

Melita

From: Melita DeBellis [melita@gcepd.org]
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To: melita@gcepd.org
Subject: From the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities

Governor's Committee on Employment
of People with Disabilities



Welcoming Motivated Workers!

ABILITIES

Promoting the employment of Vermont citizens of all abilities

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Dear Friends ~



The Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (GCEPD) was established in 1963 pursuant to Vermont statute for the purpose of promoting equal employment opportunities for all of Vermont's citizens with disabilities.

We carry out this mission through a two-pronged approach. First, we form partnerships with representatives of business, government and people with disabilities. Second, we advise the Governor on current issues affecting the employment of people with disabilities.

On October 9, 2007 the GCEPD met with Governor Jim Douglas at the Capital Plaza in Montpelier for the purpose of discussing a number of topics that have a direct bearing on employment for persons with disabilities. We are grateful to the Governor for participating in this very successful meeting that set the stage for the Committee's work during 2008. We look forward to working with our other partners in business, government and the disability community to advance the causes we discussed with the Governor.

Best regards,

Fred Jones, Chair,
Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities

and

Susan Chicoine, on behalf of the Vermont Business Leadership Network

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A Conversation with Governor Douglas



A backdrop to the October 9 meeting between the GCEPD and Governor Douglas was the Governor's own stated commitment that everyone who wants a job should have a job, and a recognition that with an aging demographic, Vermont faces significant workforce challenges. Yet a significant opportunity to address those challenges exists by tapping into the tremendous workforce resource of Vermonters with disabilities. To that end, the GCEPD raised five topics for discussion, all geared at working with Governor Douglas to showcase the State of Vermont as a model for increasing the employment of people with disabilities in both the public and private sectors.

Here is a summary of the ideas presented to Governor Douglas for his consideration:

First, establish year round **mentoring programs** within state government, with the encouragement of the private sector to follow suit.

Second, explore ways to offer **youth with disabilities opportunities to have work experiences** - through various employment programs - within both state

government and the private sector.

Third, as statewide broadband access is established, explore ***opportunities for employment through telecommuting, home-based employment, and State call centers with remote access.***

Fourth, explore the use of assistive technologies, flexible work arrangements, job sharing, and telecommuting as ***strategies for retaining the aging workforce, especially those experiencing emerging disabilities associated with aging.***

Fifth and finally, ***expand internship and training opportunities within State government*** to include workers with disabilities and others contending with barriers to employment.

Governor Douglas concurred that these were all important and valuable topics and he encouraged the Committee to continue our work in these areas by meeting with various representatives of his administration.

SPOTLIGHT ON . . .

Home-based Employment and Telecommuting

In order to present a deeper understanding of these issues as discussed with the Governor, we will shine a spotlight on each one separately in this and subsequent issues of Abilities. We start with the subject of "home based employment and telecommuting".



With the push to achieve statewide broadband access, opportunities are increasing to provide opportunities for individuals with disabilities to work at home in various capacities - whether through home-based employment, in a

telecommuting capacity, or as a remote employee of a State call center. The GCEPD sees such opportunities as consistent with Governor Douglas' stated goals in his "E-State initiative".

There are many types of home-based employment. In some instances, an employer allows its current employees to telecommute, i.e. work from home. Another form is when a company or state government out-sources "call center" type work to individuals working from home, who handle telephone orders, calls for information or materials, etc. A third type of home-based employment is when an individual signs up with a company to perform a specific task at home. The last example is "e-lancing", where an individual signs up with web brokers and performs tasks for various companies by bidding on the project.

One example of an employer who has used the telecommuting option is the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services of the Department of Homeland Security in St. Albans, which allows some of its managers to process their cases from strictly-controlled home offices. Employees must meet certain expectations around security, confidentiality, and productivity. This program has been in place for a number of years.

Currently 9 states have tax credits, incentives or statutes (either in place or pending) encouraging telecommuting.

There are many compelling arguments for implementing telecommuting and home-based employment options. Here are but a few:

- ◆ According to US Dept. of Labor and other estimates, the national average annual savings for employers hiring contractual or free lance telecommuters includes 8.1% on payroll taxes, 17.3% on benefits, \$5,000 on office space, and \$1,100 on equipment;
- ◆ Benefits to the employer include better productivity, less absenteeism, less overhead, more working time available, increased employee pool (not restricted geographically), and less interference of work due to weather;
- ◆ Benefits to the employee include lowered commuting costs, fewer personal costs, better work/home life balance, the ability to be home for children, and the ability to care for older family members in the home;
- ◆ Benefits to the community include less traffic, less pollution, and less road wear;
- ◆ It provides vital opportunities in rural Vermont where transportation is limited;
- ◆ It provides the opportunity for a person with a disability to customize a work schedule to accommodate fluctuations in functioning due to their disability; *and finally*
- ◆ Parents on TANF ("temporary assistance for needy families") benefits are able to work without having to give a high portion of their earnings to expensive childcare. Often childcare options are limited or non-existent.

Quick Links

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[Department of Labor Disability Program Navigators](#)

[Vocational Rehabilitation](#)

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Simple Ways You Can Make a Difference

Consider Getting Involved with the GCEPD

The GCEPD's success in addressing these matters is dependent on an active and committed membership. Other opportunities to support the Committee exist by supporting the work of various ad hoc, temporary committees. If you are a business person, service provider, a person with a disability, or representative of a person with a disability, and you are interested in joining or supporting the GCEPD, please contact us by phone Melita DeBellis, Executive Coordinator, at 802-434-6600 or Melita@gcepd.org.

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