



STATE OF ARKANSAS

ASA HUTCHINSON

GOVERNOR

MEMORANDUM

TO: All State Agency Directors;
Members of Employment First Task Force

FROM: Governor Asa Hutchinson

DATE: January 14, 2016

SUBJECT: Arkansas State Government's Initiative to Increase Employment of
Arkansans with Disabilities

Arkansas has one of the highest rates of disability in the nation, and the growth has been steadily upward. Increased rates of disability have an impact on the State budget because of the wide-range of services the State provides to disabled individuals including Medicaid, disability services, education, vocational rehabilitation, and workforce services. Many individuals with disabilities have the ability and desire to work at least part-time jobs, despite their genuine and significant disabilities, however, they face many barriers including the fear of losing public benefits such as Social Security and SSI disability benefits. Congress has modified laws so disability beneficiaries can typically work either part-time or full-time without losing key federally mandated benefits. In addition, state agencies operate a number of programs to encourage and support employment, but there is low awareness of these opportunities, and many barriers to employment remain even within public agencies and programs.

As Governor of the State of Arkansas, I am committed to increasing the state employment of Arkansans with disabilities. I believe that a coordinated effort by the state is needed to reduce dependence on public benefits and to increase economic opportunities for Arkansans with disabilities, including those with significant disabilities. It is important that our state government set the example of this commitment in order to ensure that Arkansans with disabilities are employed in our state agencies, departments, and commissions. In 2010, Governor Beebe issued Executive Order No. 10-17 in which he established the first initiative to increase state employment of Arkansans with disabilities by creating the Employment First Task Force (the "Task Force") through the Arkansas Department of Human Services. In 2011, the Task Force made recommendations to implement this initiative, however, some of those recommendations were never carried out.

In light of the forgoing, I reconvened the Task Force, and I charged it to fulfill the directives of Executive Order No. 10-17. To that end, I am hereby directing all state agencies that directly report to me to complete the status report form, which is attached hereto, and to submit the completed status report to the chairperson of the Task Force, Ms. Hannah Ray. This status report will demonstrate each agency's actions taken to date that exhibit their efforts to comply with Executive Order No. 10-17. These status reports will give the Task Force the necessary information to move forward with fulfilling the directives of Executive Order No. 10-17. All state agencies should submit their completed status reports to Ms. Ray no later than February 16, 2016.

In addition to Executive Order No. 10-17, I hereby direct that the reconvened Task Force to undertake the following actions and report to me confirmation of such action by the designated deadline:

- Create a mechanism to establish a baseline of the number, grade level, and compensation of persons with disabilities in each state agency by March 1, 2016. Such information shall be provided by qualifying individuals on a purely voluntary and confidential basis;
- Survey state employees and report upon the above baseline by agency by July 1, 2016, following confirmation of individual eligibility conducted and funded by the state vocational rehabilitation system;
- Solicit targeted plans from each state agency or department by August 1, 2016, for actions to recruit, train, and retain persons with disabilities in their workforce; and
- Meet as a Task Force at least twice per year to examine the progress of the state as an employer of persons with significant disabilities and provide recommendations to me on how Arkansas may address any significant continued disproportions between the total number of disabled individuals in Arkansas and the number of those individuals who are employed.

If you have any questions regarding the mandatory compliance with this memorandum or about the submission of the status reports, please contact the chairperson of the Task Force:

Ms. Hannah Ray
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500 Woodlane Street, Suite 120
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201
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Email: hannah.ray@governor.arkansas.gov



Asa Hutchinson

2016 STATUS REPORT OF AGENCY EFFORTS TO INCREASE EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AS INITIATED UNDER EXECUTIVE ORDER 10-17

DEPARTMENT/AGENCY: _____

- Please complete the following three requests by describing the actions that your agency/department took during calendar years 2013 through 2015 to implement the provisions of Executive Order 10-17.

GOAL:	TASK:	REPORTED ACTIONS:
<i>Prepare the state's workforce to effectively employ qualified candidates who are persons with disabilities .</i>	Describe department or agency actions taken to orient staff to the advantages and challenges of employing qualified persons with disabilities.	
<i>Employ a diverse and highly qualified workforce reflective of the state population, including persons with disabilities</i>	Describe agency efforts to actively recruit qualified persons with disabilities and support their development as members of the agency team overall.	

<p>Preserve Arkansas's investment in high-value human capital, including persons with disabilities.</p>	<p>Describe agency outreach to Injured or Disabled Workers to promote Transitional Return to the same job or other productive employment within the state system as early as medically approved to preserve the connection with valued personnel and protect the state's investment in its labor force. Note any partnerships with other state agencies to develop supportive policy to this end.</p>	
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Please return to Task Force Chairman Hannah Ray by February 16, 2016 at Hannah.ray@governor.arkansas.gov

2016 STATUS REPORT OF AGENCY EFFORTS TO INCREASE EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AS INITIATED UNDER EXECUTIVE ORDER 10-17

DEPARTMENT/AGENCY: **** EXAMPLE COMPLETED STATUS REPORT ****

- Please complete the following three requests by describing the actions that your agency/department took during calendar years 2013 through 2015 to implement the provisions of Executive Order 10-17.

GOAL:	TASK:	REPORTED ACTIONS:
<i>Prepare the state’s workforce to effectively employ qualified candidates who are persons with disabilities .</i>	Describe department or agency actions taken to orient staff to the advantages and challenges of employing qualified persons with disabilities.	August 2013, reviewed disability-related components of existing supervisory training outlined by OPM.
		December 2013, sponsored 3 staff to attend Employability Workshop to gain additional insight into considerations in employing persons with disabilities.
		February 2014, worked with above 3 attendees, 2 consumer groups and 2 supervisors to plan

		internal agency supervisory training to include expanded unit on employment of persons with disabilities.
		March 2014, revised verbiage of all internal agency Functional Job Descriptions to eliminate 'special conditions', such as ability to lift a maximum weight, that might otherwise exclude qualified persons with disabilities from consideration for the position. Reviewed and confirmed which job functions were <u>not eligible for waiver</u> of special conditions.
		September 2014, sponsored hands-on workshop with agency supervisors on "Bridges to and Barriers from Employment of Persons with Disabilities".
		December 2014, developed and disseminated revised policy to all staff regarding agency implementation of Executive Order 10-17 and scheduled for periodic update every other year.
Employ a diverse and	Describe agency efforts to	May 2014, developed confidential agency

<p>highly qualified workforce reflective of the state population, including persons with disabilities</p>	<p>actively recruit qualified persons with disabilities and support their development as members of the agency team overall.</p>	<p>mechanism, patterned after federal, to enable staff to voluntarily self-identify as being persons who currently or previously had one or more disabilities, per revised ADA definition.</p>
		<p>July 2014, received confidential confirmation from state rehabilitation agencies that 92% of self-identified staff, noted above, were qualified under the ADA definition.</p>
		<p>July 2014, published agency “EO 10-17 Baseline Report”, comparing percentage of staff members employed at all levels as of June 30th who are persons with disabilities, against the percentage of persons with disabilities in the state population. Scheduled annual issue of Progress Report following end of each state fiscal year.</p>
<p>Goal: <i>Preserve</i> the State’s Investment in high-value Human Capital, including persons with disabilities.</p>	<p>Describe agency outreach to Injured or Disabled Workers to promote Transitional Return to the same job or other productive employment</p>	<p>September 2014, established agency workgroup to develop methods to outreach to injured staff and keep them abreast of agency activities.</p>

	within the state system as early as medically approved to preserve the connection with valued personnel and protect the state's investment in its labor force. Note any partnerships with other state agencies to develop supportive policy to this end.	

Please return to Task Force Chairman Hannah Ray by February 16, 2016 at Hannah.ray@governor.arkansas.gov