



Interagency Committee on Employees with Disabilities

Pat Quinn
Governor

July 2009

Co-Chairpersons

TO: THE HONORABLE GOVERNOR PAT QUINN
AND THE MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Rocco J. Claps
Director, Department
Of Human Rights

Carol L. Adams, Ph.D.
Secretary, Department
Of Human Services

It gives us great pleasure to submit the Annual Report of the Illinois Interagency Committee on Employees with Disabilities (ICED) for Fiscal Year 2008. The Committee's mission, as defined in Section 19a of the Personnel Code, is:

- (a) to provide a forum where problems of general concern to State employees with disabilities can be raised and methods of their resolution can be suggested to the appropriate State agencies;
- (b) to provide a clearinghouse of information for State employees with disabilities by working with those agencies to develop and retain such information;
- (c) to promote affirmative action efforts pertaining to the employment of persons with disabilities by State agencies; and
- (d) to recommend, where appropriate, means of strengthening the affirmative action programs for employees with disabilities in State agencies.

To that end, this Annual Report documents the Committee's accomplishments throughout the fiscal year including the placement of five (5) ICED interns with four (4) state entities over the summer of 2007, presenting a conference geared to increasing promotions of employees with disabilities in April 2008, hosting a legislative reception in May and issuing two newsletters.

The Committee continues to operate without a budget or paid staff; its objectives are accomplished through volunteer efforts of members and through cooperation of other state agencies. We are grateful to the many agencies and individuals who have assisted the Committee in its work throughout the years.

Sincerely,

Rocco J. Claps
Director
Department of Human Rights

Carol L. Adams, Ph.D
Secretary
Department of Human Services

- Marva Campbell-Pruitt, Department of Human Services, DRS
- Kathy Day, Department of Agriculture
- Dan Dickerson, Department of Human Services, DRS
- Gwen Diehl, Department of Veterans Affairs
- Katherine Gardner, Department of Human Services
- Teresita Gonzalez, Department of Human Services
- Joseph Ashcraft, Department of Central Management Services
- Fred Stewart, II, Department of Central Management Services
- Margaret Harkness, Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Jack Kanady, University of Illinois' Division of Specialized Care for Children
- Carlos Charneco, Department of Employment Security
- Jimmie Miller, Department of Veterans' Affairs
- Sue Masten, Department of Human Services

ICED OUTREACH

ICED Website

The ICED website, www.state.il.us/ICED, provides a wide variety of information about the Committee and links to organizations dealing with disability issues, such as the Council for Disability Rights in Chicago, the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living and the Great Lakes ADA and Accessible IT Center. The Committee's newsletters as well as other ICED publications are posted on the website, and a discussion board is available for comments from employees with a disability and others interested in disability issues. Resources related to work site issues and employment are added regularly for managers and employees with a disability. ICED wrote and has available for download a series of technical assistance fact sheets for ADA Coordinators, EEO/AA Officers and employees with a disabilities in need of an accommodation. An ICED informational brochure was updated for download and use at events at which ICED members were able to reach out to state employees. ICED's website has a link on CMS's Diversity Enrichment Program webpage to give it greater visibility. The ICED site received over 1300 hits over the course of the fiscal year.

ICED Newsletter

Two issues of **ICED News** were distributed over the course of the fiscal year; Volume 10, Number 2 was distributed in August 2007 while Volume 11, Number 1 was distributed in June 2008. These newsletters are distributed to a mailing list of disability organizations and state employees with disabilities and posted on the ICED website. Two hundred print copies were distributed and it is emailed to 3,323 people in the state with an interest in disability issues. Over 175 hits were made on the web

newsletter. Topics covered in this year's newsletters included underutilization of employees with disabilities and the second Legislative Reception.

ICED ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF ITS MISSION

ICED Internship Program

The ICED Internship Program for College Students with Disabilities' was initiated in the summer of 2000 to assist people with disabilities who are entering the workforce and can benefit from actual work experience on their resume. In some instances, interns demonstrate their abilities and decide to apply for full-time employment with the state. Objectives of the internship program are to:

- Provide employment opportunities to qualified college students with disabilities
- Diversify state government's workplace
- Demonstrate the abilities of employees with disabilities
- Further affirmative action objectives
- Provide a transition for college students with disabilities into the workplace

Students who have disabilities were recruited through ICED's internship partners - the Department of Human Services/Division of Rehabilitation Services vocational counselors and Anixter Center, a non-profit organization with a professional placement program for college students with disabilities. Those who were interns in 2008 had various types of disability such as severe physical disabilities, and hearing and vision loss. ICED would have liked to place additional interns, but one barrier was found to be the cumbersome process of following Rutan requirements in hiring interns made some agencies choose not to hire an intern during the summer of 2007. During FY2008, five (5) ICED interns were placed with the following entities:

Department of Human Services (1)
Department of Human Rights (1)
Department of Employment Security (2)
Illinois Office of the Comptroller (1)

Their work roles varied from general office tasks to more specific responsibilities including: overseeing registration for a statewide conference, serving as a receptionist, writing, editing and researching; drafting publications, working on a Power Point presentation and developing a conference contact sheet. Supervisory feedback was very positive resulting in positive experience for both the students and the employers.

By June 2008, seventeen intern candidates were identified and recruitment of agencies willing to hire an intern was under way for the summer of 2008. One intern already had begun at the Worker's Compensation Commission, and the Illinois Assistive Technology Program provided software as an accommodation allowing this employee to meet all work responsibilities.

ICED Legislative Reception

ICED hosted its fourth legislative reception the evening of May 9, 2008 at the Illinois State Library Atrium. To maximize the voice of advocacy for individuals with disabilities, ICED joined five other groups with related missions: the Statewide Independent Living Council, the Coalition for Citizens with Disability in Illinois, the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living, Health and Disability Advocates, and the Illinois Assistive Technology Program. Approximately 150 individuals attended this event which provided an opportunity for state employees with all types of disabling conditions to communicate issues of importance to the invited legislators, agency directors and leaders of local organizations that represent or advocate for people with disabilities.

ICED members distributed a fact sheet about the Committee at the event. ICED members spoke with legislators and policymakers about Illinois improving access and opportunity for employees with disabilities. Senate Bill 2538 was being watched during this session since it would affect several state agencies (DHS, CMS, and DCEO) and targeted increased hiring of people with disabilities by the State. Senate Bill 2312 also could have increased employment opportunities.

ICED Conference/Awards Ceremony

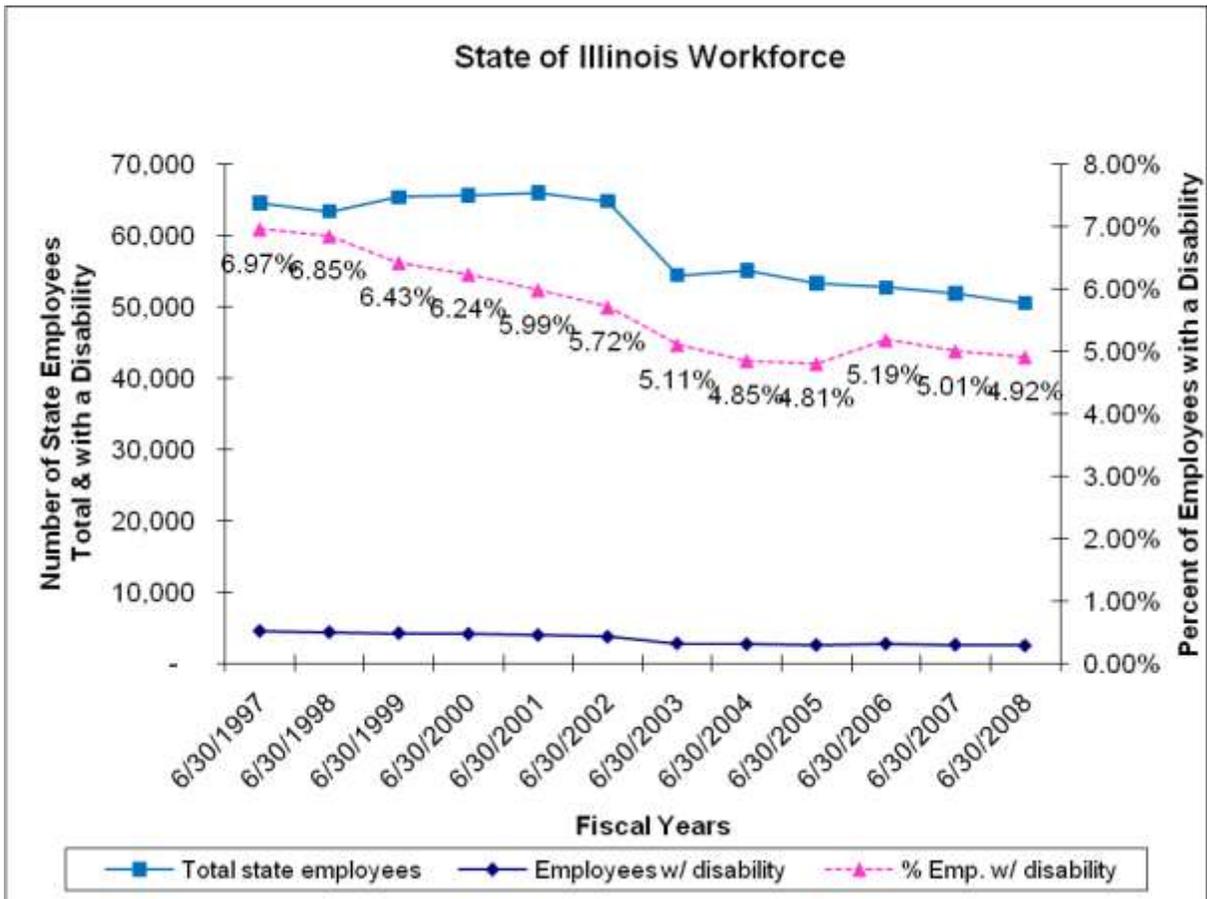
"How to Get Ahead in State Government – By Really Trying" was the focus of ICED's annual conference held in Springfield on April 30th, 2008. The focus on increasing promotional opportunities for employees with a disability was identified as a need by ICED members. The conference was one means to increase knowledge and use of the Upward Mobility program, to highlight ways employees can gain promotional opportunities, and to show ways managers can seek out strategies to increase the promotion of employees with disabilities. Ninety state employees attended and were inspired by the personal stories and insights of state employees with disabilities who have made career advances within state government. Thanks to the Department of Central Management Services, Department of Human Services, and the Department of Human Rights for financial support allowing ICED to offer this opportunity to interested state employees.

The recipient of ICED's legislative award, Representative Jim Sacia of District 89, spoke to the attendees and pledged to work on the issue of declining numbers of state employees with disabilities.

Monitoring Employment of People with Disabilities

The Committee tracks the composition of the state's workforce as one indication of the state's commitment to being a model employer of people with disabilities. In the following graph, it can be seen that over the past decade, the percentage of people with disabilities in state government fell from 6.97% of state employees in FY97 to 4.92% by the end of FY08.

Another indicator of the success of affirmative action programs based on disability in state agencies is a comparison of state utilization of employees with disabilities with labor market availability of this group. The Department of Human Rights uses 10.8% as a labor force availability rate for employees with disabilities in Illinois (10.3% for working aged people aged 21-64 per the American Community Survey for 2007). Yet the state's utilization of employees with disabilities is less than half of that.



To address this continuing pattern of underutilization of Illinoisans with disabilities, the Committee worked toward the following:

- Establishment of a full-time Executive Director and sufficient support staff to advance the mission and goals of ICED on a full-time permanent basis;
- Devotion of sufficient funds to address underutilization hiring issues;
- Increased recruitment efforts by all agencies with respect to hiring individuals with disabilities.

ICED proposes these recommendations to solidify the Administration's commitment to increasing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. A diverse workforce enables agencies to better meet the needs of the public. ICED will continue its efforts to advocate on behalf of individuals with disabilities.

Other Issues Explored by ICED

Reasonable Accommodation Requests

ICED membership brought forward the issue of different agencies each using their own form for employees to request a reasonable accommodation in their work related to a disability. Forms and procedures from member agencies were reviewed, and it was suggested that ICED develop a recommended form which represents best practice, such as a downloadable form listed on the Job Accommodation Network web site, as an option for agencies to adopt for their internal use.

Accessible Parking

Another issue brought to ICED's attention was the need for state facilities to have sufficient accessible parking available for employees and public consumers. ICED was addressed by a member of the Attorney General's Office to learn about requirements of the Illinois Barriers Act and the Illinois Accessible Code. All state offices, including those leased or rented since 1990, must meet the requirements of number, size, signage, and location of accessible parking spaces for people with disabilities. Reminders about these spaces and the need to keep them clear of obstructions including snow and ice were included in ICED's newsletter.

Disability Awareness and Etiquette Training

For Illinois agencies to demonstrate good practice and management for workers with disabilities, awareness and etiquette training is needed on an ongoing basis to maintain sensitive administrators. "Opening Doors" training was presented to ICED by member Dan Dickerson of DHS-DRS. This presentation is under consideration as a training option through CMS's schedule of courses. Opening Doors was presented at an in-person training for ADA Officers and EEO Coordinators sponsored by DHR in March 2008.

Increasing Hiring through Successful Disability Opportunities (SDO) Program

Though this program offers a wonderful option for job seekers with a significant disability, the number of people who have been hired through it remains low. ICED members discussed possible ways to encourage agencies to make use of the program. The SDO list can only be requested once union requirements have been met, and veteran's preference takes priority. Discussion continues with CMS and the Governor's Office on ways to make the SDO hiring process more efficient and effective. One recommendation was to identify a means for non-constitutional agencies to see the SDO list and CMS agreed to do so.

NEXT STEPS FOR FY2009

ICED has identified goals for which activities will be based during fiscal year 2009. The goals are as follows:

1. Provide educational opportunities in disability issues utilizing technology to reach the broadest possible audience of state employees.
2. Educate Illinois legislators about ICED, its mission, and the status of our state as an employer of people with disabilities.
3. Identify ways ICED can get its message to state administrators and human resource personnel that employees with a disability are competent, dependable, and loyal members of a workforce. Utilize first person accounts by state employees who have a disability to demonstrate this point.
4. Seek state employees who wish to be named an ICED employee member to replace vacant position.