

OESC ACCEPTS GRANT FOR CAREER CENTERS

By Michelle Boyd Waters
Staff Writer

■(GIT)The U.S. Department of Labor recently awarded the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission a \$3 million grant to launch One-Stop Career Center Systems, Glen Robards, OESC's One-Stop coordinator, said.

The OESC, with the aid of local Job Training Partnership Act grant recipients, has divided the state into several areas and will centralize the employment information and services in that area to one or more integrated facilities. The facilities will provide referrals, testing and assessment and information on job openings and labor markets and careers.

"We aren't so interested in physical organization as in coordination," Robards said. He mentioned that leases and local office markets have made it hard for some partners to physically relocate.

In some cases, the program will just help the services have a centralized access point, the coordinator said.

One-Stop will enable all partners involved in the program to access the One-Net system and to develop a common data depository.

Robards said partners in Bartlesville have already begun to integrate their services at the Tri-County Vo-tech. The OESC and Lawton JTPA recipients are also working together to coordinate information and services.

"As we continue building a world class work force, the One-Stop Career Center System is the perfect tool for coordinating information and streamlining the delivery of service," Gov. Frank Keating said. "This grant money will put Oklahoma on the cutting edge of employment services. It will

especially be helpful as we continue the effort of providing jobs to get people off welfare."

The one-year grant will fund the purchase and coordination of technology and services among private and state job search and information organizations. Robards said Oklahoma employment organizations had discussed possible solutions to problems with coordinating employment information and services. Before One-Stop, people seeking employment or employees had to go to several places and through several organizations to locate information or services.

One-Stop will also provide easier access to information and services for disabled people.

"This nation depends upon all of its workers and it is important that we make the workplace more accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities," U.S. Labor Secretary Robert B. Reich said. "By increasing the accessibility of the nation's existing and future One-Stop career centers, we can better insure inclusion for all workers."

The DOL plans to use nearly \$300,000 in funding across the nation to develop technical assistance on disability issues for One-Stop centers. DOL's Bureau of Labor Statistics is also conducting further studies with the Census Bureau to gather information on the employment experience of disabled people.

Oklahoma was one of eight states who competed for and won One-Stop grants this year. Twenty-four states now are in the process of implementing the program. When the program becomes fully operational next year, 80 percent of the nation's civilian labor force in 33 states will be able to access the One-Stop services.

HEPATITIS A EPIDEMIC CONTINUES

By Michelle Boyd Waters
Staff Writer

■(GIT)The State Health Department is drafting a budget proposal to request additional funding from the state legislature to develop a more comprehensive system for dealing with contagious disease outbreaks, said Lauri Smithee, director of Communicable Disease for the State Health Department.

Oklahoma is experiencing a rise in the number of cases of Hepatitis A, Salmonella and E. Coli 0157:H7 infections, Smithee said.

Hepatitis A has reached epidemic proportions in central and western Oklahoma counties — including Oklahoma, Stephens, Garfield and Pottawatomie counties. Cases of Salmonella and E.Coli. have significantly increased this year, also, the director said.

The first cases of Hepatitis A were reported in far eastern Oklahoma in 1994, said Dr. J.R. Nida, State Health Department Commissioner of Health. The average number of cases per year prior to 1994 was 345 cases of Hepatitis A. Smithee said 2,139 cases of Hepatitis A have been reported to date this year.

"The epidemic took off last winter," Smithee said. "We have five times as many cases as we did before."

The director said that part of the epidemic can be attributed to natural processes. In the United States, the number of cases rise approximately every 10 years because the number of people who have never been infected has increased, she said.

Another contributing factor is the increase in 20- to 40-year-olds who participate in parties where drugs are used or shared, Smithee said.

Hepatitis A can be contracted from intimate (and sexual) contact with people who are carrying the virus. Hepatitis A is carried in fecal material and people who do not wash their hands can spread it to foods, which people eat and ingest the virus. Carriers of the virus are contagious for as long a month, she said.

Hepatitis A is a liver disease that can result in fever, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting and generalized weakness, Nida said. These symptoms may be followed in a few days by darkened urine and yellow eyes and skin. It causes problems such as missing work, often as much as six weeks. The related health care costs can be high.

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ogy will only take us so far . . . our employees will get us the significant results."

Hoping to solve some of the company's work-force woes, Rice said, "we're looking forward to exploring career opportunities, talking about our competitive company benefits and telling interested individuals about our continuing education and advancement program at our job fair this Saturday."

This week, Pro-Fab, Inc. was named one of the 50 fastest-growing private companies in the area by *The Metro Journal*. Rice will be featured in the December issue.

