



This year is the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and this month is the 75th anniversary of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), recognized each October. This year's NDEAM theme is "Increasing Access and Opportunity." It's the perfect time to recognize how LifeBridge Health continues to be a champion in increasing access and opportunity to individuals with disabilities, as well as others with barriers to employment.

VSP is a LifeBridge Health Partner and Sinai Hospital department with a clear mission is to "maximize the employability of persons with significant barriers to employment through an array of workforce development services, while being mutually enhancing to LifeBridge Health." In existence for more than 53 years, VSP provides an array of workforce development services and employment opportunities to over 300 youth and adults with disabilities or economic needs, on an annual basis.

VSP is recognized locally and regionally for client-centered, high-quality services, offered through its vocational and business services divisions, and employs over 130 individuals to operate our print center and many state and federal janitorial contracts.

Through partnerships and collaboration with LifeBridge Health departments, VSP supports trainees as they acquire essential employment and job-related skills through paid internships. LifeBridge Health supervisors train participants during these "on-the-job tryouts," often identifying candidates to fill department vacancies. The result is job-ready candidates who fill permanent LifeBridge Health vacancies – a total of 38 in fiscal year 2020 – with dozens of others placed with other local employers.

In addition to serving individuals with disabilities, VSP meets the workforce development needs of an array of local communities, including Baltimore City at-risk youth, victims of domestic and other trauma, and other vulnerable and underserved populations. Despite the impact of COVID-19, VSP quickly transitioned its assessment, training and placement services to a virtual platform, engaging with participants through creative and effective means.

As we acknowledge NDEAM and the ADA, we recognize that disability and other barriers to employment do not need to be obstacles to true access and opportunity, both here at LifeBridge Health and in our greater community.