



University of Connecticut Health Center

Connect-Ability Infrastructure Change Annual Report: January-December 2008

Prepared by

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Connect-Ability is an initiative that has grown out of Connecticut's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG). The purpose of Connect-Ability is to improve the infrastructure for people with disabilities who want to work. It is organized around a comprehensive strategic plan led by the Department of Social Services' (DSS) Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS). The plan was developed with input from a broad range of stakeholders in Connecticut including employers, people with disabilities, associations such as Chambers of Commerce and business organizations, education professionals, community providers, parents of youth with disabilities, and representatives of state and local government agencies. The plan envisions that all of these groups are part of the solution to increasing the employment of people with disabilities. Connect-Ability focuses on four priority areas: recruitment, employment, promotion and retention; transition from school to work; transportation; and stakeholder education. It is designed to address existing barriers to employment (e.g., low expectations, inadequately planned transition from school to work, inadequate transportation, and the process of recruitment, hiring and promoting) that keep employers and job seekers with disabilities from connecting with one another and aims to improve the infrastructure for people with disabilities who want to work (more information is available at www.connect-ability.com).

Connect-Ability's comprehensive marketing campaign, which was launched in June 2007, is intended to influence people's perceptions of one another and to encourage Connecticut employers to hire able job seekers with disabilities. The communications campaign centers on Connecticut people and employers who haven't allowed a disability to prevent job success and includes videos, television, radio, and print messages. The marketing campaign and website feature a number of vignettes of Connecticut employees with disabilities and illustrate how integral they are to Connecticut's work environment. Real-life employers are also featured to demonstrate that the accommodations needed to employ people with disabilities are neither difficult nor costly to make. The purpose of the campaign, called "See the Ability," is to demonstrate that there are multiple benefits to hiring people with disabilities and this begins with seeing the abilities they possess.

Connect-Ability hired a research team from the University of Connecticut Health Center to measure its progress in achieving each element of the strategic plan. One key aspect of that evaluation is to capture and document all infrastructure changes relevant to the employment of people with disabilities, whether directly or indirectly related to Connect-Ability. Infrastructure change is broadly defined and can include changes to government agency policies and practices, changes to employer practices, development of new

programs, and information dissemination, among others. Given the broad definition of infrastructure change, it is often hard to capture the import of these changes on job seekers with disabilities.

A series of quarterly key informant interviews were chosen as the primary methodology for this evaluation because they provide structure and consistency to information-gathering and are especially suited to getting a snapshot of a specific area of interest. These interviews are designed to access a broad cross-section of the community and to hear the perceptions of people representing many different agencies and organizations. Although this approach is time intensive, key informant interviews are valuable in providing descriptive data and documenting the knowledge and experiences of people in their own words. In addition, evaluators are able to compare and contrast responses and can look for similarities and differences in responses. It also allows for the identification of themes that may be useful in planning for the future.

The Connect-Ability Steering Committee collaborated with the evaluation team to identify a list of potential interview subjects. The twenty-seven Committee members were selected for membership based on their demonstrated leadership and commitment to improved employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Further, their knowledge and experience allows them to influence their respective agency leadership or consumer groups for which they represent. Twenty-three people with knowledge of some aspect of the employment infrastructure for people with disabilities in Connecticut were identified as key informants. In addition to suggesting people on the Connect-Ability staff, key informants from the following organizations were identified as people who would be especially informative and provide a range of perspectives:

- Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB)
- Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS)
- Business Leadership Network (BLN)
- CT Department of Developmental Services (DDS)
- CT Department of Labor (DOL)
- CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)
- CT Department of Social Services (DSS)
- CT Department of Transportation (DOT)
- CT State Department of Education (SDE)
- Disability Advocacy Collaborative (DAC)
- Job Developers Consortium - CTWorks
- Mintz and Hoke, the company hired to develop the Connect-Ability marketing campaign

In mid-May of 2008, key informants were sent a letter explaining the evaluation process and inviting them to participate in providing feedback and documenting evidence of infrastructure change associated with Connecticut's strategic plan. To help people prepare for the interview, key informants were provided with specific open-ended questions that were developed by the Steering Committee and members of the evaluation team. Questions were designed to capture information about infrastructure changes related to the employment of people with disabilities and any barriers that may prevent infrastructure changes from taking place. Questions were

worded narrowly enough to obtain this information, but were also broad enough to allow people to share their perceptions and suggestions. Prompts were included to draw out more specific information and to help people think more deeply about their responses.

During the interviews, all key informants were asked each of the following five questions.

- 1) What positive changes can you document that can be directly attributed to Connect-Ability?
Prompt: Please keep in mind this could include: policy changes, new programs or grants, program changes, information dissemination activities or cross agency collaboration.
- 2) What positive changes can you document that may not be attributable to Connect-Ability, but have directly impacted the employment of people with disabilities?
Prompt: Please keep in mind this could include: policy changes, new programs or grants, program changes, information dissemination activities or cross agency collaboration.
- 3) What changes can you document that may have had an adverse impact on the employment of people with disabilities?
Prompt: Please keep in mind this could include: policy changes, new programs or grants, program changes, information dissemination activities or cross agency collaboration.
- 4) What barriers can you document that may be getting in the way of infrastructure changes that would affect the employment of people with disabilities?
Prompt: This could include administrative barriers, delays, and/or union issues.
- 5) What promising practices, exceptional websites, model employer(s), or other piece of information have you encountered related to the employment of people with disabilities?

Key informants were also invited to respond to any of the following additional questions.

- 1) What novel and effective approaches have been successful in developing mutually beneficial partnerships for businesses and people with disabilities?
- 2) What factors have been crucial in facilitating partnerships with employers?
- 3) How does your program/agency address barriers to developing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities?
- 4) What are the best practices for forging new partnerships and expanding outreach to employers?

- 5) What steps are needed to enhance the existing infrastructure to adequately support the employment of people with disabilities?
- 6) What are the needs of employers in urban or rural areas, and how can these needs be addressed to enhance opportunities for people with disabilities?
- 7) How can we identify existing infrastructure and leverage the infrastructure to improve the Connect-Ability project?

Upon a review of the proposed evaluation strategy, the team decided to implement a longitudinal evaluation process starting with Connect-Ability's inception. The initial interview for the evaluation covered the time period from January 2007 through December 2007. Subsequent interviews have been conducted quarterly, to capture as much data as possible and to avoid the loss of information important to the evaluation, but are compiled in yearly reports.

A total of twenty-three key informants were identified for the first 2008 quarterly interviews. Twenty interviews were completed by telephone between May 27th and June 30th for this quarter. Two of the twenty-three key informants declined to participate in the interview and a third was on medical leave and unavailable to participate. Twenty-one of the original 23 key informants were identified for the second quarterly interviews. Twenty-one interviews were completed by telephone between July 14th and August 13th. The same twenty-one key informants were identified for the third quarterly interviews. Twenty interviews were completed between October 14th and December 15th. One key informant was on medical leave and unable to participate in the interview. Prior to the final 2008 quarterly interviews, an additional individual was added to the key informant list. This key informant was appointed Executive Director of the Business Leadership Network in August 2008 and identified as a person with valuable information about infrastructure change in Connecticut. Between January 12th and March 3rd twenty-two interviews were completed.

Data from the interviews are organized into four tables: Infrastructure Changes, Barriers to Employment, Promising Practices, and Suggestions for Future Actions. Content within all four tables is organized by the four Connect-Ability priority areas, with an additional "other" category.

For each of the content areas in Table 1, highlights that are directly attributed to Connect-Ability are listed first and are followed by those that are indirectly attributed to Connect-Ability. Within each content area, highlights are organized by type of change, which is represented by the abbreviations below, and alphabetically by organization. The highlights of specific organizations are not prioritized in any particular order.

- PoCh - Policy Change
- NPG - New Programs/Grants
- PrCh - Program Change
- ID - Information Dissemination

Some highlights may affect more than one content area. These are placed in the area deemed most appropriate.

Table 1. Infrastructure Changes

Content Areas	Highlights	Type of Change:
Stakeholder education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Directly attributed to Connect-Ability • Indirectly related to Connect-Ability 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ BRS entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with DDS to advance efforts to change the infrastructure of employment for people with disabilities by focusing on four tasks: 1) Conduct an employment marketing campaign to increase the number of DDS consumers being employed in the State of Connecticut, 2) Develop an Individual Plan (IP) Buddy Curriculum & Process, 3) Develop an Employment Idol Video II, and 4) Increase access to employment information for consumers with developmental disabilities in partnership with Connect-Ability (e.g., develop content for fact sheets to describe the employment supports and resources available to job seekers with developmental disabilities). 	NPG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Connect-Ability is continuing to fund a workshop around independent living issues that was conducted in one region in 2007 and expanded to three regions in 2008. The National Consortium for Health Systems Development (NCHSD), a technical assistance partnership for the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG), is working with Connect-Ability to establish a format and post it on the website so workshop modules are usable by anyone to pass on independent living information for young adults. More information on NCHSD is available at www.nchsd.org/ 	NPG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Connect-Ability used MIG funds and Mental Health Transformation Grant funds for a Data Interoperability pilot. Interoperability allows data to be used in applications regardless of origin and to be aggregated and compared across location and time. The data sharing process took place across four primary agencies: Medicaid, BRS, DDS, and DMHAS. The pilot was designed to test if data integration was possible across agencies and attempted to do this by asking four business related questions. Public Consulting Group (PCG), a contractor based in Massachusetts, analyzed and presented data on the match of clients between the four agencies in October to the Commissioners of the agencies involved and to a broader group. A PCG report on Connecticut's initiatives entitled "Data Interoperability Initiative-Data Sharing Resource Guide," provides a background to federal, state and local government's involvement in trying to maximize program outcomes while protecting consumer privacy and underscores that some states have overcome obstacles to implement data sharing systems and limit duplication of services. Several data system initiatives in Connecticut are described in detail and efforts involving data sources currently in use 	NPG

	<p><i>by other states (Washington, Texas, Philadelphia, Florida, South Carolina, Oregon, and Massachusetts) to improve program effectiveness are summarized. Summaries review the type of data collected, the goal for the data systems, and the agencies participating in the initiative. Multiple barriers to implementing data interoperability systems (i.e., lack of legislative support, lack of concrete memorandum of understanding between agencies that fosters trust and jurisdictional issues, confidentiality concerns affecting participation rates, and federal and state statute violations) are discussed and ways to overcome these barriers are identified.</i></p>	
	<p>➤ <i>As part of a RFP developed by the NCHSD, Connecticut and 4 other lead MIG states (OR, FL, MD, and MN), along with all other MIG states selected the marketing agency Wirestone, located in Chicago, to help promote the national message to employ people with disabilities. Connecticut was chosen to participate in this process because of its leadership excellence in the Connect-Ability media campaign. NCHSD is a project of Health & Disability Advocates (HDA). More information on HDA is available at www.nchsd.org/</i></p>	NPG
	<p>➤ <i>The Connect-Ability call tracking system was revised to better standardize the data for people’s calls and to get better statistical summaries from incoming calls. Interviews with selected callers are being conducted in an effort to get a more concise data summary of the types of calls being received by the Connect-Ability free information line.</i></p>	PrCh
	<p>➤ <i>ConnectiCare added Connect-Ability to its “Where did you hear about us” dropdown on its job seeker website.</i></p>	PrCh
	<p>➤ <i>Interagency marketing efforts between BESB and BRS resulted in BESB using Connect-Ability as part of its new marketing materials for its vocational department to provide more effective outreach to employers.</i></p>	ID
	<p>➤ <i>In response to people hearing about Connect-Ability, BRS has had more opportunities to speak to consumers and other related agencies. These opportunities have resulted in an increase in the numbers of people who are employed once they have the knowledge they can keep health benefits and cash benefits at least for a period of time and are documented in an annual BRS consumer survey.</i></p>	ID
	<p>➤ <i>BRS received a mailing that had an article entitled “Helpful Program for You and Your family.” In it was a paragraph on Connect-Ability. Approximately 8 other articles mentioning Connect-Ability appeared in the following publications during 2008: The Hartford Courant, Hartford Business Journal, Norwich Bulletin, The Bristol Press, and The Advocate.</i></p>	ID
	<p>➤ <i>The Connect-Ability marketing public awareness campaign, including television and billboard advertisements, videos, and the website, encourages people to see the ability in current and prospective employees and connects employers with able employees who have disabilities. The campaign shows real Connecticut people and businesses, ranging from a self-employed truck driver to a senior systems administrator at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.</i></p>	ID
	<p>➤ <i>The Connect-Ability marketing campaign has brought about new opportunities for connecting employers, including a number of contacts with benefits counselors who were able to refer employers to the Connect-Ability website for more information on tax incentives and other topics of</i></p>	ID

	<i>interest.</i>	
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability was advertised on billboards in Hartford and West Haven between April and October.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability Director Amy Porter and James DeVoe, a commercial dump truck driver who uses a wheelchair, were interviewed by Connecticut's NBC30. The segment, which aired on October 30th, focused on DeVoe's work with BRS to modify his truck and underscored Connect-Ability's role in bringing employers and employees together. A summary of the segment is posted on www.NBC30.com</i>	ID
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability Director Amy Porter and a representative for The Workplace participated in a discussion on WELI and responded to calls from listeners. The Workplace, located in Bridgeport, is Connecticut's Southwestern Regional Workforce Development Board and provides a strong influence in improving the workforce. More information on The Workplace is available at www.workplace.org/. Nine Regional Workforce Development Boards were established by the Connecticut General Assembly in 1992 to conduct comprehensive planning and coordinate regional workforce development policy and programs. More information on the Regional Workforce Development Boards is available at www.ctdol.state.ct.us/rwdb/rwdb.htm</i>	ID
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability was interviewed for Business New Haven about a publication called "How to Hire Workers with Disabilities: The How to Business Book." Business New Haven is a leading bi-weekly news source in South-Central Connecticut that covers issues and trends in health care, real estate, business, and technology. All data, articles and features of Business New Haven are available online at www.businessnewhaven.com</i>	ID
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability has been mentioned in multiple newsletters including the June 2008 CTDDS Self Determination Newsletter. More information on the article in the newsletter is available at www.ct.gov/dds/lib/dds/self_determination/newsletters/sd_newsletter_june_2008.pdf</i>	ID
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability collaborated with CPTV and sponsored "Able Lives Incorporated," a five-part television series focused on employment issues. The series seeks to reach employers, co-workers, people with disabilities, and their families about the potential employee who was overlooked in the past but is now viewed as a person with ability. More information on "Able Lives" is available at www.ablelives.org/alinc</i>	
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability is educating and informing the public through Spotlights, a quarterly newsletter. Two issues have been published. The most recent issue (Fall 2008) included an invitation to employers to join the BLN, information about the Employer eLearning Toolkit on the Connect-Ability website, and the Bristol/Plymouth Project, a local level initiative funded by Connect-Ability.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability, in collaboration with Mintz and Hoke, prepared a full page advertorial that went into the October 20th issue of the Hartford Business Journal to explain to employers the importance of including people with disabilities in the workplace. The advertorial, "Connecticut's Workforce: A Shortage of Qualified Employees or an Opportunity for More Diversity," underscores how diversity improves business and provides multiple resources and best practices for employers. In the ad, Pfizer is noted for the establishment of one of its Diversity and Inclusion networks, called Awareness of Visible and Invisible Disabilities, or AVID. The Connecticut Business Leadership Network (BLN) is</i>	ID

	<i>also mentioned as an association of business leaders who are interested in and support an inclusive work environment.</i>	
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability staff presented at the “Employment First” kick-off hosted by DDS in May. The event was held at the New England Assistive Technology Market Place (NEAT) and attended by 200 people including self advocates, providers, and families. “Employment First” is about the vision of making employment the first priority for people with disabilities.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability’s marketing firm, Mintz and Hoke, presented at a national conference on “Getting the Job Done” in April in New Orleans.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability presented at the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR) CT chapter at its annual meeting. The 50 attendees represented state governments as well as municipalities. More information about IPMA-HR is available at www.ipma-hr.org/</i>	ID
	➤ <i>The Connect-Ability team presented to the Rehabilitation Services Administration during their site visit to the Vocational Rehabilitation agency.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability staff met with 15 people in a support group for people with bipolar disorder after the launch of the advertisement about a person with bipolar disorder. Connect-Ability received an increase in calls to its toll free information line from people with bipolar disorder following the commercial. To view the TV Spot visit www.connect-ability.com/media/tv.php</i>	ID
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability helps people see the ability in people with disabilities. As a result, the numbers of sheltered workshops in the state have decreased and there is a greater effort by DSS to help employers gain a better understanding of consumer’s employment goals.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>Between January and December 2008, there were 24,248 unique visitors to the Connect-Ability website for technical assistance and 516 calls to the toll free information line. In comparison, between June and December 2007, there were 17,000 unique visitors to the website and 250 calls to the toll free information line. A separate evaluation of the information line shows that most people requesting information were job seekers. This was followed by family members, agencies, and employers. In response to requests, most referrals were made to BRS, CTWorks/DOL, Social Security Administration, and the DSS Eligibility Program.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability staff attended the U.S. Department of Agriculture (DOA) tri-regional meeting and described Connect-Ability to a small group of staff. One of the videos they shared was of a young man who is a biologist for the forestry services. After viewing the video, some DOA staff who attended the tri-regional meeting bought into the concept of hiring people with disabilities. Shortly after the meeting, Connect-Ability staff had the opportunity to refer a BRS consumer to the DOA and that person applied for one of its positions. To view the video visit www.connect-ability.com/media/videos.php</i>	ID
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability and the CTBLN had a booth for outreach at the Disability Advocacy Collaborative Convention in September. Eighty different groups including many non-profit organizations were represented. The Convention hosted a panel of legislators and had approximately 850 attendees.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability provided technical assistance to Massachusetts and New Hampshire on how to</i>	ID

	<i>manage a marketing campaign and gave them permission to use some of the Connect-Ability website language.</i>	
	<i>➤ Multiple state agencies (e.g., BRS, BESB, DSS, DDS, DMHAS, DOL, DOT) are represented on the Connect-Ability Steering Committee, working more closely together, and sharing information.</i>	ID
	<i>➤ As a follow up to the “Employment First” kick-off, DDS sponsored a training day in June on “Customized Employment” for individuals supported by DDS, their families, providers, and DDS staff. Topics included developing creative employment ideas, self-advocacy and employment, and understanding benefits.</i>	ID
	<i>➤ An additional follow up to the “Employment First” kick-off is a focus by DDS on the IP Buddy System. This is a self-advocacy training plan involving how to attend IP meetings and advocate for employment and other outcomes.</i>	ID
	<i>➤ DDS had contacts for additional presentations after the “Employment First” initiative and met with those people throughout the summer. Specifically, Self-Determination Coordinators met with Transition Coordinators to plan joint events and share materials.</i>	ID
	<i>➤ With support from Connect-Ability, DDS created an “Employment Idol” video similar to the ones about people with disabilities on the Connect-Ability website. The video is an opportunity for individuals with developmental disabilities to share their work experiences and employment stories. DDS staff showed the video at a conference for New England States Developmental Disability Directors and Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE), a national self-advocacy [people first] organization, requested copies of it. Organizations in Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Vermont have requested copies of the video and the national ARC is putting a copy of the video on its website. The video was so popular in Connecticut that Connect-Ability is supporting a second “Employment Idol” video. The contest to select winners accepted applications through November and winners will be announced in January 2009. More information about the “Employment Idol” is available at www.ct.gov/dds/lib/dds/events/2008_employment_idol_announcement.pdf</i>	ID
	<i>➤ In collaboration with Connect-Ability and the CTBLN, The Travelers Companies, Inc. initiated a pilot Disability Awareness Day that was part of a national program open to three other field offices besides Hartford, CT: Fall River, MA, Denver, Colorado, and St. Paul, Minnesota. About 20 people with disabilities participated in job shadowing. Events like this help people with disabilities get exposed to the workplace and also help employers get more exposed to people with disabilities. It was a successful outreach effort that Travelers plans to expand next year. Success was defined by the following goals: identified employee volunteers and participants with disabilities, set an agenda and executed it (e.g., speakers, breakfast, lunch, tour, time with mentors), brought back one participant for interviews, and generated interest in some of the other field offices.</i>	ID
	<i>➤ Travelers posted reference materials on their internal website related to disability awareness. Ideas for this were encouraged by Connect-Ability. References included: Understanding physical health and multiple disabilities by Kathryn Wolff Heller, Paula E. Forney, Paul A. Alberto, Sherwood J. Best, & Morton N. Schwartzman and The New Disability History: American Perspectives by Paul Longmore and Lauri Umansky. Additional resources included on the website during October included: a list of</i>	ID

	<i>advocacy organizations, frequently asked questions with responses, and an art gallery by people with disabilities.</i>	
	➤ <i>Travelers had sensitivity training in December that was open to other companies. More awareness and discussions about disability are occurring at Travelers because of Connect-Ability.</i>	ID
	• BRS joined the Chamber of Commerce to attend programs and network through that venue.	ID
	• DDS is offering financial assistance to its providers so they can attend employment related trainings.	ID
	• DMHAS had an anti-stigma, educational campaign in October and demonstrated what it's like to have someone in recovery work for you.	ID
	• DMHAS has a link to Connect-Ability on its mental health transformation website www.CT.networkofcare.org , a single web resource that includes employment information (e.g., job-seeking assistance) and reflects 14 state agencies. The DMHAS website provides information about mental health services, laws, and related news, as well as communication tools and other features. It is a resource for individuals, families and agencies concerned with mental health and has had 3 million hits since its inception in 2008.	ID
	• DMHAS has had a widely viewed media series on CT Public Television to demystify mental illness and develop awareness of people who have mental illness and what it's like to live with mental illness and be in recovery. The series, <i>Opening Doors, Opening Minds</i> , made possible by The Governor's Mental Health Transformation grant, funded by SAMHSA, has been aired on PBS several times and demonstrates how understanding and acceptance have can reduce stigma and how mental illness can be managed with treatment and support. The series includes a Town Meeting and three Episodes: Growing up with Mental Illness, Adults Living with Mental Illness, and Family Impact. More information on the series and viewing of the videos is available at www.cptv.org .	ID
Recruitment, employment, and promotion		
	➤ <i>BRS entered into a MOA with DMHAS to advance efforts to change the infrastructure of employment for people with disabilities by focusing on coordinating and adding services and supports to its supportive housing component. One of three components of the agreement involves hiring a Benefits Coordinator, who will join the BRS Connect-to-Work Community Work Incentives Coordinator (CWIC) team and assist the DMHAS Deputy Commissioner to reconfigure the Department's benefits advising services to better align them with those of the CWIC team. The Coordinator will also provide staff training to help agencies be better prepared to advise tenants who are considering significant work, including ways to save for work- and/or education-related expenses, and will facilitate linkages to individual benefits counseling. DHMAS sees this as an opportunity to build second level infrastructure change and plans to include One Stop Centers, The Career Center in Bridgeport, and other agencies that haven't yet collaborated to bring about change for people with mental illnesses. More information on this initiative is available at http://www.ct.gov/dmhas/lib/dmhas/infobriefs/030509.pdf</i>	NPG

	<p>➤ <i>Nine local level pilots that are part of a Connect-Ability initiative have formulated approved strategic plans. The purpose of the initiative is to promote and increase the employment of people with disabilities and to address the following barriers to employment: recruitment, hiring, and promotion; school-to-work transition, and transportation. To increase employment of people with disabilities, local level pilots will implement strategic plans to bring about change, improve access, and build a broad-based constituency.</i></p>	NPG
	<p>➤ <i>Connect-Ability and a group of five Connecticut companies designed and launched an electronic Toolkit to help employers with recruitment, interviewing, and hiring of people with disabilities. The Toolkit includes the first of three planned e-learning question and answer modules and a video of several individuals with disabilities who are currently employed. Twenty participants each from Aetna, ING, Travelers, Pfizer, and Deloitte participated in providing input for improvement of the first module before it was released on June 12th. More information on the Toolkit is available on the Connect-Ability website at www.connectability.com/for_employers/workingtogether.php#</i></p>	NPG
	<p>➤ <i>Connect-Ability helped write a new National Technical Assistance and Research (NTAR) grant to expand employment for people with disabilities that links back to the Governor’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities and pulls in an important economic development perspective that’s been missing. More information on the Governor’s Committee is available at www.ctdol.state.ct.us/gendocs/GCEPD/t-GCEPD.htm. Connecticut was one of three states selected to participate in the NTAR Leadership Center grant that Connect-Ability helped write. The initiative involves the State Leaders Innovation Institute, which is part of a national effort to improve employment for people with disabilities by connecting state workforce policies to state and local economic growth and development goals. Throughout participation in the 15-month State Leaders Institute, teams of state policymakers from Connecticut, Maryland, and Minnesota will receive specialized technical assistance, leadership support, and other resources as they work to develop innovative approaches to improve employment for people with disabilities. All three states have similar goals in the pilot including looking at the state as a model employer, exploring employer toolkits in other states, and collaborating to avoid duplicating efforts. The Connecticut team plans to develop strategic actions that leverage the services of multiple government agencies to develop a more integrated continuum of career development supports for adults with disabilities and will focus specific high-growth, industry-related building efforts in southwestern Connecticut through The Workplace Inc., a nonprofit organization in Bridgeport that is the state’s southwest regional Workforce Investment Board. More information about this initiative is available at www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/uploadedFiles/Publications/Pilot%20States%20Press%20Release.pdf</i></p>	NPG
	<p>➤ <i>Connect-Ability connected with key employers at ConnectiCare, Inc. and ING Group who want to know what they can do to be a better partner in the initiative to employ people with disabilities. ConnectiCare, located in Farmington, CT, is an independent health management organization that employs 500 people and offers a provider directory, pharmacy locator, online forms, and health conditions database. More information on ConnectiCare is available at www.connecticare.com/aboutus.aspx. ING, an international financial services organization with a major operation in Windsor, CT, works with individuals, employers and institutions to provide</i></p>	PrCh

	<i>financial solutions through the use of innovative products, services and strategies. More information on ING is available at www.ing-usa.com/us/aboutING/locationsaffiliates/index.htm</i>	
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability staff is gaining a wider audience from major corporations. Unilever in Trumbull, CT requested information about the employment of people with disabilities. Unilever produces global consumer skin and U.S. laundry products and is one of the largest employers in Trumbull with over 1000 employees located in the Trumbull Corporate Park.</i>	PrCh
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability and BRS Directors provided training to at least 15 employers in Connecticut that made different requests for training around disability issues.</i>	PrCh
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability is receiving calls from employers who have job openings. BRS district directors are notified about the jobs and send someone to meet with employers to try and match job seekers with the job descriptions.</i>	PrCh
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability did an analysis on what systemic changes could be made for employers when they are posting jobs so job seekers know if they qualify or not. Research was conducted on creating an employer designation where the employer decides to select an option notifying the public that people with disabilities can apply for a specific job. Plans are being made to incorporate this into the DOL website in February 2009 and to put a direct link on the Connect-Ability website to employers listed on the DOL website who have determined themselves to work with people with disabilities.</i>	PrCh
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability and the Hartford Business Journal collaborated to develop an agenda and get sponsors for a Diversity Event that will occur the end of February 2009 in Hartford. The Hartford Business Journal covers the greater Hartford business community and regularly features breaking news and profiles. More information about the Hartford Business Journal is available at http://www.hartfordbusiness.com/</i>	PrCh
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability partnered with the Hartford Business Journal and sponsored a Best Places to Work event in Connecticut. The event included an opportunity to contribute a disability question to an employer/employee satisfaction survey being developed by a central survey organization. The question focused on the hiring and retaining of people with disabilities. The survey was conducted by the central organization in the fall in 32 states. Findings will be available in early 2009 and will provide important comparative data.</i>	PrCh
	➤ <i>CTBLN is funded by Connect-Ability and hired an executive director in August. Outcomes show that it is starting to create a stronger link among employers by providing a formal structure for quarterly meetings and an environment that encourages peer to peer learning.</i>	PrCh
	➤ <i>CTBLN conducted disability awareness training and ADA training.</i>	PrCh
	➤ <i>CTBLN is working with transitions services at Southern Connecticut State University to help students with disabilities develop soft skills (e.g., how to conduct oneself during an interview, how to approach the work world, how to send emails, etc.).</i>	PrCh
	➤ <i>CTBLN met with Disability Navigators to provide disability training.</i>	PrCh
	➤ <i>DDS transition coordinators and staff connected to the Connect-Ability Steering Committee participated in a training to facilitate the sharing of information with the nine local level pilots</i>	PrCh

	Connect-Ability initiative.	
	➤ DDS continues to keep employment on its agenda as a result of Connect-Ability.	PrCh
	➤ DMHAS has 3 employees dedicated to working on employment that use Connect-Ability as an adjunct website and resource.	PrCh
	➤ BRS Benefit Counselors have spoken to a number of people who learned about their services through the Connect-Ability website. One was an employer who contacted a Benefits Counselor after seeing a Connect-Ability television advertisement.	ID
	➤ BRS Benefit Counselors do Medicaid Buy-In outreach monthly. People with disabilities are interested in the Medicaid Buy-In program because they are interested in employment to get Medicaid. Connecticut created a Buy-In program under Medicaid so that people no longer had to choose between working and having the health insurance and support services they need. More information about the Medicaid Buy-In program is available at www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/buyin.htm	ID
	➤ Connect-Ability staff met with the Chief Operating Officer of Edible Arrangements in Wallingford in May to present information on diversity training on recruiting and hiring people with disabilities. Edible Arrangements operates 24/7 and receives more than 2,000 calls daily.	ID
	➤ Connect-Ability staff is developing a boot camp - toolkit for employers - to share with Unilever and Walgreens.	ID
	➤ Connect-Ability and the Recruitment and Retention Workgroup began development of a paper toolkit for job seekers with disabilities that includes information about how to create a cover letter and what to disclose about yourself.	ID
	➤ A representative from the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) spoke at the CTBLN meeting in March. JAN is a service provided by the U.S. DOL's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) to raise awareness about worksite accommodation consultation and training. Their work has improved the job opportunities of people with disabilities by providing job accommodation information to businesses. More information on JAN is available at www.jan.wvu.edu/	ID
	➤ CTWorks case managers have been impacted by Connect-Ability advertisements and these have provided opportunities for them to discuss situations related to their clients. For example, one of the case managers has a client with a similar disability to James DeVoe, an individual who drives a truck and owns and operates J. DeVoe Trucking in Guilford, CT. Other case managers have clients with bipolar disorder, like Kathy Flaherty, who is also highlighted in the Connect-Ability media campaign. CTWorks provides assistance to some 80,000 residents ranging from help with resume and interview skills to obtaining training - most with certifications and job placement. More information on CT Works is available at www.capitalworkforce.org. To view the Connect-Ability advertisements visit the media gallery at www.connect-ability.com/media/index.php	ID
	➤ More than 400 business people, workers and advocates for people with disabilities attended Connecticut's third annual Employment Summit in June, where the Governor helped honor eight companies with Connect-Ability's Top Employer Award. The Summit is part of a comprehensive statewide effort to facilitate connections between employers and people with disabilities.	ID

	<p>➤ <i>Mintz and Hoke worked with BRS staff to help them create a presentation for employers on how to integrate people with disabilities into the workforce, what success looks like, and best practices. The presentation was used with ConnectiCare, Metro Hartford Alliance, and Webster Bank.</i></p>	ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTDSS and MNDSS were selected to participate in a three year National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) grant to train job developers for customized employment. Negotiations occurred in 2008. Application for providers are due in 2009 and 14 will be selected. More information on NIDRR is available at www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/nidrr/about.html 	NPG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DMHAS received a \$250,000 grant that was awarded to the Alcohol and Drug Recovery Center (ADRC) in partnership with Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR), one of the largest addiction advocacy groups in the state. The purpose of the grant includes hiring employment specialists and increasing employment for people with substance abuse disabilities in regions 2 and 3. The grant is continuing to be implemented and goals and objectives are being met. 	NPG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DMHAS is working with Focus On Recovery-United, Inc. (FOR-U) to implement a new project. FOR-U is located in Middletown, CT and is a peer-support program staffed entirely by paid and volunteer peers. The organization is dedicated to promoting a culture of wellness by encouraging positive change in the lives of adults, their family members, providers and the community. More information about FOR-U is available at www.focusonrecovery.org/site/index.html. As part of the Connecticut Recovery Employment Consultation Service (C-RECS), this transformation workforce initiative aims to increase the number of persons employed in the behavioral health workforce with lived experience of mental illness and/or addiction and focuses on the following task areas: pre-employment training, facilitates recruitment for available positions, designs and provides post-hire support, retention and career development assistance, offers consultation and technical assistance to assist agencies in moving toward a recovery-oriented, consumer-driven model of care. DMHAS funded agencies are being encouraged to work with FOR-U in implementing C-RECS. 	NPG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money Follows the Person (MFP) initiative is off the ground. The demonstration grant period of performance/budget period is from 2007-2011 and allows people with disabilities in nursing homes to transition back into community. This is a first step toward reentering the workforce and is a positive change for people with disabilities. More information on MFP is available http://www.cms.hhs.gov/NewFreedomInitiative/downloads/MFP_2007_Announcement.pdf 	NPG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BRS provides direct benefits counseling to some of the people Walgreens hires. 	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BRS Benefit Counselors and Disability Navigators collaborate in providing information to people interested in gaining new benefits. They refer clients to each other as appropriate and BRS recommends people to the Disability Navigators if they don't qualify for Social Security but might be eligible for other benefits. The Disability Navigator Initiative is designed to increase employment and self sufficiency, facilitate services for persons with disabilities in One-Stop Career Centers, develop linkages with Vocational Rehabilitation and the employers' community, and inform SSDI-SSI recipients about work incentive programs and tax credits available to them. More information about this initiative is available at www.ewib.org/Default.aspx?tabid=121 	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTWorks Disability Navigators conducted a training at the Chrysalis Center and Community Renewal Team 	PrCh

	Mental Health Outpatient Clinic to help people with résumé writing and job search skills.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DDS is creating incentives for providers to do more employment related work (e.g., change how employment supports are funded). 	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DDS has a new rate system that eliminates some of the employment disincentives and equalizes rates for group employment so there's no economic advantage for the provider. 	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DDS developed educational programs on the benefits of working with input from BRS Ticket to Work staff. 	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DDS is getting the word out to case managers about the importance of IPs and is incorporating employment questions in it. As a result, more people with disabilities are going into individual jobs rather than sheltered workshops. 	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A subcommittee of the DDS Provider Council is helping DDS work on employment goals. This Council is comprised of leadership staff and provider representatives from DDS trade associations including Connecticut Community Providers Association (CCPA), Connecticut Association of Nonprofits (CAN), and ARC. DDS is starting with a Fact Sheet that describes the employment first philosophy. More information on CCPA, CAN, and the ARC is available at www.ccpa-inc.org/, www.ctnonprofits.org/, and www.thearc.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=183 respectively. 	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DMHAS Statewide Services reorganized and are focusing on three areas of recovery capital: employment, housing, and social connection. DMHAS doesn't receive funds for employment and relies on partnerships with BRS and DSS to benefit DMHAS job seeking clients. 	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOL is playing an important role in enhancing young workers' skills by providing job shadowing opportunities through the Job Corps Center in Hartford and New Haven. Special mentoring events were held in October during Disability Awareness Month that involved approximately 45 students. Another event is planned for February 2009. More information on the Job Corps Center in Hartford and New Haven is available at www.ctdol.state.ct.us/JobCorps/hartford_desc.html and www.ctdol.state.ct.us/JobCorps/newhaven_desc.html 	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOL attended regional meetings with Chamber groups and smaller agencies that have job developers. 	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DMHAS put together a toolkit for women's services and has an employment program based on the Dartmouth Model. The Dartmouth Evidence-Based model, an individualized, supported employment approach, has been successful in helping people with mental illness seek employment, a first major step in recovery that results in positive outcomes including fewer symptoms and increased self-esteem when working. More information on the Dartmouth Model is available at http://dartmed.dartmouth.edu/winter05/pdf/disc_strategy.pdf and The Dartmouth Supported Employment Center at http://dms.dartmouth.edu/dsec/ 	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Program Navigators in One Stops are registering people in the DOL business system computer so people with disabilities can be identified. 	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTWorks, BRS, Social Security and multiple health organizations were involved in Project Homeless Connect in December. Approximately 500 homeless people attended. Employment information was provided by CTWorks and BRS. 	ID

Transportation		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>BRS entered into a MOA with CTTransit to advance efforts to change the infrastructure of employment for people with disabilities by focusing on the development of a new software module for web-based trip planning. Trapeze Info will assist people with disabilities who use ADA paratransit transportation. The planner will allow its computerized schedule information data base to be accessed on-line for the purposes of trip planning. Since very little transit coordination is currently done in CT, coordination with fixed-route bus service can make paratransit service more efficient. The trip planner will be operational by the end of September 2009 for the Hartford, New Haven and Stamford divisions of CTtransit. The other CTTTRANSIT divisions and the DOT contracted Hartford Express operators will be operational by the end of 2009.</i> 	NPG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Connect-Ability had additional discussions with the Connecticut Disability Advocacy Collaborative (CDAC), the Arc of CT, CTTransit, and the CT Association for Community Transportation to discuss concerns related to Senate Bill 5746. At the forefront are issues related to safety in transporting people with disabilities and training for cab drivers.</i> 	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Connect-Ability participated in a public hearing with the Legislative Program Investigation Review and Investigations Committee regarding taxi and livery service in Connecticut. The committee is a bipartisan statutory group that examines State government programs and its administration to determine the effectiveness of programs and whether or nor they require modification or elimination. The hearing will impact any proposed accessible taxi legislation in the future.</i> 	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Information that came out of the Transportation Committee, one of the Connect-Ability work groups, helped DDS staff develop transportation website links and get a transportation goal into the agency's annual goals.</i> 	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Connect-Ability made it easier for DOT to identify key people that should be involved in its United We Ride (UWR) initiative by providing a forum for information exchange. Connect-Ability provided DOT with information about gaps in service as well as ideas of how to approach resolving those gaps and information about the issues people with disabilities face and what other agencies are doing to help. As a result, the invitation list for the UWR initiative was expanded to include all the Commissioners (e.g., DDS, DOL, DOT, DSS, DMHAS, Veteran Affairs, Children and Families, SDE, and the Office of Policy and Management).</i> 	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Connect-Ability and DOT are partnering to produce the final two of five Getting on Board transportation guides. The transportation guides were commissioned by Ride Share and contain detailed information about fares and routes and are specific to the Eastern and North Central regions of Connecticut. Ride Share contributed \$30,000 to the project, completed the development, copyrighting, and data gathering. Connect-Ability, with assistance from Mintz and Hoke, is doing the layout, printing, and distribution of the guide to the public. The Eastern guide should be released at the end of February 2009 and the North Central guide in mid April 2009, depending on DOT approval. Plans include making the guides available on the Connect-Ability website. Three earlier Getting on Board guides were funded and completed by DOT for the Southwestern, Northwestern, and South-Central regions.</i> 	ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Connect-Ability approved and printed a statewide Getting on Board transportation brochure that</i> 	ID

	<i>provides a snapshot of transportation options and modes of transportation.</i>	
	➤ <i>A one page fact sheet called Commuter Benefits was developed for Connect-Ability and provides assistance for employees to get reimbursement for transportation costs. DSS has included the fact sheet as part of its new hire packet.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability and DOT hosted the first "Transportation: Making Connections" forum in May to highlight current transportation options for people with disabilities and provided a unique opportunity to broaden partnerships. It also provided a venue to share creative solutions to increase accessible transportation to reduce barriers to employment for the more than 250,000 residents who have a physical disability, and to learn about DOT's Service Initiative - Phase 2. The event coincided with National Transportation Week and featured a panel discussion, success stories and a demonstration of public transit options, including the fuel cell bus, ADA paratransit van, accessible taxi and personal vehicle modification vendors. Event attendees (n=142) included key state agencies, employers, individuals with disabilities, and advocacy organizations.</i>	ID
	• DDS has designated regional staff to be responsible for overall coordination of regional transportation activities.	PrCh
	• DOT used \$3.5 million in funding from the Bus Operations budget to improve public transportation for people with and without disabilities.	PrCh
	• DOT reorganized its website and trained four individuals to make approved changes. Information is no longer hidden under multiple layers and is more user-friendly. There is better control of where information is placed on the website and what's placed there.	PrCh
	• DOT had a United We Ride workshop. This program goes beyond helping people with disabilities and is an interagency Federal initiative that supports States in developing coordinated human service delivery systems. It also provides State and local agencies with a transportation coordination and planning self-assessment tool, technical assistance, and other resources. More information on United We Ride is available at www.unitedweride.gov/	ID
	• DOT had its first United We Ride meeting in November and is collaborating with other state agencies to learn about clients who have transportation needs that aren't being met. DOT used a Framework for Action to see where the State needs to improve and where it is already doing a good job. The Framework for Action is a comprehensive evaluation and planning tool to help state and community leaders and agencies improve or initiate coordinated transportation systems. It is available under the Assessment and Planning menu on the United We Ride website at www.unitedweride.gov/	ID
Youth in Transition		
	➤ <i>BRS staff did a presentation on Connect-Ability at North Branford High School. The teacher who invited them used the website as part of her curriculum. As a result of this connection, SDE in collaboration with the State Education Resource Center (SERC) developed professional training to demonstrate how the Connect-Ability website would be used in school curriculum. Training will be provided by SERC and Connect-Ability staff. Five trainings to Regional Education Service Centers are</i>	PrCh

	<i>scheduled between January and March 2009.</i>	
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability is being recognized as central point of entry for gaining information. For example, at Southern Connecticut State University students at an informational meeting were listing employment resources on a white board and included Connect-Ability as a major resource without prompting from anyone.</i>	PrCh
	➤ <i>Transition facilities within school districts are beginning to use the Youth Connect-Ability website. The website includes information on how to find employment and a Youth Journal for bloggers. More information is available at www.connect-ability.com/for_youth/forYouth.php</i>	PrCh
	➤ <i>A searchable database of all community rehabilitation providers working with state agencies and schools that was begun at the end of 2007 is complete and on the BRS website, but due to contracting problems is not yet on the Connect-Ability website. The database is anticipated to be functional on the Connect-Ability website in June 2009.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>BRS presented to all of CONN-CASE (Connecticut Council of Administrators of Special Education) in an effort to increase employment awareness for all special education directors in the state.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>Under the National Governor's Association (NGA) grant, BRS did resource mapping and guides for caseworkers, families, etc. This was a stand alone effort and was being monitored by BRS, but is currently under the Youth Transition section of the Connect-Ability website. More information on the NGA grant is available at www.brs.state.ct.us/PDFs/ExecutiveSummaryResourceMap.pdf and http://www.brs.state.ct.us/PDFs/2008StatePlan/StatePlan411aStatewideAssessmentskkbdd.pdf</i>	ID
	➤ <i>A blog on the Connect-Ability website was developed and provides a place where students can share information about their transition experiences. This initiative was started in the third quarter of 2007 and was posted on the website for young adults to use in the second quarter of 2008.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>There have been a few more responses to the youth blogs on the Connect-Ability website, but not as many as hoped for. Students who participated in the initial blogs have moved on to college and are not as available as before.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>The School to Work Transition fairs at many high schools had multiple requests for information about Connect-Ability. As a result, Connect-Ability staff members were invited to 8 transition fairs and participated in 6. There were 1,755 students involved in these 6 fairs.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>The State Department of Education (SDE) in collaboration with Connect-Ability distributed a "Transition, Work Experience and Community Participation Services Summary Form" survey to all Connecticut school districts in March 2008 to survey what transition services and work experiences are available to youth with and without disabilities and where they're available. There was a 100 percent response rate. In some districts the survey has sparked discussion between special education and regular education personnel and they're finding out what each other has done. Other districts are using the form as a self-evaluation or planning tool. The survey facilitated the sharing of information about the process of getting students involved in a paid work experience and how to get businesses interested in that. The final report is currently under review and will be posted on the SDE and Connect-Ability websites upon approval.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>The Connecticut Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) has been held at UConn in Storrs, Connecticut for</i>	ID

	<i>the past ten summers and helps young adults with disabilities become leaders in their school and community. Two young adults in the most recent group joined the School to Work Transition work group and are making connections where their voices can be heard about the infrastructure.</i>	
	➤ <i>The Connect-Ability Youth in Transition workgroup plans to continue partnering with Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD) in MA and is currently in talks with the Governor's Prevention Partnership to work with them and their network of community mentoring programs. This is a partnership that hasn't been developed before. More information on PYD is available at www.pyd.org and information on the Governor's Prevention Program is available at www.preventionworksct.org/</i>	ID
	• SDE changed the transition page of its Individualized Education Program (IEP) to provide better information. It was completed in 2008 and will be disseminated in February 2009. All districts are expected to use it. The changes include the requirement of two goals: post secondary education/training and employment. Previous goals only required one goal.	PrCh
	• SDE requires that IEPs identify what transition assessment is used and that it's tied to post secondary goals	PrCh
	• SDE hired a new consultant in 2008 that will help with transition beginning in January 2009.	PrCh
	• SDE hired two additional consultants with secondary level experience in 2008 to help with transition-related activities. They will start on January 30, 2009.	PrCh
	• Through the SDE Transition Task Force, the Cross Agency Workgroup, a subcommittee of the Transition Task Force, is looking at putting all agency information on the DOL website so there's one place to go to access information for transition age youth.	ID
Other		
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability provided technical assistance to the Department of Social Services by providing an accessibility checklist for agency meetings. The Office of Organizational and Skill Development (OSD), a collaborative group of skilled professionals who support DSS staff and the organization, disseminated this checklist to be used when choosing a site for an event. This example of infrastructure change within DSS is to ensure that plans exist for any accommodations that may be needed by attendees with disabilities.</i>	PrCh
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability won a Gold award for its videos and Silver for the integrated campaign at the Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA) regional awards event that includes both Connecticut and New York's Westchester County. PRSA is an individual membership professional society of more than 20,000 public relations practitioners. DSS/BRS created the campaign with Mintz and Hoke Communications Group (Avon, CT) to open people's minds to the idea that hiring people with disabilities is beneficial to organizations.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability received the National Rehabilitation Association (NRA) Excellence in Media Award for 2008 and the Connecticut Quality Improvement Award (CQIA) from Connecticut's Malcolm Balbridge National Quality Award, a Silver CQIA Innovation Prize. The Connecticut Quality Improvement Award Partnership, Inc. is a group of active business people, educators, health care executives, and government officials focused on improving the economic vitality of Connecticut through the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Criteria for Performance Excellence. More information on the</i>	ID

	<i>Connecticut Quality Improvement Award Partnership, Inc. is available at http://www.ctqualityaward.org/</i>	
	➤ <i>The Bell Ringer Award was presented to Mintz and Hoke Communications Group in June by the Publicity Club of New England to recognize and honor excellence and achievement in the development of the Connect-Ability website.</i>	ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR), one of the largest addiction advocacy groups in the state, received the Joel Hernandez Voice of the Recovery Community Award and was honored as the recovery community organization of the year in Washington, DC in June. This first-ever award to a local or statewide organization was created to honor Joel Hernandez, who fought to get his job back under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). More information on this award is available at www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/pdf/press_releases/AWARD_PRESS_RELEASE.pdf 	NPG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travelers received an award from the USBLN for promoting people with disabilities in the workplace. 	ID

Similar to Table 1, data in the following Tables are organized by content areas and include highlights; these are not prioritized in any particular order. The following Table (2) focuses on barriers to employment. Table 3 lists promising practices that were mentioned by key informants, and the last Table (4) contains suggestions for future action made by key informants.

Table 2. Barriers to Employment

Content Areas	Highlights
Stakeholder education	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a sociological and expectations gap between people with disabilities and the rest of the world. Low expectations of the educational system and community for people with disabilities Lack of understanding about accommodations resulting in people with disabilities being told not to work Lack of understanding about Social Security and misinformation about benefits and employment Misunderstanding of mental illness as a chronic disease that can be managed with treatment and support
Recruitment, employment, and promotion	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current economy Hiring freeze

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freeze on most travel for state employees and the difficult process one must go through to travel • Lack of new jobs and more competition for existing jobs • State agencies not advocating the importance of employment and people with disabilities not seeing there are opportunities to work • Myths and stereotypes about the mature worker and people with disabilities being more expensive • No database to match job competencies and employer needs • A leadership void that results in people going back into their silos • Misunderstanding of the concept of the state as a model employer • Competing priorities within agencies • Misunderstandings about Social Security overpayment and how Ticket to Work can help
Transportation	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without current funding, the best plans for transportation can't be implemented. • Lack of accessible transportation in areas where there are no bus routes • Nothing is happening to create more accessible or affordable transportation. For example, the new Walgreens is out of walking distance for employees and there is limited bus service and no taxis service to accommodate people with disabilities. It takes people a lot of time to figure out the system and how to get to work there. • The \$5 million that the governor gave to DOT for a new bus service was rescinded as part of the deficit mitigation plan. • The Federal Transit Administration and congressional interpretation of the New Freedom Program and types of programs that are eligible for partners interested in New Freedom funding • Under the New Freedom Program, DOT can't currently hire anybody.
Youth in Transition	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough counselors to handle the needs of consumers in a timely manner • The inability to share information across agencies without jeopardizing confidentiality impedes the employment process for people with disabilities who are seeking work.
Other	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state contracting process makes it difficult to finalize contracts and move forward. • There is a collective depression in the provider community regarding lack of funding. • Lack of providers in Connecticut's Charter Oak Health Plan is a significant obstacle for DMHAS clients with substance abuse who lose health benefits on General Assistance (GA) when they go to work. More information on the Charter Oak Health Plan is available at www.charteroakhealthplan.com/coh/site/default.asp • There's a perception of not enough hands, eyes, and brains to pay attention to what needs to be done and in the State only trainees can be hired. It typically takes new people awhile to come up to speed and to understand how

	<p>to work with other agencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of interagency cooperation
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Table 3. Promising Practices

Content Areas	Highlights
Stakeholder education	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aetna has 11 affinity groups called Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). Hartford AetnAbilities ERG is a group for people with disabilities and currently has 35 members. Aetna's ERGs were established to provide a mutually beneficial relationship for the company and employees and are open to all employees. ERGs contribute to an inclusive environment by providing opportunities for employees to share their experiences and expertise, partner with and give back to their communities, network with senior management, and learn career-building skills. ERGs play an important role in supporting and sustaining diversity. More information on Aetna's ERGs is available at www.aetna.com/about/aetna/diversity/networks.html • BRS Independent Living Summer Workshops that were funded by Connect-Ability and piloted in the Southern, Northern, and Western regions of Connecticut included sessions in areas such as assistive technology, personal assistance, independent living needs, housing, emergency preparedness, benefits, financial literacy, recreation/leisure, personal safety and included a panel of peers. NCHSD is helping write up these modules and facilitator guides as replicable models to be posted on the Connect-Ability website. Workshops have been successful in impacting advocacy roles for young adults and helping them feel more confident in getting employment or going on for more education. • Dissemination of information about people with disabilities in multiple venues: short video, TV commercial, and print ad. More information is available in the Connect-Ability Media Gallery at www.connect-ability.com
Recruitment, employment, and promotion	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The national AARP has a website that provides information for the older worker interested in re-entering the workforce. The website includes a WorkSearch Assessment System that assists qualified people over age 40 to assess their skills, match to careers and link to job openings. The Training Assistance Program (TAP) helps qualified people with job training costs, and the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) assists qualified job seekers improve their skills, obtain training, and locate employment in order to re-enter the workforce. More information about these programs is available at www.aarpworksearch.org • The national AARP features Top Employers that agree to certain standards, such as looking at flexible work arrangements, phased retirement, to what extent employers accommodate the needs for caregiver workers, and to

what extent employers are responsible to provide additional training for older workers. For example, Cornell University ranked number one among AARP's Best Employers for Workers Over 50 in 2008. The university accommodates employees with special needs by making equipment modifications, moving them from full- to part-time status, modifying job duties, and providing special areas where people with diabetes can check their blood-sugar levels. More information is available at

www.aarp.org/money/work/best_employers/articles/cornell_university_2008.html

- www.career.utk.edu/dco/students/coverletter.asp is a website located out of the University of Tennessee that includes information on disability-related questions, the disclosure process, and disclosure options for employment.
- CTBLN provides an important formal structure that includes both modeling and a commonality among peers that's powerful.
- CTWorks runs a Supportive House Case Management Series, an employment program to bring together case managers from CTWorks and people in supportive housing. This cross training makes it easier for people to access employment. Case managers put 75 people through the program, which is being replicated around the state.
- DMHAS developed a relationship for clients with a faith based organization in New Britain. Once or twice a week staff from Mazzotta Employment Specialists Agency in Middletown work innovatively with women at the faith based organization helping them with resume building, assisting them in realistically considering what jobs might be best for them (e.g., some women have been in prison, some have children), and helping them find jobs that are appropriate for their individual situations.
- DOL website has sections for people with disabilities with good content for getting a job. More information is available at www.ctdol.state.ct.us/
- DOL Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) website has survey data information for employers and people with disabilities. It is user-friendly and has up to date information on multiple topics including: Assistive Technology, Disability Initiatives in Connecticut, Educational, Federal Resources, Mental Health, Recruitment Assistance, State Resources, Tax Credits, and Workplace Accommodations. A link to Connect-Ability is provided under *Disability Initiatives in Connecticut*. More information on the ODEP website is available at www.ctdol.state.ct.us/gendocs/pwd-Employers.htm
- DOL's model of providing workshops/seminars for employers is useful. Employers have been requesting workshops on accommodations, tax credits, and incentives for employers. Announcements for Employer Education Breakfast seminars are posted on the main page of the website at www.ctdol.state.ct.us/. The 4 hour seminar occurs monthly, takes place in Wethersfield and costs \$25. Topics include Complying with Connecticut's Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Regulations, Introduction to Employment Law, Complying with the Connecticut Drug Testing Laws, Unemployment Insurance, Wage, and Hour Law, and Unemployment Compensation.
- DOL Office of Program Policy sponsored an Employment Law Conference on November 11th. The conference was an extension of the ongoing Employer Education Breakfast series and was designed to help companies avoid workplace pitfalls. Information included topics that focused on complying with employment laws and changes in the

Americans for Disabilities Act (ADA). The conference was attended by 250 employers. This kind of event will create sustainability when the Connect-Ability grant is over. More information on the conference is available at www.ctdol.state.ct.us/communic/2008-10/conf1114.htm

- DOL Speakers' Bureau is an online service that allows employers and organizations to request a speaker on a particular topic. More information on the Speakers' Bureau is available at <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/speakers/use.htm>
- The Employer Assistance & Recruiting Network (EARN) is a cost-free service funded by the ODEP under the DOL to help employers recruit and hire qualified workers to meet their workforce needs. EARN assists employers in understanding the practical business reasons for, as well as the practices that facilitate the recruitment and hiring of people with disabilities. A link to EARN is on the Connect-Ability website. More information on EARN is available at www.earnworks.com/index.php.
- The DDS "Employment First" initiative encourages youth and adults with disabilities to consider employment first and underscores the importance and benefits of individual work.
- The Hartford is actively recruiting people with disabilities and has internal mechanisms in place to promote diversity. Specifically, it is hiring disabled veterans as part of its big initiative and has asked Connect-Ability for assistance in doing this.
- The Hartford Business Journal is responsibly sensitizing people to the employment of people with disabilities.
- www.jobaccess.gov.au is an online resource and telephone advice service that provides free information and advice to job seekers, employers, and employment service providers. The web site has information about the full range of government services and incentive schemes in Australia for the employment of people with disability and includes step-by-step guides on: recruitment, job searching, adjusting a workplace, understanding rights and responsibilities at work, and addressing common concerns.
- Some state agencies (e.g., BESB, DDS, DMHAS) have used Connect-Ability funding to model their brochures after Connect-Ability and to demonstrate a partnership with Connect-Ability to employers.
- The National Business and Disability Council (NBDC) at *Abilities* is a leading resource for employers seeking to hire people with disabilities and businesses seeking to reach them in the consumer marketplace. More information on NBDC is available at <http://www.nbdc.com/index.aspx>
- Pfizer is making improvements in working internally with employers and provides flyers promoting diversity and people with disabilities. Human resource professionals are also promoting this information to employees.
- www.Resume-resource.com is an online resource offering advice on building a resume.
- The State Employment Leadership Network (SELN), a network of state Developmental Disability (DD) agencies to advance and promote the employment of people with disabilities, produced a webinar on customized employment in October that DDS found useful. The curriculum for promoting job development and training in customized employment is a promising practice involving a process for individualizing the employment relationship between a job seeker or an employee and an employer in ways that suit the needs of both. It is based on a match between the unique strengths, needs, and interests of the job candidate with a disability and the identified business needs of the employer. Customized employment has also been strongly supported by the Institute for Community

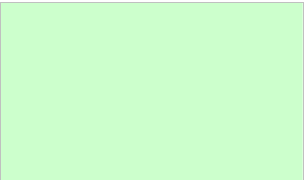
	<p>Inclusion (ICI), a national leader for more than 25 years in promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities. More information on SELN is available at www.communityinclusion.org/doc.php?doc_id=59&id=16&type=project. More information on customized employment is available at www.dol.gov/odep/tech/employ.htm and www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=228</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia Commonwealth University - Quality Indicators for Competitive Employment Outcomes. More information is available at www.hcbs.org/files/137/6801/Fact_Sheet_Employment_Quality_Indicators.pdf • Walgreen's partnership with the community to hire people with disabilities for the distribution center in Windsor, CT
Transportation	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An innovative rural transportation solution implemented by the Kenai Peninsula Center for Independent Living (CIL) in Alaska provides a taxi program to the elderly and people with disabilities by leasing vans to a cab company at no cost. In return, the cab company gives all CIL consumers of their transportation services a cost break. The program provides accessible, affordable, dependable transportation for all CIL consumers. More information on this program is available at http://www.ilru.org/html/publications/readings_in_IL/vans.html • Numerous employers have a commuter tax benefit reimbursement program to assist commuters who take public transportation. Individuals can get up to \$115.00 in reimbursement for taking public transportation or people who have to pay for parking can get up to \$220.00 a month in reimbursement for parking. The Metropolitan District Commission is in the early stages of implementing this public transportation reimbursement program and has 500-600 employees participating in the program through payroll deductions. More information on the commuter tax benefit reimbursement program is available at http://www.commutertaxbenefit.org/ • Ride Provide in Mercer County, NJ is a community based non-profit transportation service for people 65 and over, and adults of any age with visual impairments, that uses both volunteer and paid drivers to provide door to door transportation. The service helps individuals maintain their independence and reduces isolation by providing a dignified transportation option. More information on Ride Provide is available at www.rideprovide.org/ • The State of New Jersey used a portion of its Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) to commission Rutgers, the State University, to conduct a statewide transportation study to explore the range of accessible transportation and recommend options for change. Best practices resulting from this project include a shared ride voucher system that supports individuals with disabilities as they secure and sustain competitive employment in an integrated setting. More information on the findings of the Rutgers report is available at http://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dds/publications/DDS%20Final%20Report%20ES.pdf
Youth in Transition	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Connecticut YLF has been held annually for ten years at the UConn Campus in Storrs, CT at the end of July. Invitations are sent in early November to all school districts by the chairpersons of the forum under the heading of the State of CT Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (DOL). Districts are asked to distribute the invitation to all high school sophomores and juniors with disabilities. The goal of the committee is to provide an opportunity to those with varying disabilities to be part of the forum, which lasts for four days and three nights. Both public and private sectors cooperate in this endeavor. There is no cost to the delegates and accommodations are provided. The staff includes people who work for the State of Connecticut (BRS, DMR, Bureau of Special Education and Pupil Services, etc.). A few members of the staff are also former delegates.

	<p>Understanding, support, and supervision in a safe environment are all part of the environment of the forum. The delegates are encouraged, through large and small group sessions, to learn the importance of teamwork and self-advocacy. Strategies are discussed and reinforced. Each delegate also develops a personal leadership plan (PLP). One student said, <i>“To me being part of this project has made me wake up and realize there are more important things in life than me. Trying to help others is now one of my main focuses and has even affected my college major choice.”</i> At YLF a greater number of students reported working in after school jobs. Many shared that because of YLF they feel more confident about their ability to try new areas of employment. More information on CTYLF is available at www.ctylp.org/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.cped.uconn.edu/ld-dss.htm is a link for reaching the Directors of Disability at all the Connecticut colleges and universities. • www.thedesk.info/myplan is a website that provides an assessment for planning youth transition needs and was developed by the national ARC. It is simple in its presentation but would work for any young adult and by checking boxes online students can come up with a report at the end of what they want to be working on to be more independent at the end of their transition period. More information on the national ARC is available at www.thearc.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=1386 • www.going-to-college.org is a website specifically designed for teens with disabilities who are preparing to go to college. The website provides video clips, activities, and additional resources to help teens plan for college life including how to use personal strengths and interests to set goals for college. • www.knowhow2go.org/ is a website geared toward middle and high school students who will be the first in their family to attend college and therefore may not have parents who know how to help them get ready. • Resource mapping provides an alternative approach to the “needs” model of youth services and focuses on what communities have to offer by identifying assets and resources that can be used for building a system. It is a catalyst for joint planning and professional development, resource and cost sharing, and performance-based management of programs and services. As a methodology, resource mapping links community resources with an agreed upon vision, organizational goals, strategies, or expected outcomes. • www.sharedwork.org/ is a website and tool designed by the Office of Special Education Program (OSEP) and run out of the U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) to facilitate communication among diverse partners at the local, state, and national levels. Connect-Ability is using this website with the ten local pilot projects and will look at it in broader sense for bigger transition conversations in general. Anyone can use the website and it’s set up by topic. Locked pages are password protected and allow certain groups to communicate with each other. Any unlocked pages are open to the public.
Other	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) website provides advocacy, expertise, leadership, and financial resources to make it easier to create and operate supportive housing. More information is available at http://www.csh.org/

Table 4. Suggestions for Future Action

Content Areas	Highlights
Stakeholder education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalize more effectively on Disability Awareness Month and Disability Mentoring Day. Support and set up the infrastructure needed to carry out these ongoing activities annually. • Reconsider whether public relations through advertisements are sending the wrong message, i.e., that Connect-Ability can directly provide jobs for people with disabilities, and determine the best way to help these individuals. • Help agencies and organizations see how Connect-Ability works so there will be a greater buy-in and long range sustainability. • Provide resources to employers (e.g., training and assistance in getting job seekers job ready) by working with partners (e.g., DHMAS, DOL) and other stakeholders that provide employment and training to people with disabilities. • Provide feedback mechanisms on websites to encourage a sharing of ideas and infrastructure changes. • Focus more attention in schools on educating students for jobs requiring skilled workers. • Avoid duplication of services and promote more efficient sharing of information.
Recruitment, employment, and promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a job bank and resume bank to help facilitate partnerships with employers. • Guide employers and provide them with information when it's requested. For example, an employer called Connect-Ability to ask where they could find information on ADA laws and were referred to a specific website. • Continue to work with employers and address their concerns about hiring people with disabilities. • Help job seekers develop crucial networks. • Bring visibility to Connect-Ability through connections with larger organizations such as MetroHartford Alliance, an organization of 1,000 businesses, education and health care institutions and municipalities. More information on the MetroHartford Alliance is available at http://www.metrohartford.com/ • Develop apprenticeships and internships to benefit young people with disabilities who have grown up thinking they don't have skills and don't get opportunities to develop them. • Most of the nonprofit and state operated providers believe strongly in employment, but with limits on funding people need to be creative to get their staff to do what they want or need to do. • Business organizations need to join the Chambers of Commerce and create a stronger employer network.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State agencies/contractors and private agencies receiving state or federal funding should hire more people with disabilities in a much more visible way. • Help state agencies re-direct existing resources to support employment initiatives. • Improve collaborative efforts on local Connect-Ability initiatives. • Clarify the mission of Connect-Ability and demonstrate what infrastructure change looks like to so employers will understand how Connect-Ability can help them and what kinds of changes they can aim towards. • Provide accessible applications (e.g., an application in large print, electronic format, or other formats) that may be helpful to people with disabilities. • Encourage the state as a model employer by branching out and getting buy-in from other state agencies through peer-to-peer influence. Having state agencies speak about what they're doing and how they're able to work on the employment piece in their agencies with consumers is key. • Develop a network of recovery friendly providers. • Develop a better triage system at the Technical Assistance Center for people with mental illness. DMHAS needs to have calls directed to them immediately so they can hook job seekers up with its infrastructure and get them into training, etc. and take seriously what they want to do. The linkage between the Technical Assistance Center and DMHAS needs to be formalized. • Work with employer organizations directly and tap into them through the CTBLN. • Agencies need an outside push to focus on the employment of people with disabilities. • Promote examples of people with intellectual disabilities and how these individuals can be beneficial to employers. • Help people with disabilities use money creatively for day services and employment services. • Provide an additional training course for direct service staff at Social Security and BRS to help them better understand accommodations and the importance of encouraging people with disabilities to work.
Transportation	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concentrate on resolving transportation issues for people with disabilities who want to work and need a way to get there. • Create a more sustainable infrastructure by providing more accessible bus transportation and reducing reliance on ADA Paratransit service.
Youth in Transition	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a common application (e.g., intake form) that can be used by multiple agencies, without jeopardizing confidentiality, to help people get a range of services more quickly. • Market the youth blog on the Connect-Ability website more effectively to increase participation. • Offer short term training around the state to community mentoring groups in 4 regions so people can participate locally.
Other	

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- Seek representation of critical agencies (e.g., DOL, DOT) on the Steering Committee and greater involvement from these agencies in Connect-Ability activities to help promote sustainability of the central mission when the project is over.
 - Provide technical assistance to a variety of constituencies based on their needs.
 - Increase personnel in agencies so work can be accomplished and infrastructure changes realized.