
Institute for Disability Studies Assists in Youth Awareness Training Sessions

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Employment has been a problem for many Mississippians in recent years, but the employment outlook for Mississippi's youth and young adults with disabilities, particularly individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities, is especially bleak.

Labor research has shown people with disabilities who have higher levels of education were more likely to be employed than those who have less education. However, at each level of education, individuals with a disability were much less likely to be employed than their counterparts with no disability.

In an effort to reverse this unfortunate trend, the Institute for Disability Studies (IDS) at The University of Southern Mississippi has collaborated with other state entities on a special project that features a series of regional awareness training sessions during May and June to inform community members involved in the lives of youth and young adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities who want to work.

The Mississippi Partnerships for Employment for Youth and Young Adults with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities project was developed by the Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities, IDS and Disability Rights Mississippi to increase competitive outcomes for youth and young adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities by enhancing the collaboration of existing state education and employment services systems. The five-year project is being funded by a grant from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities. Mississippi was one of six states chosen from 42 applicants for these grant funds

Four separate sessions will be held in each community: one for self-advocates and families, another for educators (superintendents, secondary, community college, and university educational leaders); another for policy makers such as elected officials including legislators, mayors, boards of supervisors, and Congressmen; and another for the business community including employers and business leaders.

Training session topics will include job development, customized employment, supported employment, federal laws and programs, environmental adaptations, person-centered planning services, or other supports for employment of individuals with disabilities.

Sessions are scheduled for the Gulf Coast in Long Beach on May 7-8 at the Technology Learning Center on The University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast campus. The sessions scheduled are: May 7: policymakers, 10 a.m.; youth with disabilities and their families, 5:30 p.m.; May 8: business leaders, 10 a.m.; educators, 1 p.m.

Awareness sessions will be held in Greenville on May 21-22, in Starkville on June 4-5, and in Jackson on June 21-22.

For more information on the Mississippi Partnerships for Employment project and the regional awareness sessions, call 1-888-671-0051 or visit www.usm.edu/ids.

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