

# Abby Cooper

*ODEP Subject Matter Expert*



Ms. Cooper has more than 30 years of experience in directing and managing comprehensive, integrated, employment services. She designed and implemented the first community-based supported employment program and one of the first independent living services in Washington State. She has also designed and administrated supported employment programs for individuals with chronic mental illness and individuals with multiple physical and cognitive disabilities. She designed and implemented training for parents and teachers of transition age students focusing on how to effectively use the adult service system in obtaining employment. She designed and implemented one of the seven RSA choice demonstration grants.

As administrator of the Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), she managed the Business Relations Team working with public and private employers, developed and managed the Division's systems, training criteria, and infrastructure for Ticket to Work. She supervised, trained and supported seven benefits planners. She created training for the One-stops throughout Washington State on understanding Work Incentives, conducted focus groups with both the staff of the One Stop Centers statewide and individuals with disabilities on the quality of services received at the Centers, conducted a statewide assessment of all One Stop Centers for Universal access and design. Her findings resulted in \$750,000 from the Governors discretionary budget going to support the One Stop Centers in Universal Design. She created Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) for DVR customers using SSA reimbursement dollars. She currently is a full time consultant working on policies and issues to expand customized employment and economic self-sufficient for individuals with disabilities.

She has published numerous articles ranging in topics from: Integrated Employment for people with severe physical disabilities, entrepreneurship and rehabilitation, the impact of informed choice on community providers, economic self-sufficiency and asset development for individuals with disabilities and the relationship of supported employment services on broader employment policy. She was part of the Institute on Rehabilitation Issues that wrote the monograph On Promoting Consumer Empowerment through Professional VR Counseling. She provides consulting throughout the country and Canada on customized employment, job development, informed choice and economic self-sufficiency issues.

Ms. Cooper holds a Master's Degree in Organizational Management and a Bachelor Degree from Kent State University.