Bureau of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- **Twenty representatives from agencies and organizations and five self-advocates** serve on the MSPE Consortium.
- **Fifty-five high school youth secured jobs in their communities** through school-based work experiences developed by two MSPE pilot projects
- **Four people employed through customized employment** efforts of the third MSPE pilot project.
- **Ten middle and high schools** in two school districts have had students participate in employment projects.
- **More than 25 community collaborators**, including McAlister's, Bob Boyte Honda, Computer Express, Firehouse Subs, Ray Brothers Automotive, Threat Construction, Baptist Hospital and TJ Maxx, work with projects to employ students.
- **Two Annual EmployAbility Job Fairs** sponsored by the Governor's Job Fair Network. In 2014, more than 650 applicants received 60 job offers from 33 participating employers; in March 2015, 400+ applicants received 88 offers from 46 participating employers.
- **Customized employment ensured as a viable option** through pilot project working with schools, employment providers and state funders
- **Sixty-nine MSPE printed and electronic publications** have been disseminated to more than 8,500 Mississippians
- **Raised awareness** at all levels about benefits of supporting competitive employment for people with disabilities

Getting to Work! A Report on Options, Opportunities and Young Lives

"I just had to know that I could live on my own—pay my own bills and buy my own stuff," said Willie. He is one of the independent, employed young Mississippians with a disability who is featured in *Getting to Work!*, the implementation update report of the MSPE project Employment Work Group published in September 2014.



This report highlights the accomplishments of the MSPE project over the first three years of the project and the successes of other young people like Willie who have achieved their dream of competitive employment in the community.

Priorities and progress in the area of competitive employment are detailed. For a printed copy of the report, visit the MSPE website at www.mspeidd.org.

The **Mississippi Partnerships for Employment for Youth and Young Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (MSPE)** consortium was established in 2011 to develop and direct a state-level collaborative approach to improve employment outcomes for Mississippi youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). The goal of the MSPE project is to build capacity across existing state services for sustainable systems change that improve outcomes for youth and young adults with I/DD seeking competitive employment in integrated settings. Find project information, employment resources and more on the MSPE website at www.mspeidd.org.