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“Out of Work and Out of Luck”: Federal Cuts Hinder Employment Prospects for Coloradans with Disabilities

Denver, CO — Recent layoffs at the U.S. Department of Education threaten the ability of people with disabilities to succeed in school and find employment, according to Disability Law Colorado (DLC). DLC is joining more than 375 organizations across the country in urging the Department to reverse the cuts.

“These cuts leave Coloradans with disabilities out of work and out of luck,” said DLC Executive Director **Andrew Romanoff**. “Without a functioning federal government, job training dollars don’t reach the states, and students go without the support they need to learn and thrive.”

One casualty: Colorado’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). In 2024, DVR helped more than **19,400 people** with disabilities prepare for, obtain, or keep a job.

More than 75% of DVR’s funding comes from the federal offices now being slashed. The shutdown has forced DVR to rely solely on its limited state funding.

“When the federal government shuts down these jobs, it effectively shuts down access for the people we serve,” said **Kim Erickson**, coordinator of DLC’s Client Assistance Program and an expert in Colorado’s vocational rehabilitation system. “These are individuals trying to build independence and find meaningful work. If we don’t support that, their needs don’t disappear — they just shift to other overwhelmed systems.”

“Vocational rehabilitation services don’t just benefit individuals,” Erickson added. “They also help Colorado employers build a stronger, more diverse workforce. And they offer a long-term return: When people with disabilities work, they are *less likely* to rely on public assistance.”

The layoffs follow broader federal cuts affecting not only employment services but also enforcement of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. That law guarantees every student the right to a free and appropriate public education.

Contact Communications Manager Felix Ortiz to schedule an interview with **Andrew Romanoff** and **Kim Erickson**.

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Disability Law Colorado is a nonprofit civil rights organization, authorized by federal law to combat discrimination, abuse, and neglect. We aim to make Colorado the best place in America for people with disabilities to thrive. For more information, visit disabilitylawco.org.