



The Disability.gov Website – New and Improved

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More and more frequently in our society the personal and social needs of older Americans are intersecting with the personal and social needs of people with disabilities. Disability can accompany aging and the growing field of Elder Law is beginning to encompass the problems of people with disabilities. Elder Law of Michigan, Inc., which operates the Legal Hotline for Michigan Seniors—as well as several other programs benefitting aging people— has as its mission, “to protect and promote the rights, health and economic well-being of people as they age or people with disabilities, by providing information, advocacy, legal advice, and professional services.” Increasing numbers in both of these groups is creating greater demands for information and problem-solving resources.

Over 50 million Americans with disabilities, as well as anyone interested in disability-related information, now have a new and improved resource—the U.S. Department of Labor’s recently launched web site: Disability.gov. Billed as “connecting the disability community to information and opportunities,” the new site replaces the old site (DisabilityInfo.gov) and contains material from 22 federal agencies. Changes in the new site include the addition of social media tools, like blogs and newsgroups. These are principally online or Internet

information mediums that allow users to add or generate content to published works.

According to the Department of Labor, these tools are intended to encourage interaction and feedback by users and to provide new ways to organize, share and receive information.

Thousands of links found at the site contain information from federal agencies, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and state and local governments. The scope and variety of information is meant to encourage independence and full participation of persons with disabilities in their communities. Want to know about disability laws, find a job, locate housing or health care or apply for disability benefits? This website will lead you to resources for this information.

Visitors to the site can choose information from any one of 10 subject areas – benefits, civil rights, community life, education, emergency preparedness, employment, health, housing, technology, and transportation. In addition, the site offers personalized news and updates and a forum for online discussion of issues of common interest.

For more information visit the site at: <http://www.disability.gov> or contact the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy at 1-866-633-7365 (TTY: 877-889-5627).

The Legal Hotline for Michigan Seniors can answer questions relating to disability, such as Social Security Disability benefits, or the Americans with Disabilities Act. Anyone 60 and over can call the Hotline to set an appointment to talk with an attorney, usually the same day. Call the Hotline at (800) 347-5297, Monday through Thursday, 9-5. You can call the same number, during these same hours, and ask to set an appointment with Elder Law of Michigan's newest

program, the Benefits Enrollment Center. A Benefits Specialist will call you back to discuss your situation and determine if there are any programs and services you may be eligible for to ease your financial worries. The help is free to adults age 60 and older and people with disabilities.