



## Stimulus initiatives mean jobs for people with disabilities

Alabama employers, in concert with the VR Southeast regional Business Advisory Group (BAG) advised ADRS on customized use of stimulus dollars provided to the department through the ARRA legislation. To best impact employment outcomes for people with disabilities, while also easing the economic stress on today's employers, businesses suggested the following services which are now being implemented by ADRS to the benefit of Alabama employers and ADRS consumers.

### **Post-hire wage reimbursement for employers**

This service offers 50 to 90 percent salary reimbursement to Alabama employers to offset the cost of training a new hire and to enhance the skills of ADRS job hires.

### **Pre-hire work "try-outs" (at no cost to the employer)**

Three options are offered to businesses:

- a short-term job-site assessment of a potential hire by the employer
- a time-limited worksite "try-out" of individuals who could turn into future hires by the company if they do well
- internships for ADRS students through worksite opportunities related to their field of study

The on-going implementation of businesses' ideas for use of stimulus money to create jobs and/or prepare Vocational Rehabilitation job candidates for work has proven to be successful. As is evident below, snapshots of these success stories vary geographically and by type of job or business:

- **Brasfield and Gorrie** – internship
- **Personnel Board of Jefferson County** – pre-hire try-outs
- **P.F. Changs** – wage reimbursement training opportunity
- **V.A. Hospital** – multiple pre-hire initiatives with several resulting in employment
- **Barons Baseball** – a three-month pre-hire work experience
- **Holden Security (for Alabama State University)** – Pre-hire try-outs
- **Value Place Hotel** – Jobsite assessments
- **Georgia Carpet Outlet** – Pre-hire experiences with one resulting in a hire; an additional direct hire using wage reimbursement to the employer through on-the-job training
- **Shelton State Community College** – Pre-hire opportunity
- **The Children's Center** – Pre-hire work try-out

## Strategic Planning Focus Groups

In FY 2009, at the request of Alabama Gov. Bob Riley, ADRS participated in strategic planning focus groups, one of which included the ADRS employer advisers.

Priorities from these businesses for the ADRS Business Relations Program included:

### **1. Continue a strong emphasis on business relationships to develop and maintain partnerships with employers**

- Disseminate information about products and services
- Lead the collaboration among business, labor, employers and local service providers
- Maintain communication with employers

- Continue active outreach and awareness campaigns with business

### **2. Continue to support a high level of expertise through the ADRS business relations consultants (BRC's) statewide**

### **3. Provide the fiscal resources necessary to support the hiring and retention of individuals with disabilities**

Most valued by these businesses in their partnership with BRC's was "positive partnering" as evidenced in:

- realistic activities related to job matching
- professional listening with a focus on the needs of business
- knowing the employer's work environment with first-hand exposure
- commitment to the ADRS-business partnership