



# University of Connecticut Health Center

## Connect-Ability Infrastructure Change Annual Report: January-December 2007

**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](http://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 that started with Connect-Ability's inception. The initial interview for the evaluation covered the time period from January 2007 through December 2007. During the same interviews, respondents were asked to note any infrastructure changes or barriers between January 2008 and March 2008. Data from this later time period and ongoing quarterly interviews will be reported in the 2008 and 2009 Connect-Ability Infrastructure Change Reports. Interviews are conducted quarterly, rather than annually, in an effort to capture as much data on infrastructure change and barriers as possible and to avoid the loss of information important to the evaluation.

A total of twenty-three key informants were identified; twenty interviews were completed by telephone between May 27<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup>. Two of the twenty-three key informants declined to participate in the evaluations and a third was on medical leave and unavailable to participate in the interview.

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"> <li>➤ <b>Directly attributed to Connect-Ability</b></li> <li>• Indirectly related to Connect-Ability</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Connect-Ability is helping to fund a workshop around independent living issues that was conducted in one region in 2007 and will be expanded to three regions in 2008. Connect-Ability is currently working with the National Consortium for Health Systems Development (NCHSD), a technical assistance partnership for the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant to write up the modules. Upon completion, these will be posted on the Connect-Ability website.</b></li> </ul>	NPG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>The Office of Special Education Program (OSEP) initiated departmental program changes focusing on training related to transition services. The quality of transition planning was addressed by instituting on-site training visits, which are also included in the general supervision indicator of the Connecticut state performance plan. Transition pages of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which describes the goals the education team sets for a student during the school year, have also been changed to better reflect what is being asked of districts in terms of transition planning.</b></li> </ul>	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>The Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) is recognizing the branding of Connect-Ability and working with Mintz and Hoke to develop its own marketing products. The CT-based Mintz and Hoke Communications Group was selected by Connecticut's DSS to develop communications intended to connect people with disabilities to job opportunities.</b></li> </ul>	ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>BRS presented at the National Medicaid Infrastructure Grant and Northeast Partnership conferences. As a result, other states are using the Connect-Ability website and Employment Summit as best practices.</b></li> </ul>	ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>BRS partnered with an assistive technology program to develop an AT specific video that looks similar to Connect-Ability. It is also working with BESB, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to do the same thing.</b></li> </ul>	ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>At the request of employers (e.g., Chambers of Commerce, Lion's Clubs), Connect-Ability completed multiple employer presentations.</b></li> </ul>	ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>The Connect-Ability website for technical assistance and toll free line were established. Between June 2007 and December 2007, there were 17,000 unique visitors to the website and 250 calls to the hot line. Although no benchmarks were set, this response is encouraging. A separate evaluation is underway to measure the impact of the hot line.</b></li> </ul>	ID

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>The Connecticut Business Leadership Network (BLN) member company employees participated in a Connect-Ability video and in several videos sponsored by Able Lives, Inc. that were aired on CPTV. The national BLN is chaired by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and is led by employers in concert with state Governor's Committees and/or community agencies that engage the leadership and participation of companies throughout the United States to hire qualified job candidates with disabilities. This Network offers employers access to a largely untapped pool of applicants with disabilities, relevant disability employment information, a network of businesses sharing information on disability employment issues, and the opportunity to provide training and work experience for job seekers with disabilities.</i></li> </ul>	ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>DMHAS is conducting a media campaign with a similar approach to Connect-Ability and has given out the Connect-Ability website to all providers they're in touch with including women's services providers.</i></li> </ul>	ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Three employment people working at DMHAS are specifically sharing what they know about Connect-Ability with clients and how best to use Connect-Ability.</i></li> </ul>	ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>The state's Long-Term Care Plan is updated quarterly and now includes employment information based on the Connect-Ability strategic plan.</i></li> </ul>	ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Mintz and Hoke developed 3 minute videos for Connect-Ability and put them on YouTube to show what people with disabilities can do. The videos are also available through the Connect-Ability website.</i></li> </ul>	ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Mintz and Hoke is developing advertisements that use photos of people with disabilities to integrate images of people with disabilities into the popular culture.</i></li> </ul>	ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>North Branford High School used the transition page on the Connect-Ability website to develop curriculum in general education and special education classes and as a result of this will work with Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) to do professional development with teachers to show them that model.</i></li> </ul>	ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) hired 10 people to specifically promote self-advocacy and help influence policy from a consumer's point of view.</li> </ul>	NPG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Southern Connecticut State University (Disability Resource Center) and BRS are conducting workshops to keep students focused on employment and related areas. One workshop that's offered is, "A Degree is not Enough." Another workshop focuses on how to travel independently so people with disabilities can consider working in internships or summer jobs that require traveling. Future workshops will focus on financial literacy and internships. These workshops are being cosponsored biannually and have been well attended with 20 students in each class.</li> </ul>	NPG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BRS presented on <i>Transition to the Work Place</i> to all state special education directors at the CT Association of Special Education meetings.</li> </ul>	ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect-Ability staff participated in the work group that was organized by BRS to help the National Governor's Association Policy Academy on Young Adults with Disabilities develop a web based navigation tool for state agency programs. This initiative was not funded by Connect-Ability, but the</li> </ul>	ID

	navigation tool was later taken over by Connect-Ability.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The CT Tech Act Project is operating a regional website called <i>getATstuff</i> where people can access devices that people have posted on the website or can swap them. Categories for devices listed on the exchange in New England include: vision; hearing; speech communication; learning, cognitive, developmental; mobility, seating and positioning; daily living; environmental adaptations; transportation and vehicle modifications; computers and related equipment; recreation, sports, and leisure. For more information visit the website at <a href="http://www.getatstuff.com/home.php">http://www.getatstuff.com/home.php</a>.</li> </ul>	ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Department of Labor (DOL) website has been redesigned and provides useful information for job seekers with disabilities.</li> </ul>	ID
Recruitment, employment, and promotion		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Connect-Ability exhibited leadership in encouraging the development of an Employment Action Plan and arranged to meet with the DSS Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner to implement it.</i></li> </ul>	NPG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>The BLN, which was recently rejuvenated in CT, is building up the peer-to-peer approach to provide an informal source of consultation on workplace disability issues.</i></li> </ul>	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Connect-Ability referrals are going to existing partners, including BRS, BESB, or the DOL's career centers.</i></li> </ul>	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Connect-Ability staff conducted training with all state agency affirmative action managers</i></li> </ul>	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Connect-Ability is partnering with Vocational Rehabilitation and sends employment information to its entire staff who then reach out to people with disabilities.</i></li> </ul>	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Connect-Ability is working with the DSS Commissioner to make that agency a model employer for hiring people with disabilities. The partnership is exploring initial steps including creating internship opportunities and commuter information on transportation in the employee hire manual.</i></li> </ul>	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>As a result of Connect-Ability, the DMHAS Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner are concentrating on employment as one of several important goals for people with mental health disabilities.</i></li> </ul>	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>The State Employment Leadership Network (SELN), which brings together state developmental disability agencies for sharing, educating, and providing guidance on practices and policies around employment, is being revitalized. Connect-Ability is funding Connecticut's participation in SELN.</i></li> </ul>	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>The second annual CT Employment Summit was held in June 2007. It was attended by 250 employers, people with disabilities, service providers, and state agency staff, and provided valuable information and networking opportunities.</i></li> </ul>	ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BRS/DMHAS share an employee who is a bridge between the two agencies and is overseeing a</li> </ul>	NPG

	Collaborative Employment pilot to evaluate consumer employment processes.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DDS has a new employment initiative with the slogan “No Chump Change.”</li> </ul>	NPG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMHAS has written and submitted a grant proposal to implement employment strategies into its supportive housing program.</li> </ul>	NPG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMHAS was awarded money for the Military Support Program that includes a component for employment.</li> </ul>	NPG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In May 2007, the Connecticut Department of Labor (DOL) was awarded a two-year \$1,180,000 Disability Program Navigator Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. This grant establishes a state level Lead Program Navigator at CTDOL and six regional Disability Navigators located at CTWorks One-Stop Centers. Disability Navigators act as guides to One-Stop Center staff in helping people with disabilities access and navigate the complex provisions of various programs that provide services and supports needed to obtain and maintain employment. 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. Disability Navigators are hired by different vendors of the Local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB).</li> </ul>	NPG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Walgreens initiative underscores positive hiring practices and will provide employment for numerous people with disabilities in a CT-based distribution center.</li> </ul>	NPG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BRS is using a case conferencing process for counselors and consumers that have difficulty in knowing what the next steps for employment are.</li> </ul>	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BRS is working more closely with smaller businesses including “mom and pop” organizations and Spanish merchants.</li> </ul>	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DDS began to implement its Employment First vision of making employment the first priority for people with disabilities.</li> </ul>	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DDS increased the money it gives to fund People First of CT allowing a greater focus on employment. Founded in 1989, People First of CT is a statewide self advocacy group with 16 chapters that meets every other month to share self advocacy news and issues.</li> </ul>	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DDS is collecting data and doing an analysis to look at place, type of employment, hours, salary, and type of support received.</li> </ul>	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMHAS - Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR) - is building recovery capital that includes connectedness with employers.</li> </ul>	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMHAS is underscoring person centered planning and changing its philosophy about how it approaches people.</li> </ul>	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of the DMHAS units developed gender responsive treatment guidelines and included employment as one of the standards.</li> </ul>	PrCh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMHAS is training its providers, including women’s services providers, on how to get people back to</li> </ul>	PrCh

	work. Assessment is an important part of this work.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community work incentive coordinators have helped to disseminate knowledge about programs that have people more willing to return to employment.</li> </ul>	ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employment First policies and practices are posted on the SELN website.</li> </ul>	ID
Transportation		
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability and DSS staff participated in initiatives to expand transportation services to people with disabilities (e.g., Transportation to Work Program for TANF eligible employees).</i>	NPG
	➤ <i>A transportation resource directory is being developed by Connect-Ability, in partnership with BRS, to help people see general information on transportation options at a glance.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability has helped the Department of Transportation (DOT) bring users together to look at gaps in services and create strategies to create responses and information.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability is working with DOT to provide transportation guides and to have web based trip planning similar to Map Quest.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>DDS is updating its website to include information on transportation.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>DDS regions are identifying a contact person to provide transportation information.</i>	ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DOT has used funding from one legislative initiative to improve public transportation for people with and without disabilities. Through the first Governor's Transportation Initiative (PA 05-4, JSS-Sec. 28), \$3.5 million was provided for the purchase of new buses for service expansion.</li> </ul>	NPG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Job Access Program is letting people know that using public transportation to get to work is potentially more reliable than using one's own car every day.</li> </ul>	ID
Youth in Transition		
	➤ <i>The concept for an integrated mentoring program for young adults was developed in 2007. This program will increase the availability of mentoring, and will be included in existing programs.</i>	NPG
	➤ <i>Work group members from the School to Work Transition workgroup have been meeting with young adults to get their input.</i>	PrCh
	➤ <i>Connect-Ability and BRS developed a tool kit that provides resources for transition and for its staff. It is posted on the BRS website along with a transition page of information about BRS and transition resources. More information is available at <a href="http://www.brs.state.ct.us/SchoolToWork/toolkit.htm">http://www.brs.state.ct.us/SchoolToWork/toolkit.htm</a>.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>Youth and parent sections on the Connect-Ability website were developed to reach all young adults including those who aren't connected to state agencies.</i>	ID
	➤ <i>A searchable database of all community rehabilitation providers working with state agencies and schools was begun at the end of 2007.</i>	ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Statewide Transition Task Force is developing a web page for state agencies working with young adults and will provide a link to their resources related to employment. The link will also be added to</li> </ul>	ID

	the DOL website.	
Other		
	➤ <i>BRS was able to expand personal assistance services by amending DSS policy to include waiver coverage for college students who live in dorms.</i>	PoCh
	➤ <i>Legislation was introduced and is in the final processes of approval to link DDS waivers and the ABI waiver program to Connecticut's Medicaid Buy-In program.</i>	PoCh
	➤ <i>Money Follows the Person grant proposal, which was led by Connect-Ability staff, was awarded and then moved into the DSS Medicaid unit. The grant proposal included an employment focus for individuals with disabilities transitioning out of nursing facilities.</i>	NPG
	➤ <i>Department of Administrative Services (DAS) has promoted the Connect-Ability initiative within its organization. DAS provides statewide policy to state agencies on matters related to human resources and other centralized services.</i>	PrCh
	➤ <i>DMHAS Mental Health Transformation Grant is coordinating with Connect-Ability. As one of 7 states awarded this grant, Connecticut is using grant funds to continue developing a recovery-oriented system of mental health care in which state and local systems work together to support citizens across the lifespan and provide accessible supports to promote resilience and recovery.</i>	PrCh
	➤ <i>Interagency collaboration has been occurring. The Connect-Ability Steering Committee is an example of change and brings agencies together. BRS has had planning meetings with DAS, DDS, DMHAS, and BESB.</i>	PrCh

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. Table 2 focuses on barriers to employment. Table 3 lists promising practices that were mentioned by key informants, and 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"> <li>• Low expectations of schools and the community at large for people with disabilities</li> <li>• Limited resources for training</li> <li>• The idea that people with disabilities don't need to work</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of understanding of benefits and misinformation about benefits and employment</li> <li>• The stigma associated with mental illness disabilities</li> </ul>
Recruitment, employment, and promotion	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hiring freeze</li> <li>• Limiting the minimum wage hike</li> <li>• Difficulty with coordination between agencies: Fragmentation is still strong and a lack of understanding among employers exists about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.</li> <li>• An inadequate workforce of personal assistants for people who need them and lack of benefits for this group of workers</li> </ul>
Transportation	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of funding for transportation services</li> <li>• No local governance for transportation in CT: Other states have municipal funding so municipalities have more of a say regarding transportation.</li> <li>• Transportation isn't used as a criterion for awarding employer best practices.</li> <li>• Transportation expenses and increasing cost of gas</li> <li>• Lack of wheel chair accessible taxis</li> <li>• Union issues for public transportation drivers</li> </ul>
Youth in Transition	
Other	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient staff impact how agencies deliver services and the ability to handle contracts and requests for proposals for new programs in a timely manner.</li> <li>• Worsening state budget issues</li> <li>• Lack of affordable and accessible housing</li> <li>• The long process to get new organizational agreements in place</li> <li>• Not enough central coordination of technical assistance activities (phone calls, e-mail, website, technical assistance)</li> <li>• State Administered General Assistance (SAGA ) is a disincentive to work and has repercussions for DMHAS consumers on SAGA.</li> </ul>

Table 3. Promising Practices

Content Areas	Highlights
Stakeholder education	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A Disability 101</i> publication was produced by the U. S. Department of Education and has been used as a reference by BRS in developing a website for employers and people with disabilities.</li> </ul>
Recruitment, employment, and promotion	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walgreens' partnership with the community to hire people with disabilities for the distribution center in Windsor</li> <li>• Edible Arrangements in Wallingford, CT is preparing to hire people with disabilities for their call center.</li> <li>• Virginia Commonwealth University - Quality Indicators for Employment Outcomes</li> <li>• Job Accommodation Network has great information for employers.</li> <li>• BRS case management model is directed toward returning people to the community and encourages them to see they can have benefits and employment opportunities.</li> <li>• Case conferencing process for BRS counselors and consumers that have difficulty in knowing what the next steps are</li> <li>• Hiring technical mentors to mentor others who need technology and collaborating with ancillary services is cost effective and helps get the right kind of service for people.</li> <li>• Targeting certain regions, types of employment, or specific types of disabilities has been done successfully in the Job Access Program when they targeted Industrial Parks.</li> <li>• Targeted outreach spreads the word among particular work settings - enables people to get a better feel for that particular employer's culture and for the kind of employees employers are seeking.</li> <li>• Telecommuting provides flexibility in employment location and hours.</li> </ul>
Transportation	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rhode Island's tool kit on vouchers provides a transportation option.</li> <li>• United We Ride initiative enhances human service transportation services through coordination of efforts at the federal, state, and local levels.</li> <li>• Trade associations or trade groups (i.e., Job Developers Coalition) are a good surrogate for addressing transportation and other work-related issues.</li> <li>• DSS hired 3 transportation brokers who explore different transportation options and determine the best way for people with disabilities to get to their medical appointments. Using this process has saved DSS 3 to 4 million</li> </ul>

	dollars.
Youth in Transition	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internships allow businesses to preview the talent of a person before they actually hire them and help an intern learn what's required in different work settings while they're building good basic skills.</li> <li>• Employer mentoring programs broaden student awareness and expectation.</li> <li>• Start on Success (SOS) programs focus on getting students into paid internships in the community or on college campuses (e.g., in Bristol High School's SOS program, a transition worker went to the local police department and got them to donate lost or stolen bicycles. A work experience was then developed for students to repair the bicycles. Restored bicycles were subsequently used to provide transportation for other students to get to their work sites).</li> <li>• Southington High School developed an in-house print shop and has trained students with disabilities to operate the equipment and run the business.</li> </ul>
Other	

Table 4. Suggestions for Future Action

Content Areas	Highlights
Stakeholder education	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote workforce education to maximize employment potential and help companies achieve their goals.</li> </ul>
Recruitment, employment, and promotion	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employing people with disabilities needs to be on employer's radar, and human resources need to be more aware.</li> <li>• Listen to employers and get the resources they request.</li> <li>• Know employers and connect with them to bring each other on board.</li> <li>• Provide supported work experiences for employers to experience the benefits of workers with disabilities.</li> <li>• Work with recovery-friendly employers to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.</li> <li>• Identify companies that have diversity officers so Connect-Ability can bring them together to access employment opportunities for people with disabilities.</li> <li>• Provide an anonymous, monitored blog for employers on Connect-Ability's website where employers can post</li> </ul>

	<p>questions and data could be collected on how to better reach employers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire employment experts who will talk to employers about making changes in hiring.</li> <li>• Employment specialists are needed to explain the options that are available so people get the whole picture and see that there are many opportunities for work.</li> <li>• To increase employment potential, affordable and accessible housing in urban areas should be provided in areas near employment.</li> <li>• Dissemination tools for job postings across stakeholders and advocacy groups are needed (i.e., a job bank).</li> </ul>
Transportation	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate entities applying for federal and state dollars about people with disabilities' need for greater access to transportation and other services.</li> <li>• Need more information about the types of jobs and schedules at different places of employment in order to provide better transportation in rural areas.</li> </ul>
Youth in Transition	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training to district personnel (i.e., job developers and transition coordinators) about better job development including marketing and matching skills of students with needs of employers.</li> </ul>
Other	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need continued evolution of the benefit system.</li> <li>• Need more Community Work Incentive Counselors (CWICs) to help people better understand their benefits and what will happen to those benefits when they are employed.</li> <li>• Focus on understanding the changing economy and becoming a customer service-based state.</li> <li>• Increased collaboration in the last 2-3 years has been helpful, but it needs to branch out beyond disability related agencies.</li> <li>• Develop a more seamless approach between agencies.</li> <li>• Social Security needs a mechanism for supporting people with disabilities going off of benefits.</li> <li>• Provide long-term service supports to those who become impoverished because of their long term needs.</li> </ul>