



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT ON DISABILITY SERVICES

PRESS RELEASE



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Department on Disability Services Joins Broad Effort to Observe National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)

Nationwide campaign takes place in October

(Washington, DC) — October 15, 2018 — The DC Department on Disability Services is celebrating October's designation as National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), an annual awareness campaign sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor. This year's theme is "America's Workforce: Empowering All." On **Wednesday, October 31, DDS** will host a recognition program to acknowledge local employers who have provided job training and skills development opportunities for people with disabilities. The event begins at 9am at 250 E Street, SW. **Antwanye Ford**, President and CEO of the Technology Consulting Firm Enlightened, Inc., is the keynote speaker. Ford also serves as chairman of the **D.C. Workforce Investment Council (WIC)**.

Andrew Reese, Director of the DC Department on Disability Services commented, "DDS proudly celebrates NDEAM because it recognizes that meaningful employment is empowering and demonstrates that an inclusive workforce benefits everyone—businesses, employees, and our communities." Reese further noted that under the leadership of Mayor Bowser, the District of Columbia has made significant strides in becoming a model employer of people with disabilities.

In 2017, the government hired a Disability Employment Specialist who works closely with agencies to make sure that residents with disabilities know how to use the District's online job application system and to assist people with understanding the application process. Also in 2017, the District piloted the Aspiring Professionals Program, a six-month paid internship program that gave people with disabilities a chance to work in professional level jobs within various District Government agencies. Twenty-two applicants were selected for positions through a competitive process; 19 completed the program and 12 have been hired in full-time positions such as contract administrator, customer service representative, legal analyst, and staff assistant.

The history of NDEAM traces back to 1945, when Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October as "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." In 1962, the word "physically" was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Learn more about National Disability Employment Awareness Month at www.dol.gov/ndeam.

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The Department on Disability Services is a dynamic organization serving people with disabilities through the services of was Developmental Disabilities Administration and the Rehabilitation Services Administration. This comprehensive collaborative approach provides innovative high quality services that enable people with disabilities to lead productive lives as vital members of their families, schools, workplaces, and communities. Learn more at www.dds.dc.gov and follow us at <https://www.facebook.com/DDS.DC>.