

# **DHS Celebrates National Disability Employment Month IDHS and providers host events to raise awareness for disability employment**

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SPRINGFIELD/CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) is raising awareness about the employment of people with disabilities and partnering with providers across the state for awareness month events.

“Increasing meaningful work opportunities for people with disabilities has to be a priority at IDHS, in October and every month of the year,” said Grace Hou, Secretary of IDHS.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Statistics, the unemployment rate for persons with a disability was 8.0 percent in 2018, more than twice the rate of those without a disability (3.7 percent).

Each year, National Disability Employment Month (NDEAM) raises awareness about disability employment issues and celebrates the many and varied contributions of America's workers with disabilities.

The history of NDEAM traces back to 1945 when Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October each year to be dedicated to employing individuals with disabilities.

In 1962, the week was updated to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and named it National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

“NDEAM is an important time for employers, educators, and organizations to ensure they are conveying a commitment to an inclusive culture for individuals with disabilities,” said Allison Stark, Director of the Division of Developmental Disabilities.

IDHS, along with communities and organizations across the country, is hosting activities and events this month for NDEAM. Events in Illinois include the Interagency Committee on Employees with Disabilities (ICED) Annual Awards Ceremony, a Ticket To Work Orientation that featured jobs for disabled Chicago residents, Olive-Harvey College’s Disability Awareness Day and Resource Fair, Columbia College of Chicago’s Deaf Awareness Day, the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities’ Disability Business Resource Forum (Oct. 24) and the Annual Summit for Youth with Disabilities (Oct. 26).

For more details, a full list of events, and additional resources, please visit the IDHS Bureau of Accessibility and Job Accommodation events page.

“We would like to thank our community partners for hosting events this month in Chicago and throughout the state,” said Rahnee Patrick, Director of the Division of Rehabilitation Services. “These events are just a small part of the important work they do every day to help individuals with disabilities achieve full community participation through employment, education, and independent living opportunities.”

IDHS is that state’s lead agency in supporting people with disabilities through vocational rehabilitation programs and job placement. Last year, IDHS helped 5,000 people through vocational rehabilitation programs, placed 1,000 people with intellectual or developmental disabilities in supported employment, and helped an additional 3,400 people with mental health conditions find and keep meaningful work through the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) services program. To apply for these services and the programs, visit the Rehabilitation Services Referral Page.

Employers and employees in all industries can also learn more about how to participate in National Disability Employment Awareness Month and ways they can promote its messages during October and throughout the year by visiting: [www.dol.gov/ndeam](http://www.dol.gov/ndeam).