



NEWS RELEASE



DEPARTMENT OF
ECONOMIC SECURITY

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MICHAEL TRAILOR, DIRECTOR

DES Announces Opportunity for Individuals with Disabilities to Achieve a Better Life Experience

PHOENIX – (March 5, 2018) The Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) announced today the establishment of AZ ABLE (Achieve a Better Life Experience), the platform for the Arizona ABLE program, a way by which individuals with disabilities can set aside money for qualified disability-related expenses through savings accounts.

“AZ ABLE will give individuals with disabilities and their family members another option on the pathway to a successful life, unimpeded by the fear for some of losing the public support upon which they rely,” said DES Director Michael Traylor. “The program will serve as an additional source of empowerment to remove a barrier that can prevent individuals from preparing for the future.”

The AZ ABLE program was established in DES in 2016 following the passage of HB 2388 (*Laws 2016, Chapter 214*) and is based upon the federal ABLE Act. AZ ABLE was created in partnership with the State of Ohio as it was the first state to launch an ABLE program, and has since supported numerous states across the nation in establishing partner programs.

“All our citizens deserve the opportunity to live independent and productive lives,” said Governor Ducey. “The AZ ABLE program will help Arizona parents of a child with a disability better save for that child’s future. This will give these families a little more peace of mind while providing economic protection and greater opportunity to some of our most vulnerable citizens.”

The intention of the ABLE Act is to supplement public benefits, private insurance and other sources of income, so the individual with a disability can achieve a better life without risk of losing another source of income or support.

The AZ ABLE Oversight Committee is comprised of seven (7) members, each of whom serves in a designated capacity:

- Robert B. Fleming (*Attorney Member and Chair*)
- Joyce Millard-Hoie (*Community-Based Organization Member*)
- Debra Peterson (*DES Member*)
- Karla Phillips (*Family Member of Eligible Individual*)
- Grahame P. Richards (*Investment, Asset, Financial Management Experience Member*)
- Jason Alan Snead (*Eligible Individual Member*)
- Mark Swenson (*Treasurer Member*)

"The federal ABLE Act has been in place for several years, and now Arizona offers a plan to benefit people with disabilities," said ABLE Oversight Committee Chairman Robert B. Fleming. "This new development will offer extra flexibility and alternatives for family members as well. Contributions, management and tax benefits are simple to understand and easy to administer online."

Eligibility for most public benefits typically require the beneficiary to report less than \$2,000 in savings, but monies placed in an ABLE account are exempt from eligibility consideration. Accounts are able to receive contributions from friends and family, in addition to the beneficiary, with a \$15,000 annual limit and \$462,000 lifetime limit. However, beneficiaries who are employed can potentially have a higher contribution limit of up to \$27,060 due to the newly passed ABLE to Work Act of 2017.

"Like every parent, I want to do everything I can to plan and prepare for my children's future," said Karla Phillips, ABLE Oversight Committee member and parent of an eligible individual. "And while each of my children is unique and has their own special abilities, the ABLE Act recognizes that our expectations should be far-reaching for all children. Thanks to the ABLE Act, I now have the same options for both of my children."

The accounts can be used to cover qualified disability expenses like education, housing, assistive technology, health care, transportation and much more. An eligible individual must be an Arizona resident, diagnosed as having an onset of disability before turning the age of 26, and either receive Social Security Insurance or Social Security Disability Insurance due to a disability, have a condition listed on Social Security Administration's "List of Compassionate Allowances Conditions," or have a self-certification with a physician's diagnosis confirming disability criteria is met.

For more information, please visit [the AZ ABLE website](#).

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