

**The Alliance for Full Participation
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**AFP LAUNCHES EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE FOR
CITIZENS WITH INTELLECTUAL & DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**

WASHINGTON, DC –The Alliance for Full Participation (AFP) announced a national effort today to increase employment in the U.S. for people with developmental disabilities. Individuals with developmental disabilities want and need real jobs like everyone else. About 10% of the U.S. population has disabilities; but within that group, only 37% of them are employed. And it's worse for Americans with developmental disabilities, where only 22% of the entire group is employed.

According to Chester Finn, President of Self Advocates Becoming Empowered, "Employment is important for people with disabilities because we want to work, make money and accomplish our goals and aspirations. Furthermore, we're contributing valuable skills and assets to our communities. The Alliance for Full Participation focusing on employment for people with disabilities will help the nation and states understand the importance of employment, freedom, justice and equality."

The Alliance's initiative includes focused action and networking among multi-stakeholder state teams; nationally webcast education and town-hall events; national and state-level policy change advocacy; and directed local efforts to increase and enhance employment for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Also anticipated is an October 2011 national summit to share leading practice, process recommendations and establish meaningful national outcomes.

The primary focus of this initiative is on achieving demonstrable results on a state level. The Alliance is building and will guide state teams that include people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, advocates, service providers, business organizations, state government officials, and members of the general community to explore and transform the environment for employment in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

"Having a job leads to independence, making new friends, and feeling like you make a difference," says Nancy Thaler, executive director of the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services. "Having a job also means growing as a person, learning new things, being a part of one's community, and becoming a responsible, valued citizen."

"Some states and some employers are already doing an excellent job of supporting good jobs for people with disabilities," adds Karen Flippo, AFP liaison to the AFP state teams. "We want to highlight those states and employers that are removing barriers and creating incentives, so others can emulate them."

AFP members have each established national, organizational goals and outlined planned actions to foster employment opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The primary focus of this nationwide effort is on demonstrative change in individual states. "Meaningful employment for people with developmental disabilities will go a long way toward realizing the goals of our 2005 summit – integration, productivity, independence and quality of life choices. A person with a good job can afford housing, and the supports and services that make their independence possible. With that job, people assume responsibilities and provide resources

to their communities," says James F. Gardner, Ph.D., president and CEO of the Council on Quality and Leadership, and Chairman of the AFP Steering Committee

This effort stems from goals voiced and agreed upon by self-advocates and advocates participating in the 2005 Alliance for Full Participation national summit in Washington, DC. To learn more and get involved in this exciting new initiative, visit the AFP website at www.allianceforfullparticipation.org.

About the Alliance for Full Participation

The AFP is a 501 (c)3 nonprofit organization comprised of 13 national nonprofit organizations in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities:

American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD),
American Network of Community Options and Resources Foundation (ANCOR),
APSE: The Network on Employment,
The Arc of the United States
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD),
Autism Society of America (ASA),
The Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL)
Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation,
National Association of Councils on Development Disabilities (NACDD),
National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP),
NISH
The National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS),
Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE)
TASH
United Cerebral Palsy (UCP),

Each of these organizations represents distinct stakeholders within the developmental disabilities community, yet all are united in commitment to successful inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities into mainstream American life. By bringing together the many voices within these organizations and throughout the developmental disabilities community, the Alliance for Full Participation is dedicated to making the vision of full participation a reality.