

Dear Reader,

HireAbility's highlighted programs below continue to grow Vermont's economy and support our department's mission to make Vermont the best state to live with a disability with dignity, respect and independence. Employment and economic opportunity are the key drivers of a community's health and wellness and have proven to be a social determinant of health for our customers. HireAbility is committed to achieving a chosen career pathway for every Vermonter with a disability we serve.

[2024 Summer Career Exploration Program](#)

HireAbility is pleased and proud to have successfully completed our 4th year of the [Summer Career Exploration Program \(SCEP\) \(click this link for video\)](#). Over 120 youth participate from nine HA districts around the state. Youth in SCEP were employed by nearly 100 Vermont employers. This is the biggest enrollment that we have seen since our inception. SCEP is a program for youth with disabilities in high school that offers 5 weeks of career exploration curriculum in a classroom with peers, plus paid employment in the participant's area of interest. SCEP is intended to be a fun and inspiring vocational launchpad for the youth participating. For many, this is their first job with a paycheck. Past SCEP participants have followed up their SCEP experience by enrolling in dual enrollment courses, Project SEARCH, College Compass, credentialed training and apprenticeships, and much more. HireAbility believes that everyone can work if they are given the right support. This program offers young people with disabilities a positive first experience with the world of work. The result is youth with stronger self-confidence and belief they can succeed at a job and have a career.

[JOBS Program Celebrates 30 Years of Success](#)

Since 1994, the Jump on Board for Success (JOBS) Program has supported youth disconnected from their communities and facing barriers to successful transitions to adulthood. On June 4th, over 75 people joined HireAbility to share the program's impact over the last three decades, recognize program staff, [hear from youth supported by the JOBS program \(click this link for video\)](#), and honor long-standing program leadership and staff. The JOBS Program is supported through a unique partnership of HireAbility Vermont, the Department of Mental Health, the Department for Aging and Independent Living, the Department of Corrections, and the Department for Children and Families as well as local Designated Agency and Restorative Justice partners around the state. The celebration event was incredibly well received and renewed all our commitment to the value of the JOBS Program for Vermont's at-risk youth.

[Working for Recovery from Opioid Use](#)

Opioid use can have a devastating impact on the relationships and structures that support a stable and productive life. Employment is often a victim of opioid use. Yet having a stable job is critical to sustaining recovery. HireAbility is partnering with Invest EAP, VABIR, and the recovery centers in Chittenden and the Northeast Kingdom to help Vermonters in recovery. This [Working for Recovery program \(click this link for video\)](#), funded by the legislature, involves a HireAbility counselor,

VABIR employment consultant, and Invest EAP mental health counselor. These three staff form a wraparound team for the participants as they work to regain jobs and build careers, and encounter the inevitable bumps of stigma, discrimination, and reoccurrence during their lifelong journey of recovery. The team is outstationed in the recovery community. Thus, resources are brought within easy reach that aren't usually present there – HireAbility's career counseling and flexible financial resources, VABIR's wide network of employer contacts and job placement skills and Invest EAP's expertise in solution-focused mental health interventions related to employment. The combination of dedicated outreach and an employment focus makes this a very promising initiative. Building

[Building Careers Through the VT Career Advancement Project \(VCAP\)](#)

When Cameron started her work with HireAbility in 2019, she was in recovery and relying on Reach-Up benefits and wanted our help to get a part-time job. We helped her get a job in grocery store at just above minimum wage but knew that she had higher ambitions. Her interest then was working in the trades. As we supported her in a DOL manufacturing apprenticeship, we also nurtured her aspirations. When she decided she wanted to become an engineer, we provided the encouragement, counseling, and financial resources to make that a reality which included completing her AA degree. Today, her wage is more than 3 times what it was in 2019, thanks to her drive, and our ongoing support. As a VCAP participant, Cameron personifies what it's about: The VCAP initiative is a systems-change commitment for HireAbility: that every Vermonter who seeks our services is worthy of and has access to a career that offers economic security and aligns with individual values. VCAP is committed to the long-haul, to sustained effort that helps people with disabilities find their career path, train for it, and move into high-wage, high-quality employment. As Cameron put it: "...having a sounding board, a witness, advice, someone rooting for me... was almost more supportive than the financial help along the way. I really needed that. Thank you!" [Click this link for another participant video highlighting HireAbility's Career Pathways focus.](#)

As always, I look forward to continuing our robust and productive partnership with the VT State Rehabilitation Council.

Diane Dalmasse, Director HireAbility Vermont