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*NEWS RELEASE*

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*Department of General Services*

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## **EXPANDING THE WORKFORCE**

### ***Building on Differences Not Disabilities***

**Sacramento, Calif** - Helping Californians get work is a top priority these days. First Lady Maria Shriver's WE Include Initiative aims to open the door to opportunities and raise awareness of resources that address the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities.

As a result of this effort the Department of General Services is participating in a pilot program to train individuals with developmental disabilities to become a vital part of the state's workforce. The program provides paid on-the-job training that will prepare participants to take the entry custodian exam for state positions.

"The Department of General Services sees this program as an opportunity to provide confidence and motivation to candidates we consider valuable," said Department of General Services Acting Director Ron Diedrich.

The Maintenance and Service Occupational Trainee (MSOT) program is designed to provide candidates with the necessary experience and job skills to successfully complete the States' Service Assistant Custodian exam and ultimately transition to a custodian position. Currently 19 individuals have been selected and are enrolled in the paid, MSOT program which began November 2, 2009 and runs through August 2, 2010.

The program is a collaborative effort between DGS, the Department of Developmental Services who provided planning and outreach and the Department of Rehabilitation who provided the personnel support and funding necessary to prepare the trainees for competitive employment.

Candidates will be mentored by supervisors and DGS employees throughout the duration of the program. Some individuals will also receive assistance from a specialized job coach who provides on-site training to aid them in job performance and help them adjust to their work environment.

DGS provides business services of all kinds to state agencies, including real estate and building services in approximately 1,900 state owned and leased facilities throughout the state. The Department currently employs nearly 800 custodians. The first phase of the MSOT program is taking place at seven state buildings in San Diego, Riverside, San Bernardino, Santa Ana, Van Nuys, Los Angeles and Fresno, Calif. Two additional phases of the program are slated to begin in San Francisco by late 2010 and in Sacramento by 2011.

With the passage of AB 925, California was charged with developing a comprehensive strategy to bring the employment rate of people with disabilities as close as possible to that of the general population. California is one of the first 10 states in the nation to have a comprehensive strategy to guide public policy towards change to increase the employment rate for people with disabilities.

[More information on the WE Include program is available by clicking this link.](#)