

Melanie Porter***Senior Advisor, Office of Research, Demonstration, and Employment Support
Social Security Administration***

Melanie Porter is the Senior Advisor to the Division Director of the Office of Beneficiary Outreach and Employment Support within the Office of Research, Demonstration, and Employment Support at the Social Security Administration. Ms. Porter serves as the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) for the Ticket to Work, Ticket Program Manager contract. In this role, Ms. Porter oversees the daily operations for all Ticket program activities, and works closely with executive management, providing strategic input on policy and other factors affecting the overall management of the Ticket to Work program.

From 2004 through 2016, Ms. Porter worked at Booz Allen Hamilton and managed a number of technology, policy, process improvement, and performance management projects at the Social Security Administration. This included initiatives within the Office of Systems, the Office of Disability Policy, the Office of Disability Determination, the Disability Determination Services, and the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review. In 2010, Ms. Porter took on the role of Project Director for the Beneficiary Access & Support Services (BASS) contract, where she oversaw beneficiary outreach, operations for the Ticket to Work Help line, and the development of the www.choosework.net website. Throughout her tenure, Ms. Porter also served as the co-chair and Strategic Advisor for Booz Allen's internal diverseABILITY forum, where she helped promote disability awareness within the community.

Prior to joining Booz Allen, Ms. Porter was the Quality Assurance Coordinator and one of the lead training specialists at Maximus, providing training and ensuring quality for all Ticket to Work call center representatives. Ms. Porter holds a M.S. degree in Behavior Analysis from the University of North Texas, a B.S. degree in Psychology from Western Michigan University, and is a certified Project

Management Professional (PMP). In 2014, Ms. Porter was named one of the Careers and the Disabled Magazine's Top Ten Employees of the Year and was a recipient of the Women of Color in Technology All Star Award in 2011.

Joseph M. Ashley, Rh.D., CRC



Assistant Commissioner, Grants & Special Programs Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

Joseph M. Ashley, Rh.D., CRC, Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, serves as the Assistant Commissioner for Grants and Special Programs and has worked in this capacity since 2000. Dr. Ashley is responsible for identifying and securing grants to support the employment choices for individuals with disabilities. He also has responsibility for Social Security Cost Reimbursement and Ticket to Work programs as well as the Agency's implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act.

He has helped create a Partnership Plus network with VR providers that includes a Work Incentives and Benefits Counseling service. He currently is the Agency representative on the Virginia state Career Pathways Workgroup and on the WIOA Implementation team. He has served as co-director on a number of Department of Labor grants, such as the Disability Employment Initiative Rounds I and IV that focuses on increasing the capacity of the workforce system to support workforce services for individuals with disabilities. He also serves as the co-principal investigator on the NIDILRR funded University of Richmond's Vocational Rehabilitation Return on Investment grant. The grant works with eight state VR agencies to create the ROI model for the VR program. He is also currently the Director for Virginia's Rehabilitation Services Administration Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities Grant Project. He serves on the Project Steering Committee for the DOL Workforce Innovation-funded Virginia Financial Success Network grant project.

MJ Willard***Executive Director
National Telecommuting Institute***

MJ Willard has spent her career pioneering methods of increasing the independence of people with severe disabilities. After earning a doctorate in Educational Psychology, in 1981 she founded Helping Hands, a nonprofit that grew out of her research in training capuchin monkeys to serve as aides for quadriplegics. Helping Hands trains and places these service animals with quadriplegics. Willard left there in 1995 to found another nonprofit, National Telecommuting Institute, (NTI) where she serves as Executive Director. NTI places approximately 500 people with disabilities in home-based call center or tech support jobs each year.

Willard also founded TakeCharge, the first organization to be approved as an Employment Network under the Ticket to Work program in 2001. TakeCharge operates under the Client Directed Services model in which most of the ticket payments are distributed to beneficiaries as work support payments. Willard is currently affiliated with four Employment Networks. Collectively they hold 4,800 Tickets.

Jamie Ray-Leonetti, Esq.***Assistant Director of the Client Assistance Program
Disability Rights of Pennsylvania***

Jamie Ray-Leonetti is a staff attorney with Disability Rights Pennsylvania (DRP) in Philadelphia. She is also the project director for DRP's Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) grant. She focuses on issues surrounding protection and advocacy of individual rights for persons with disabilities, including meaningful access to competitive employment, as well as access to education for children with disabilities. Prior to this, she served as co-director of the Pennsylvania Client Assistance Program, a non-profit advocacy program for Pennsylvanians with disabilities who want to work. In this capacity, she advocated for individuals with disabilities who needed work-related services from the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in order to regain or maintain employment. Ms. Ray-Leonetti is a 1999 graduate of Temple University School of Law.

Jennifer Sheehy



Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)

US Department of Labor

Jennifer Sheehy is the Deputy Assistant Secretary, leading the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), US Department of Labor. The mission of ODEP is to develop policies to increase the number and quality of employment opportunities for youth and adults with disabilities. Prior to her current position, Jennifer spent ten years at the US Department of Education in many roles, including acting Director of the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, acting Deputy Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration and Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. Jennifer came to the Department of Education from the Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities where she was Senior Policy Advisor and served a detail as Associate Director in the White House Domestic Policy Council. Before she joined the task force staff, Jennifer was Vice President of the National Organization on Disability and Director of its CEO Council. She has worked for Marriott, Sheraton, and Anheuser-Busch and has received many civic and leadership honors. Jennifer earned a BA from Cornell University and an MBA from Georgetown University.

Andraéa LaVant



Inclusion Senior Specialist Girl Scouts Nation's Capital

Andraéa LaVant is a sought after strategist, trainer, and advocate on issues of specific relevance to youth and adults with disabilities and other underserved populations. She currently serves as the Inclusion Senior Specialist at Girl Scouts Nation's Capital in Washington, DC, where she is responsible for increasing and supporting the membership of girls and adults of all abilities and fostering a culture of inclusion among volunteers, staff, and girls within the Council and across the U.S.

LaVant's role as a disability advocate has presented her with a variety of notable opportunities to share messages and prompt change for people with disabilities across the globe, including assisting in the development and launch of the 2014 National African American History Month Program: Civil Rights in America, hosted by the White House Office of Public Engagement; speaking on behalf of women with disabilities as part of President Obama's Disability Roundtable in July 2013; and serving as one of 12 delegates of women to participate in the U.S. / Jordan Young Women with Disabilities Leadership Exchange Program funded by the U.S. State Department in 2012.

In addition to her inclusion-focused work, Andraéa is also an emerging fashion blogger and designer. Under her blog, Infynite Expression (housed on www.andraealavant.com), Andraéa prompts people of all abilities to embrace their uniqueness and enhance their style, ultimately reminding them that "when it comes to self-expression, the choices are INFYNITE."

Andraéa formerly served as the Youth Development Specialist for the Center for Workforce Development, housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, DC. In that capacity, she coordinated and oversaw the operations of multiple federally funded technical assistance and training centers designed to prepare young people with disabilities to transition from school to employment. With a passion for service and volunteerism, Andraéa's other work experience includes working for Youth Service America, a national non-profit that strives to improve communities by increasing the number and diversity of young people serving in substantive roles. Her own dedication to the national service movement stems from her year of service as an AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) at Volunteer Tennessee, Tennessee's state service commission.

Andraéa studied Public Relations at Middle Tennessee State University.