



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT ON DISABILITY SERVICES

PRESS RELEASE



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**DIRECTOR OF DEPARTMENT ON DISABILITY SERVICES NAMED
STATE AMBASSADOR**

Washington, DC—Laura L. Nuss, Director of the D.C. Department on Disability Services, is one of nine state leaders selected for the **2015 Employment First State Ambassadors Network**, a national initiative of the **U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)**. The Network highlights exemplary leadership among local and state officials who are pushing high-impact systems-change efforts to promote Employment First principles in their state or local communities.

Employment First is a critical program of the State Department designed to increase employment opportunities for people with significant disabilities. Under Nuss' leadership, the Department on Disability Services, and its partners, has established the District as a leader in the *Employment First* initiative. Said Nuss, "Too often, people without disabilities underestimate the skills and the talents of people with disabilities. There is dignity in all work and so much untapped ability in the people with disabilities. It is our responsibility to ensure that people with disabilities have access to every possible opportunity to pursue their aspirations and dreams, and others will soon learn that our success will in turn have a significant impact on society and our city."

The District of Columbia labor force data indicates that there are 425,152 working age residents. Of those of working age (18-64) 37,770 are estimated to have a disability, which represents 8.9% of the District's working age population. Through the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and the Developmental Disabilities Administration, DDS serves more than 7,000 residents, adults and students, with disabilities. Over the last three years, RSA has helped more than 1,700 residents with disabilities get and keep jobs. Disability leaders from Tennessee, Ohio, Utah, Iowa, New Jersey, and Maryland are also part of the Network. States engaged in the *Employment First* program will be able to access State Ambassadors for peer-to-peer mentoring support in implementing their *Employment First* efforts.

-30-

The Department on Disability Services was established in 2007 to address deficiencies in services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It is comprised of the Developmental Disabilities Administration and the Rehabilitation Services Administration. DDS also manages the Social Security Disability Determination Division. Learn more at www.dds.dc.gov and follow us at <https://www.facebook.com/DDS.DC>.