

## GRANTS AWARDED TO PROMOTE THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

### From US Dept. of Justice

■(WASHINGTON) Organizations in ten states across the country were awarded \$450,000 in grants to help teach local businesses and governments about how to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Justice Department announced this week.

The grants will be given to state-based organizations who will reach out to businesses through regularly scheduled meetings and by conducting statewide conferences on the ADA for state and local government officials. The Department funded similar projects in 16 states in 1995.

"These grants will bring information about the ADA directly to local businesses and governments," said Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Deval L. Patrick. "Access to information about cost-effective, practical ADA solutions is key to complying with the ADA."

Organizations in Arkansas, Idaho, Maryland, Minnesota, New Mexico, and Wisconsin will conduct statewide projects to educate small businesses both about the variety of ADA resources available locally, regionally, and from the federal government, as well as the basic requirements of title III of the ADA. Title III requires public accommodations and commercial facilities to make their facilities and services accessible to persons with disabilities. The groups will also speak at local Chambers of Commerce, Rotary Clubs, Restaurant Associations, and other organizations.

This week's small business education grants were awarded to:

- ADA Roundtable, Little Rock, Arkansas
- Easter Seal Society of Wisconsin, In., Madison, Wisconsin;
- Idaho Task Force on the ADA, Boise, Idaho;
- Independent Living Resource Center, Albuquerque, New Mexico
- Kennedy Krieger Institute, Baltimore, Maryland;
- Minnesota State Steering Committee with the Great Lakes Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Four additional organizations received funding to conduct statewide ADA information-sharing conferences for local and State government officials in the states of Iowa, Mississippi, Utah, and Washington. The conferences will educate government officials

about the requirements of title II of the law and the resources available on the ADA. Title II applies to all activities, programs and services of state and local governments.

These statewide information-sharing grants were awarded to:

- Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities, Jackson, Mississippi;
- Easter Seal Society of Utah, Inc., Salt Lake City, Utah;

- Iowa State Association of Counties, Des Moines, Iowa;

- Washington Coalition of Citizens with DisABILITIES, Seattle, Washington.

Through previous grants, the Department has funded the development of materials aimed at specific types of businesses and state and local government officials. A collection of these and other ADA materials are now available in 15,000 local public libraries.

## MILLIONS OF WORKERS AFFECTED BY CHANGES IN HEALTH CARE COVERAGE

### From US Dept. of Labor

■(WASHINGTON) Labor Secretary Robert B. Reich said earlier this week that more than one million workers whose health care benefits will be protected if they lose their jobs must be notified by Nov. 1 of their new rights by their current or former employers.

Reich said the new health care benefits, provided by congressional passage of the Kennedy-Kassebaum health bill, would allow more children to be covered, allow for extra care for the disabled, and allow people the fullest health care options available to them.

"When you're out of work, you have your hands full looking for a new job. Workers shouldn't have to worry about the limitations of their health care coverage. These measures are an important step in giving hard-working Americans some peace of mind," said Reich.

Changes in the law don't take effect until Jan. 1, but all extended benefits will be applied retroactively. If an employee is laid off or loses a job in the next few months he should know the fullest extent to which his

health care needs will be met.

The changes to COBRA would allow employees to expand their benefits to include the child of an employee who may be born or adopted during the period of COBRA coverage.

An additional change extends COBRA coverage from 18 months to 29 months for those employees who are determined to be disabled either at the time they qualify for COBRA or during the first 60 days after they qualify for COBRA.

A final amendment limits exclusions for pre-existing conditions. In the past if an employee with a pre-existing condition found another health care provider, that provided some but not all coverage, then the COBRA employer could terminate the employee's COBRA continuation coverage. Under the new law it will be harder for employers to make these exclusions.

The Technical Bulletin on changes to COBRA under HIPPA is available on the Internet at: <http://www.dol.gov/pwba/public/programs/ori/techrel/cobra.htm>.

## WEEKEND BLUES



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