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ALABAMA DISABILITIES ADVOCACY PROGRAM
January 8, 2014

The Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program (ADAP) is part of the nationwide federally mandated protection and advocacy (P&A) system. ADAP's mission is to provide quality, legally based advocacy services to Alabamians with disabilities in order to protect, promote and expand their rights.

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ADAP Demands End to Segregated Subminimum - Wage Workshops

Calling them exploitive, isolating, and cost-inefficient, ADAP has called for Alabama to phase-out public support for segregated sheltered workshops for persons with disabilities and to enact "Employment First" policies that support employment in the general workforce as the first and preferred employment outcome for people with any type of disability.

This is the chief recommendation in a report released on Dec. 9 by ADAP titled *It's My Job: It's My Life: Employment First for Alabamians with Disabilities*.

Through personal stories, this report demonstrates that individuals with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, can - with appropriate support - achieve gainful employment in the regular labor market.

The report offers cost-efficient, proven policy steps that can be taken to improve employment opportunities for Alabamians with disabilities so they can better achieve economic independence and self-sufficiency.

To read a PDF of the report, click [here](#).

For the press release, click [here](#).

Darren Morris

"It feels great to know I'm contributing to my community and society."



Darren Morris's next big goals in life are to get a driver's license and buy a car. Knowing Darren, he'll be driving around Montgomery any day now, frequenting his favorite restaurants and visiting friends.

Born in Chicago in 1969, Darren has always been good at setting goals and is not afraid to work hard. After graduation from high school, he worked in food service at a racetrack and at a popular fast-food restaurant. "I also worked as a school bus aide for more than a year," Darren recounts.

"It was my job to help a child with a disability be seated and safe on his ride to and from school."

In 1999, Darren and his brother moved to Alabama to be near family. For almost twelve years, Darren

lived in Tuscaloosa. Like any ambitious young man, he kept his eyes open for good job opportunities and - just like his peers without disabilities - he experienced layoffs during bad times. He worked in industrial, office, non-profit, and retail settings.

Last year, Darren decided to move to Montgomery where he felt there would be more job opportunities. He found a job at Walgreens where he works 20 hours a week stocking shelves and running the cash register. As a Walgreens employee, Darren participates in a retirement savings program. Darren likes his co-workers who, he says, treat him exactly as they do their other colleagues. In the last month, he adds proudly, he received two "Shout-Outs" – outstanding performance awards.

Darren became involved with the self-advocacy group People First after moving to Alabama. He was recently elected President, has attended several national meetings, and is on a planning committee for a national conference next year.

When asked why people have trouble recognizing that people with disabilities can and should work, Darren says more education is needed with potential employers. They need to know that people with disabilities are reliable and can do as good a job as other employees. "My employers at Walgreens have an open mind and that is helping me to be successful," says Darren.

Darren also thinks families need to be better educated about employment and the ways in which disability benefits can be managed even when a person works. "Persons with disabilities may be reluctant to work but it feels great to know I'm contributing to my community and society."

Today, Darren has his own home, a job he loves, and lots of friends. He is known as a leader in the self-advocacy movement. But, Darren is not through. He hopes for full-time employment at Walgreens, maybe in a supervisory role. He also wants to see positions develop with state agencies so he can work to train more self-advocates about their rights and living a full life. Oh yeah . . . Darren wants that license and car too.



HAVE PRESENTATION. WILL TRAVEL

Are you a member of a group that needs a speaker for an upcoming meeting? If so, ADAP can fill this need. ADAP staff provides education/training sessions on a wide variety of disability-related topics including, but not limited to: the Americans with Disabilities Act, Medicaid waivers, guardianships, special education, general disability rights, and transition services for youth who will soon become adults. We will also speak on specifically requested, disability-related topics. If you are interested in making arrangements for ADAP to come speak at one of your meetings, please contact Anita Davidson, one of ADAP's Legal Assistants, by calling 205-348-5107, or emailing her, akdavidson@adap.ua.edu



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