Burton Blatt Institute receives funding from U.S. Department of Education for three-year disability and asset accumulation project

The Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University has received $900,000 in funding from the U.S. Department of Education’s National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) for a new three-year research and dissemination project. The project will advance the economic self-sufficiency of youth in transition and working-age adults with disabilities. The funding (grant H133A090014) is the only award of its kind in the country.

A comprehensive research and practice agenda will explore ways to promote income production, saving and asset building by individuals with disabilities. New financial education materials and accessible and affordable financial services will be tested at selected locations nationwide.

According to BBI Chairman and University Professor Peter Blanck, “exciting partnerships with financial institutions and local asset-building coalitions for low-income working families will be made to assist individuals with disabilities to build a path to a better economic future.”

Building on work funded by NIDRR over the past five years, the new project will allow collaborators to create new knowledge based on best practices that can be translated to significant use at an individual and systems level.

“BBI has a unique opportunity to provide important leadership to government, the business community, financial institutions, practitioners and people with disabilities,” says Michael Morris, BBI chief executive officer and principal investigator of the project. “This project will change the way we think and what we do to advance economic self-sufficiency for people with disabilities.”

Funding will also support continuation of the e-newsletter Equity, published by the World Institute on Disability. The monthly publication reaches more than
20,000 key audience stakeholders, including policymakers, lenders and community-based organization leaders.

Along with co-project investigators Johnette Hartnett and Steven Mendelsohn, BBI will collaborate with the School of Community Economic Development at Southern New Hampshire University, the Federation for Community Development Credit Unions, the World Institute on Disability and the National Disability Institute to develop a second generation of knowledge to help multiple audiences reach and support people with disabilities as they move out of poverty and into the economic mainstream.

For additional information on the asset accumulation project, contact Morris at mwmorris@law.syr.edu.

BBI fosters public-private dialogue to advance the civic, economic and social participation of persons with disabilities in a global society. The institute takes its name from Burton Blatt (1927–85), a pioneer in humanizing services for people with mental retardation, a staunch advocate of deinstitutionalization and a national leader in special education. BBI currently has offices in Syracuse, New York City, Washington, D.C., Atlanta and Tel Aviv. For more information, visit http://bbi.syr.edu.

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