



ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2016 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2017





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am pleased and proud to share with you AHEDD's FY 16-17 Annual Report, outlining our performance and accomplishments this past year. In doing so, I want to highlight the fact that AHEDD is also celebrating the start of our 40th Anniversary year of service to the community in helping individuals with disabilities to find and retain competitive employment.

Having been with AHEDD since our launch in 1977, I believe it is important to ask all who have been involved in this work to think together about why our work mattered back then and why it still matters today. Probably more important would be to ask how it should move forward from here. Certainly, such an endeavor is a challenge within the short space allotted for this message, but a few historical trends do provide us with a glimpse of the milestones that have affected our work.

A major milestone that occurred in 1973 was the passage of Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act; banning discrimination on the basis of disability by recipients of federal funds. This single Act gave recourse to people with disabilities against exclusion from employment consideration, among other rights, ultimately leading up to the recent Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) rulings against segregation in sheltered workshops and promoting opportunities for people to engage in community integrated employment.

Enactment of Section 504 gave recognition to the fact that the low social and economic status of people with disabilities was not just a result of their disability; so much as it shed light on the societal barriers and prejudices also impacting this population. For the first time, people with disabilities had standing as "a class/minority group". This legislation mandated equal access to education, removal of architectural and communication barriers, and the provision of job accommodations; setting the stage for the passage of the ground breaking legislation known as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990.

The ADA is based on a basic presumption that people with disabilities want to work and are capable of working, as well as living in their communities.

It goes without saying that our work continues to truly matter. If it were not so, what purpose was the commitment and hard work of the advocates who never waived in the fight for the rights they so richly deserved? It begs the next question of, "How might our work best move forward from this point to enhance the gains that we have achieved?" As in most industries, I believe that innovation will play a key role to our moving forward. If we are to further enrich the lives and economic self sufficiency of people with disabilities, we must continue to play a leadership role in building greater economic and social resilience among our participants. One way that we, as providers of employment services, can accomplish this is by collaboratively expanding economic opportunities for even more individuals throughout our Commonwealth and this great country of ours.

As I see it, we cannot afford to look back with mere nostalgia for our past accomplishments. We must take what we have learned and accomplished over these many years as a means of informing a whole new body of work for the future.

It has been my honor, and the honor of our staff, both past and present, to have played a small role over these past 40 years in promoting and advancing employment policy and services. More importantly, we have been privileged to deliver real job opportunities for the individuals we have served.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rocco Cambria". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

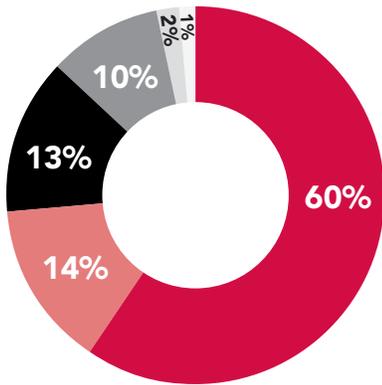
Rocco Cambria
President

▶ FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

REVENUE

\$4,214,997

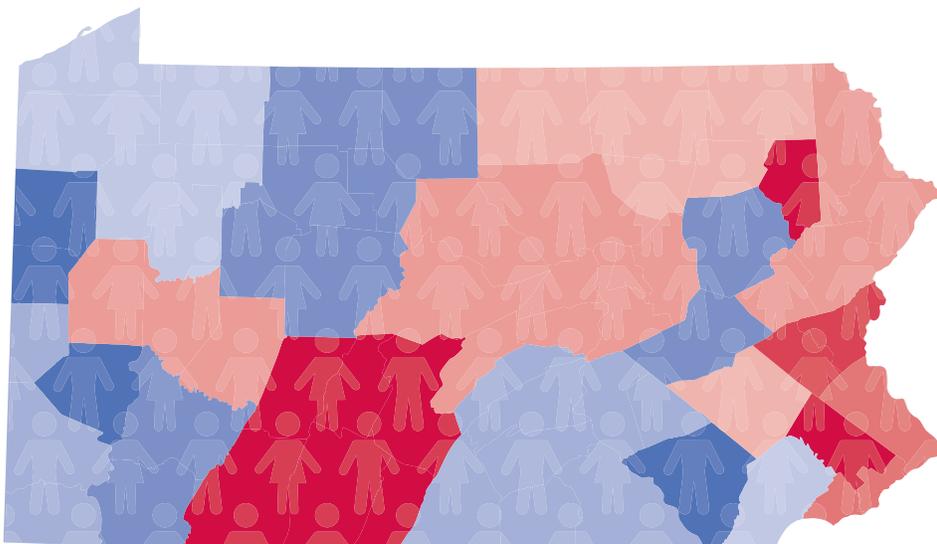
▶ SPONSORSHIP



- 687** PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)
- 163** Social Security Administration (SSA)
- 153** PA Office of Mental Health (OMH)
- 111** PA Office of Developmental Programs (ODP)
- 22** Secondary Schools
- 16** Other Sponsors

NEW PARTICIPANTS PER SPONSOR AT TIME OF SERVICE

▶ WE SERVE MUCH OF PENNSYLVANIA



OUR WORKFORCE IS OUR GREATEST ASSET

▶ AHEDD'S TEAM



Bob Lee

Employment Specialist

ACRE National Achievement Certificate in Employment Services (Customized Employment) 2016

“The ongoing support I have received from those in the central office... coupled with the daily training, advice, sharing of experiences, and camaraderie from those in my home office has been the chief reason why I have been successful in embarking in a second career as an Employment Specialist with AHEDD.



Sarah Guyer-Marshall

Area Manager

Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP) 2017

“Working remotely, and the flexible scheduling that AHEDD offers, has been instrumental in creating a healthy work/life balance for my family and me.



Matthew Smith

Employment Specialist

ACRE Supported Employment 101 Certificate, 2017

“Through training provided by AHEDD, I have learned much about how to assist our participants in finding meaningful employment. During the ACRE Supported Employment Training, the instructors discussed topics ranging from customized employment and self-employment to the Discovery process and how to think creatively about accommodations. I continue to learn new things every day with the support of my co-workers, area manager and the administration.

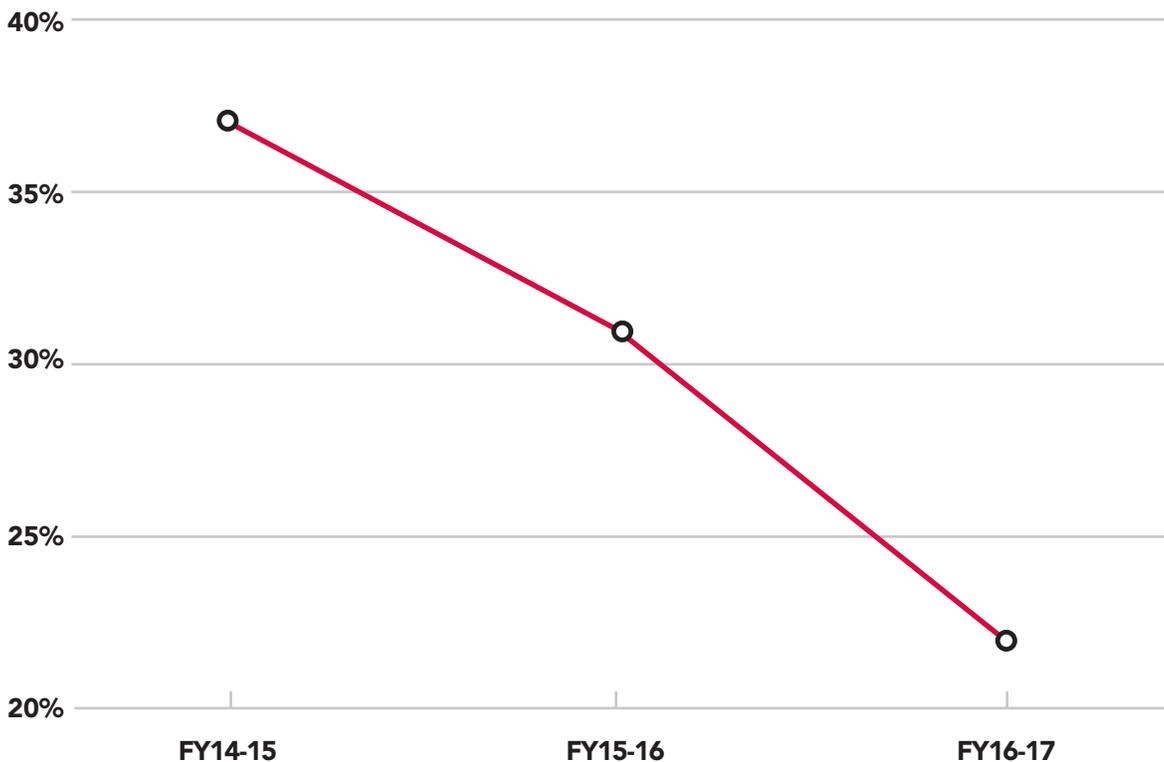
WE ARE COMMITTED TO OUR STAFF AND QUALITY SERVICES

AHEDD recognizes that our workforce is our single greatest asset and is essential to achieving our mission. We welcomed 18 new employees to our workforce this year, while also significantly reducing agency turnover. Changes were made to our processes for recruiting, interviewing and onboarding new staff, and “stay interviews” were conducted with newer staff to learn more about everything from their first impressions to the quality and timing of initial training.

In addition to local training in the field, AHEDD employees have the opportunity for development and training through in-house orientations, a six month series of weekly training webinars, and our annual meeting, where we can offer two days of in-person training to all staff.

AHEDD continues to also invest in external development opportunities for staff such as APSE’s Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP) credential, ACRE-approved Discovery and Customized Employment training and certification programs, and Virginia Commonwealth University’s certification program for Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWICs) Community Partner Work Incentive Counselors (CPWICs).

▶ STAFF TURNOVER



DECREASING STAFF TURNOVER

"BANKING" ON A BETTER FUTURE

In January of 2016, AHEDD's Area Manager (Lidia) began working with a man named DaMario. Lidia reported, "From my first interaction with DaMario, I found his optimism and employment-focused drive for returning to work inspiring. He was pleasant, engaging and obviously determined to return to work. While protecting DaMario's identity and privacy, I have shared DaMario's story with nearly every person that has inquired about AHEDD services in the last year and a half. His story is simple, yet the message it conveys is a powerful one that can motivate and encourage others to succeed."

DaMario's challenges began in 2014 when a catastrophic illness caused him intermittent headaches and problems with balance and slurred speech. Initially, DaMario said his symptoms were incapacitating and rendered him unable to continue his job as a tractor trailer truck driver; a job he had for nine (9) years. Eventually the severity of his condition led him to apply for Social Security Disability Income (SSDI), which he began to receive in January 2015.

With medications DaMario was finally able to manage his symptoms and began to plan his return to work. He stated that he was interested in saving enough money to buy a car. DaMario added that he also needed to earn \$1,000 to re-take the state's Driver Evaluation test: a necessary step to return to driving tractor trailer trucks.

His journey back to employment began with DaMario visiting AHEDD's website and completing a brief application for participation in the Ticket to Work (TTW) program funded by the Social Security Administration (SSA). Since 2001, AHEDD has been an approved Employment Network (EN) under this program and has enrolled over 600 beneficiaries interested in long term employment under TTW.

Despite DaMario's initial goal to return to



Damario assisting a customer

truck driving, he eventually shared that he would prefer to obtain employment within an office or customer service type position. As part of DeMario's Individualized Work Plan (IWP) development, AHEDD provided career guidance by exploring a variety of positions that would match his interest areas. DaMario also expressed a need for a full-time job with health benefits. As for his preferences on a work schedule and industry setting, DaMario was open-minded. His flexibility allowed AHEDD to expand the search for possible jobs that could be a good fit for him. DaMario's only request was to have Sunday's off due to his active involvement with his community church.

Given DaMario's work history and diverse skill sets, AHEDD was quickly able to assist him with updating and customizing his resume. Initially AHEDD identified three job opportunities (a Pharmacy Tech and two Assistant Administration positions) that were a good fit for him. Staff even gave him details about applying/testing for jobs within the Commonwealth and federal government.

Within the next few weeks, AHEDD sent several job opportunities to DaMario and he applied to all with enthusiasm. Being engaged and quickly responding to job leads really paid off for DaMario. On February 1, 2016, AHEDD sent him a link regarding a bank

teller job. DaMario called AHEDD on February 2nd to say he had a scheduled interview for that teller position at First National Bank (F.N.B.) in Harrisburg. His diverse retail management experience handling cash was the focal point of the initial interview.

Eight days later, DaMario was offered the part-time Teller 1 position of 25 hours per week! In less than 30 days from AHEDD's initial meeting with DaMario, his employment began with off-site training on February 16th and his first day at the Harrisburg branch was February 23, 2016. Once at the branch, DaMario sent an email stating, "Just wanted to let you know everything is going great. Yesterday was my first official day at my branch. And it was awesome!"

In mid-March, AHEDD connected with DaMario to review his responsibilities for reporting his earnings to SSA and continuing with support under TTW funding. At least monthly, he provided AHEDD with copies of his paystubs (keeping copies for himself) and mailed the originals to SSA. AHEDD also gave DaMario a letter template to use when sending his monthly paystubs to SSA.

By May 2nd, DaMario's hours increased and he had achieved his goal for a full-time position with benefits. With the increase in earnings, DaMario was now consistently achieving Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA), SSA's earnings threshold that is used to calculate changes in benefits.

Next, DaMario was referred to a Community Work Incentive Counselor (CWIC). A CWIC is someone certified to review DaMario's case in detail and explain how and when his SSDI benefits would be impacted by his earnings. After his meeting with the CWIC on May 23rd, DaMario told AHEDD his SSDI payments would likely end in January 2017. DaMario stated he had already been "preparing to stop depending on SSDI and pay bills only with work income." Through this service DaMario also learned that when his cash benefits ceased in January (following the Trial Work Period), he would have an Extended

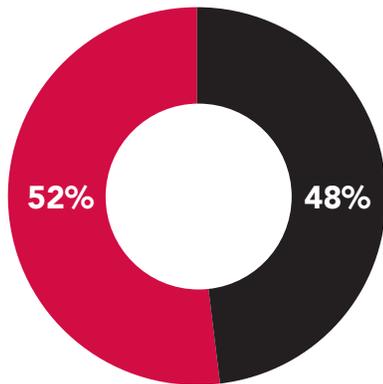
Period of Eligibility (EPE) for another 36 consecutive months. This EPE means if DaMario's monthly countable earnings drop below SGA during any of the 36 months, he would be eligible to receive his SSDI check again. The EPE is such a great incentive for SSDI beneficiaries: it takes some of the fear out of attempting a return to work.

DaMario celebrated his one-year work anniversary in February of 2017! When asked about the status of the goals he set one year ago, DaMario said he only just started to save for a car. In addition, he shared that he's no longer planning to return to truck driving because he is the Youth Minister at his church. DaMario reported he "would be disappointed to have to tell the youth I'm going to be leaving."

According to Laurie Kyler, DaMario's manager, "We could not ask to have a more reliable and enjoyable employee on our team than DaMario. It is an honor to be part of his story and success."



▶ PEOPLE SERVED



1152 New Participants Served

1070 Existing Participants Served

2222 Total Served
2016-17 FY

▶ YOUTH & ADULTS SERVED

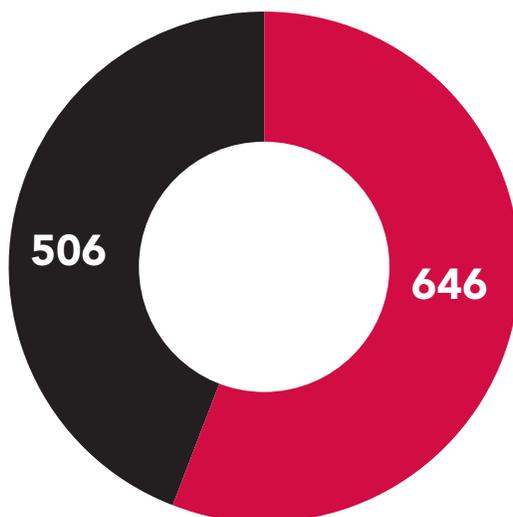
NEW YOUTH SERVED
(21 and younger) **455**

TOTAL YOUTH SERVED
(21 and younger) **670**

NEW ADULTS SERVED **697**

TOTAL ADULTS SERVED **1552**

▶ NEW SERVED WHO ARE SOCIAL SECURITY (SSA) BENEFICIARIES



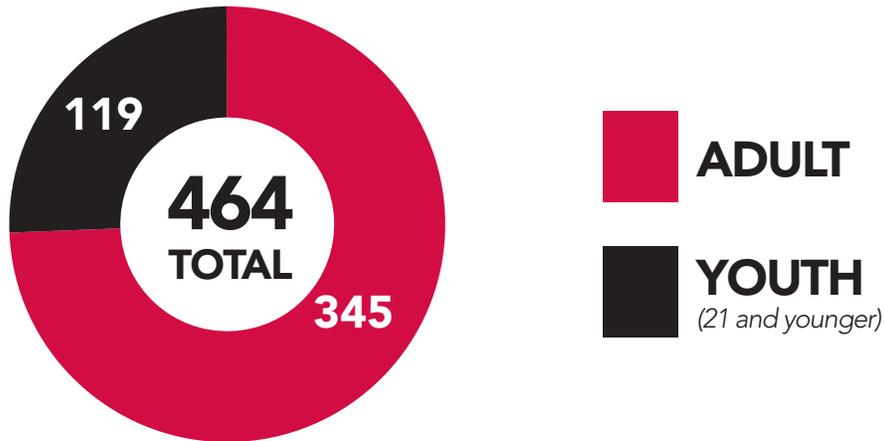
SSA

NOT SSA

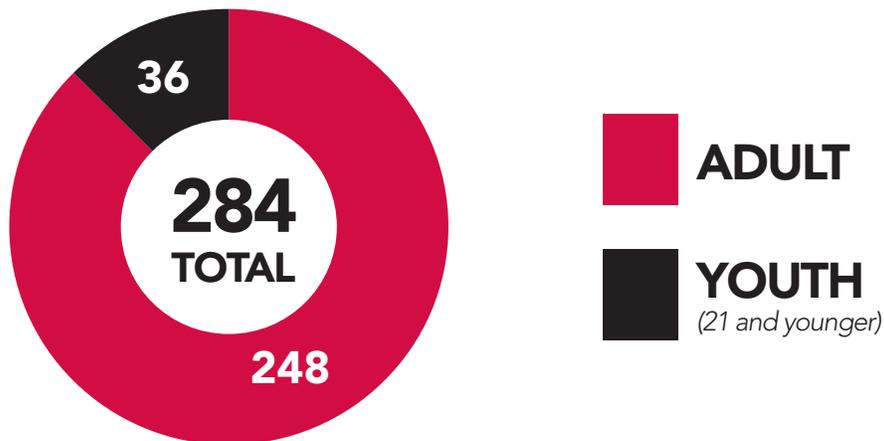
AHEDD had 679 beneficiaries enrolled in SSA's Ticket to Work program by June 30, 2017. Of this total, 57% achieved earnings of at least Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) and 20% earned enough money to have SSA cash benefits suspended or terminated.

▶ PLACEMENTS

NEW PLACEMENTS OF YOUTH VS. ADULTS

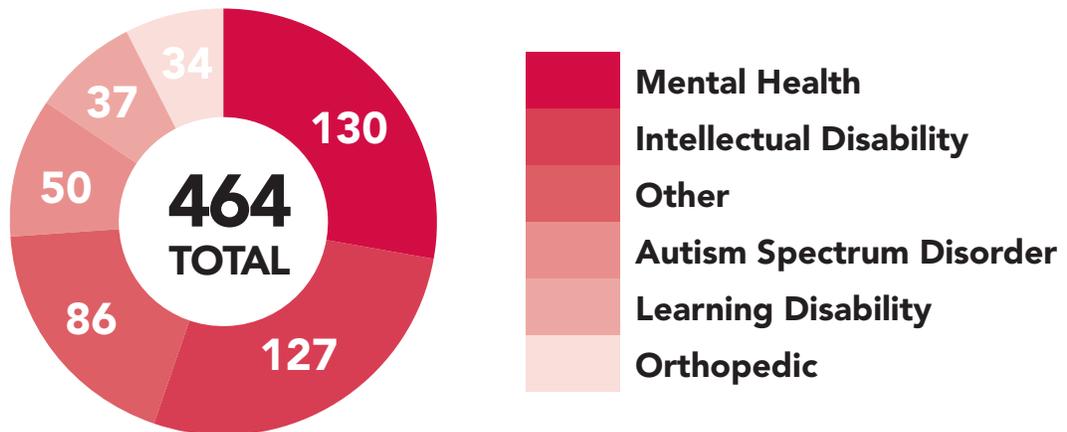


NEW PLACEMENTS THAT ARE SOCIAL SECURITY (SSA) BENEFICIARIES



▶ PLACEMENTS & EARNINGS

PLACEMENTS BY DISABILITY



AVERAGE MONTHLY EARNINGS FOR NEW PLACEMENTS

YOUTH RECEIVING
SSA BENEFITS
(21 and younger)

\$629.22

ADULTS RECEIVING
SSA BENEFITS

\$1019.61

ALL NEW YOUTH
(21 and younger)

\$694.21

ALL NEW ADULTS

\$1058.19

▶ TIME FROM SERVICE TO PLACEMENT

2014-15
150
DAYS

2015-16
137
DAYS

2016-17
121
DAYS

BALANCING LIFE, HEALTH AND WORK

Lynn was referred to AHEDD back in 2012 by Northwest Counseling. She's a high school graduate who had continued her education at the University of Oregon, where she received an Associates Degree in Biology.

Diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder when she was 28, Lynn had been institutionalized for two years and told she would never again reside outside the institution or have a job. Lynn was eventually released from this institution in California and moved to Pennsylvania, earlier in 2012.

When she came to AHEDD for assistance, she had only had a total of 18 months of employment experience and 9 months of volunteer experience. Her anxiety was severe enough that she was only able to handle being in a busy, demanding environment for about 2 hours before she would need to retreat to another location. Her Doctor wasn't certain that he wanted her to attempt work; he initially gave her 10 hour limitation per week, but eventually recommended that she only work 28 hours each week.

After coming to AHEDD, Lynn was initially successful in obtaining employment as a food service worker for a Mini Market around April of 2014. Lynn was responsible for making all food for display and sale. This food ranged from subs and salads to pizza and milk shakes. AHEDD's job coach, Debra, provided a lot of supports to Lynn outside of the work environment. Deb suggested strategies for keeping up with tasks, assisted Lynn with managing her benefits and reporting her earnings to the Social Security Administration (SSA), provided guidance for how Lynn could approach her employer about concerns, and delivered overall encouragement for Lynn when she was anxious. Lynn really liked this job, but the frequent staffing needs at that location often put her over the 28 hour work limit that was best for maintaining her mental health.



Lynn with Employment Specialist, Debra

In December 2014, Lynn transitioned to providing in-home care for individuals with disabilities through Comfort Keepers. Lynn is very successful in this Home Health Aide position and has become a frequently requested caregiver. Her supervisor stated that every client has wanted Lynn to return and she works well with the other employees.

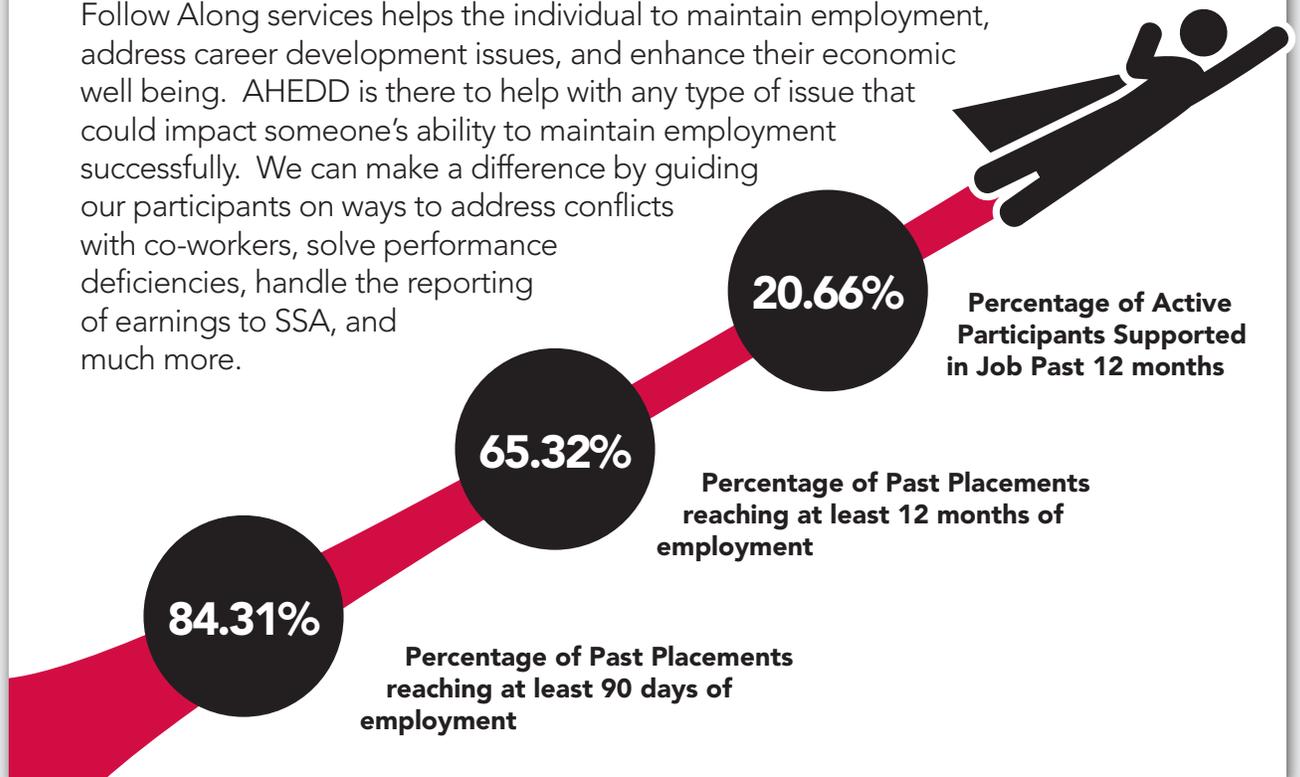
While Lynn continues to have to work at balancing her life and health, this job appears to be a good fit for her. She is still working over four (4) years after first going to work with AHEDD's support. By August 2015, she was also able to purchase her own car and was designated as Comfort Keeper of the Month in February 2016.

Enrolling Lynn under Social Security's Ticket to Work (TTW) program, enabled AHEDD the flexibility to give her the individualized and long term support she needed to remain employed for much longer than she ever had worked in her past.

▶ RETENTION AND IMPACT

AHEDD commits to provide support and guidance to our program participants for at least the first 12 months after work begins. This commitment to ongoing (follow along) support is a great benefit for both our program participants and employers. We not only want people to get a job, we want them to stay employed.

While the level of support is customized according to need, providing such Follow Along services helps the individual to maintain employment, address career development issues, and enhance their economic well being. AHEDD is there to help with any type of issue that could impact someone's ability to maintain employment successfully. We can make a difference by guiding our participants on ways to address conflicts with co-workers, solve performance deficiencies, handle the reporting of earnings to SSA, and much more.



▶ WORK INCENTIVES COUNSELING

373

INTAKES

177

**WORKING AT TIME
OF INTAKE**

Work Incentives Counseling is a service that helps social security beneficiaries to understand how employment earnings will impact their benefits. Currently AHEDD has 12 certified staff who can help individuals to identify work incentives which can maximize their income and healthcare options as they achieve greater financial independence. AHEDD provides this service through various sources of sponsorship to encourage employment and working to one's potential.

REACHING HER GOALS AND GREATER INDEPENDENCE

Jennifer was initially referred to AHEDD by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) in December of 2015. She struggles with reading and writing comprehension and also has recurring muscle spasms in her back.

When services began for Jennifer, a Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) recipient, her employment goal was to become teacher assistant or work at a daycare. She's a single Mom that was looking to work a schedule similar to her children's school times; the plan was to start part time and eventually move to full time hours with earnings of at least \$9.50 an hour.

Over the next two months, AHEDD assisted Jennifer in researching options for employment, compiling her resume, and preparing for applications and interviews. She even received Work Incentive Counseling from AHEDD before starting a position with Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU) in March of 2016; she began at BCIU as a Bus Assistant/ Van Driver for twenty-five hours a week. Her duties included driving the bus, assisting the students on the bus, attaching safety harnesses, maintaining order on the bus, monitoring student's interactions, and keeping attendance. She did very well in her position as a Bus Assistant.

Just a few weeks into employment at BCIU, Jennifer moved on to a Full Time Paraprofessional Educator position within BCIU; making more money than she hoped in her initial goal planning. In this position her responsibilities included: assisting students with their activities of daily living, implementing student IEPs, assisting in evaluating individual students, collecting data, compiling records/documentation, and monitoring students throughout the day.



Jennifer at BCIU Table and Classroom

Jennifer worked successfully as a Paraprofessional Educator for 90 days. At this point OVR closed her case and AHEDD was able to enroll her in the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Ticket to Work program under a Partnership Plus agreement that AHEDD has with OVR. The extra support she's been getting under Ticket to Work funding has enabled AHEDD to be instrumental in helping Jennifer to report her earnings to SSA. Jennifer is working on becoming independent from her SSDI benefits.

During the summer of 2016, she also obtained a summer job at the local Recreation Board to fill in for the summer break from BCIU. Jennifer continues to slowly work toward attaining her Child Development Associate (CDA) credential.

There haven't been a lot of worksite accommodations needed throughout Jennifer's employment. She does, however, have someone review all written materials with her. Jennifer also knows her AHEDD Employment Specialist (job coach) is there to help should new job duties cause her a need for more support.



USBLN AFFILIATE

PABLN BUSINESS LEADERSHIP NETWORK

P E N N S Y L V A N I A

DRIVING SUCCESS THROUGH **DISABILITY INCLUSION**

ENGAGING THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

The PA Business Leadership Network (PA BLN), coordinated by AHEDD since 2000, represents an excellent statewide resource for business leaders to engage each other about the critical issues relative to recruiting and/or retaining employees with disabilities. This employer friendly initiative provides companies with access to a network of their peers, opportunities for training and positive public relations, an increased number of applicants with a disability, and a centralized source of information. The PA BLN is indicative of AHEDD's ability to effectively network with employers and assist the business community with needs related to recruitment compliance, return-to-work strategies, civic responsibility, and workforce awareness training.

PREPARING YOUTH FOR THE FUTURE

In looking at transition services for youth, it's important that AHEDD reference The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), implemented in July 2015, which has led to an important change in services to youth. This legislation caused an amendment that now requires vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies to set aside at least 15% of their federal funds to provide pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services. This recent change in legislation and focus has really expanded AHEDD's partnership with OVR and increased the amount of services and real work experience that community agencies can provide to youth before they leave school. AHEDD believes that giving more opportunities for early supports will lead to more employment successes after school.



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FIRST JOB

Kasey was referred to AHEDD by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) in January of 2017. At the time of referral, he was a 17 year old High School student with no work experience.

The initial goal was to help Kasey set up a short term Work Based Learning Experience (WBLE) where he could get valuable experience and prepare for employment after school was over. Since Kasey's goal is to work in the front end of a grocery store, AHEDD was able to secure Kasey a short term experience as a Porch Attendant at Weis Markets. In this position, Kasey is responsible for keeping the cart corrals clear, helping the customers unload their groceries into the car, retrieving carts when customers are done with them, cleaning up the litter in the front of the store, collecting trash from receptacles throughout the store, and maintaining the cleanliness of restrooms.

Due to his diagnosis of Autism, it was important to see if Kasey was going to work well within a public setting like a grocery store. This store requires porch attendants to greet customers with a smile and a helpful attitude. Kasey has excelled above and beyond the required standard in this component of his assigned tasks. He also demonstrated that he could catch on to instructions, perform tasks independently, and ask questions when he needs direction.

Management and co-workers at the Weis Market have shared multiple compliments on Kasey's progress, work ethic, and excellent customer relations. In fact, Kasey started out working (2) four hour shifts on the weekends with the expectation that he would get more hours based on his performance. Within 6 weeks of starting, Kasey was given 2-3 more shifts during the week and is considered to be a permanent, part time employee.

Some of Kasey's challenges along the way have included determining what type of conversa-



Kasey with Manager Andrew

tion is not appropriate in the workplace and identifying best practices for getting the assistance of other co-workers. The presence of an AHEDD job coach at the worksite has been extremely helpful in giving Kasey that extra guidance he needed for improving on the social aspects of his job and showing others how to best prepare Kasey for changes that occur in the workplace.

Kasey's parents have also been an important part of his success. They have helped to provide transportation and reinforce the lessons on social skills that AHEDD has been teaching. His parents have also allowed AHEDD to take the lead in communicating with the employer. Such cooperation has enabled Kasey to better develop his independence.

**AHEDD is celebrating
40 years of service
1977-2017**



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