



**THE FLORIDA GOVERNOR'S ALLIANCE
FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF DISABLED CITIZENS**

Employer Resource Kit

Because People Want to Work

Introduction

Recognizing the need to promote employment opportunities for the 49 million Americans with disabilities, the President of the United States and the Governor of Florida designate each October as "Disability Employment Awareness Month" (DEAM). The Florida Governor's Alliance for the Employment of Disabled Citizens (FGA), also known as The Able Trust, has been designated to promote the employability of Florida's citizens with disabilities and provide information and referrals to the disability community, corporations and the general public. In celebration of Disability Employment Awareness Month, the FGA has constructed the Employer Resource Kit to provide information about hiring, employing and marketing to persons with disabilities.

The materials in the Employer Resource Kit can be used to foster employment opportunities for people with disabilities throughout the year. The theme for this year's kit is "Opening Doors to Ability."

The American challenge for the 21st Century is to become a nation in which all citizens have the opportunity for full employment. The ability of a diverse workforce provides the framework to meet this challenge. People with disabilities want to be a vital component of the diverse workforce. America is in an excellent position to be a winner in the global economy of the 21st Century because of the strength of its diversity, the power of the economy and the depth of the nation's values.

Nevertheless, we must not overlook the abilities of the 54 million Americans with disabilities. And that means inclusion, not exclusion. Persons with disabilities have demonstrated their abilities to work in all venues from Pennsylvania Avenue to Wall Street to Main Street. By opening doors to ability, employers gain the skills and talents of persons with disabilities.

The FGA plans several activities throughout October to promote the employability of persons with disabilities.

If you have questions, need additional materials or would like to participate in a DEAM event in your area, please contact:

The Able Trust/Florida Governor's Alliance for the Employment of Disabled Citizens
106 E. College Avenue, Suite 820
Tallahassee, FL 32301
VOICE: (850) 224-4493 or (888) 838-2253
FAX: (850) 224-4496
INTERNET: www.abletrust.org

The Ability Awards will honor individuals, agencies and employers for their outstanding efforts in promoting and employing persons with disabilities. Ability Week offers members of the media an opportunity to interview persons with disabilities at their place of employment. Stories will be featured on television and in newspapers throughout the state as the media "shadow" these individuals for a day. The FGA also conducts a statewide public service campaign with the goal of educating the public about the abilities of persons with disabilities. Employers, such as yourself, can assist us in these efforts by participating in any of these events.

We have developed this kit to provide you with information about interviewing and hiring persons with disabilities, tax incentives for businesses, marketing to customers with disabilities, and other valuable tools. Employers can also access The Able Trust/FGA web site and search for qualified employees with disabilities. Abilities On-Line, our on-line job bank is free for employers to post job openings and search for job seekers with disabilities. The site also offers additional resource materials and statewide activities for Disability Employment Awareness Month. We encourage you to use these materials in your hiring and other business procedures.

Table Of Contents

About The Able Trust/FGA	3
About The President's Committee	5
Basic Facts.....	7
Hiring People with Disabilities (Commonly Asked Questions)	9
Pre-Employment Inquiries	11
How Do I Know If My Workplace Is Accessible	12
Recruitment Resources.....	13
Tax Incentives for Businesses	15
Workplace Accommodation Process	17
JAN: Opening Doors to Job Accommodation	19
Recruiting Disabled Veterans: A Primer	21
Affirmative Action and People with Disabilities	23
Personal Assistance Services in the Workplace.....	25
Disability and Cultural Diversity	27
Marketing to Customers with Disabilities	29
Providing Quality Services to Customers with Disabilities	31
Employment Checklist for Hiring Persons with Disabilities.....	33

**The President's Committee on Employment for People with Disabilities contributed materials for this kit.*

About The Able Trust

Florida Governor's Alliance for the Employment of Disabled Citizens

THE ABLE TRUST

The Able Trust is a nonprofit public-private partnership foundation created by the Florida Legislature in 1990. Its purpose is to provide support for the employment of Florida citizens with disabilities and to promote public awareness about the vocational rehabilitation process.

Since its establishment, The Able Trust's total grant awards have amounted to over \$5.5 million for the employment of persons with disabilities in Florida. Both a grant-making and a fund-raising organization, The Able Trust is funded from traffic violation fees, earnings from a perpetual endowment, grants, gifts and corporate and public support.

FLORIDA GOVERNOR'S ALLIANCE FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF DISABLED CITIZENS

In 1997, Governor Lawton Chiles signed Executive Order 97-57 to designate The Able Trust as the Florida Governor's Alliance for the Employment of Disabled Citizens. Under this designation, The Able Trust is responsible for expanding its role to increase employment for Floridians with disabilities, promote awareness of their abilities, serve as liaison to the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities and recommend policies to the Governor.

WHO SERVES ON THE ABLE TRUST/FGA

The Able Trust is governed by nine Board of Directors, appointed by the Governor for three-year terms. A voluntary group of individuals from diverse backgrounds and various parts of Florida, the Board of Directors meet a minimum of two times a year to conduct foundation business. Directors represent business, education, government, disability advocacy, the arts community and the general public.

EMPLOYER PROGRAMS

The Able Trust/FGA has established several employer networking committees to promote the employment of Florida citizens with disabilities.

- ◆ The Business Leadership Network (BLN) is an employer-led coalition of business, government and community service organizations dedicated to improving business opportunities that include people with disabilities. The BLN provides education, support services and a peer network to serve businesses and help make the ADA work for them. Membership in the BLN is free and provides the resources needed to successfully recruit, hire, train and support both new and existing employees with disabilities and also attract new customers with disabilities. Membership also includes a subscription to *BLN Connections*, a biannual newsletter with updates on employment issues regarding persons with disabilities. Denis McKinnon, President of First Union Bank of Florida-Pensacola, serves as the BLN Chair.
- ◆ Abilities On-Line is a free on-line job bank designed to assist employers in filling full-time and part-time positions in their industry. Using Abilities On-Line, employers may post job openings or search for resumes of qualified candidates that best meet their employment needs. The site is marketed to persons with disabilities in Florida, who will search for job listings and post their resume on-line. The site also features helpful links and resources for both job seekers with disabilities and employers. Visit Abilities On-Line at <http://jobs.abletrust.org> directly or go to The Able Trust website at <http://www.abletrust.org> and click on the Abilities On-Line icon.
- ◆ The Symposium on Disabilities is a free statewide training conference that features workshops on employment issues, funding, policy, technology, development and other disability-related issues. Employers are invited to attend free workshops on tax incentives, the ADA and other employment-related issues.

- ◆ In October, The Able Trust/FGA sponsors the Ability Awards, which recognize individuals, agencies, employers and other organizations for their outstanding contributions toward hiring persons with disabilities. These awards consist of the Beverly Chapman Award, Outstanding Entrepreneur Award, Employer of the Year and the Media Award. Nominations are accepted each Fall and the awards are given at the Ability Awards banquet, which is held in conjunction with the annual Symposium on Disabilities in October.
- ◆ With the support of the President's Committee and other resources, The Able Trust/FGA distributes this Employer Resource Kit free to all Florida employers. It is available throughout the year and is updated on an annual basis.
- ◆ The FGA Advisory Council consists of state agency representatives, partnered together to create a dialogue regarding various needs of citizens with disabilities. The Council meets quarterly to discuss current issues that impact the disability community.
- ◆ The Able Trust also sponsors a fund-raising gala at Donald Trump's members-only Mar-a-Lago Club in Palm Beach. The event serves two purposes: to raise awareness about employing persons with disabilities and to provide long-term funding for Floridians with disabilities. Donald Trump serves as honorary chair and special guest for the event.
- ◆ Information resources are provided in *Florida Grantor*, a free quarterly newsletter containing articles about disability issues, other sources for funding and updates on successful employment projects. Over 1,500 people receive this free publication, which also contains updates on FGA and President's Committee activities.
- ◆ The Able Trust has an extensive website, which is located at <http://www.abletrust.org>. The site features information about The Able Trust/FGA's programs, Abilities On-Line, disability resource links, grant program information, public awareness activities and other helpful links.
- ◆ The Able Network is a statewide Information and Referral toll-free service that refers inquiries on disability needs to appropriate agencies. The Able Network can be reached by calling (888) 838-ABLE (2253).

PUBLIC AWARENESS PROGRAMS

In addition to grantmaking, public awareness is a priority for The Able Trust.

- ◆ The Able Trust sponsors several activities in honor of October being designated National Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM) by President Clinton and Florida's Governor. This includes Ability Week, a week-long media campaign that features employees with disabilities in newspaper and television stories around the state.
- ◆ The Able Trust also distributes free media packets and promotional plans to Florida nonprofit agencies to assist with promotional activities for DEAM

The Able Trust/FGA
 106 East College Avenue, Suite 820
 Tallahassee, FL 32301.
 (850) 224-4493 or (888) 838-2253 (Voice or TDD)
 (850) 224-4496 (Fax)
<http://www.abletrust.org>

About the President's Committee

WHAT IS THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

The President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities is a small federal agency based in Washington, DC. The Committee's mission is to communicate, coordinate and promote public and private efforts to enhance the employment of people with disabilities.

WHO SERVES ON THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE?

The President of the United States appoints a Chairman and Vice Chairs. The Chairman, in turn, appoints members to the Executive Board and to six standing subcommittees. Some 300 members, who serve without compensation, represent various industries and groups that impact employment: the business community; labor unions; disabled veterans groups; educators; rehabilitation professionals; service providers; Governor's Committees in states and U.S. territories; more than 600 Mayor's Committees; and disability community leaders throughout the country.

WHEN WAS THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE CREATED?

During World War II, people with disabilities filled many positions left open by the labor shortage and showed their capability in the workforce. Following the war, veterans, many of them disabled, were eager to return to civilian jobs. This combination of factors encouraged President Harry Truman to appoint a committee of prominent citizens to promote employment for people with disabilities. Thus, the President's Committee was born. Every succeeding President has endorsed the Committee. For over 50 years the President's Committee has provided the leadership necessary to ensure that disability employment issues remain high in the public consciousness.

WHAT DOES THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE DO?

The Committee provides information, training and technical assistance to America's business leaders, organized labor, rehabilitation and service providers, advocacy organizations, families and individuals with disabilities. Toward these ends, the Committee:

- ◆ Provides information on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- ◆ Spearheads a number of projects and initiatives,

intended to increase the number of people with disabilities in the workplace.

- ◆ Sponsors periodic employment fairs for job seekers with disabilities.
- ◆ Makes available a number of free publications and fact sheets on disability employment-related issues.
- ◆ Reports to the President on the progress and problems of maximizing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Each year, the President's Committee develops and implements various projects that have the potential to improve work opportunities for people with disabilities. Building partnerships with public and private sector organizations is the hallmark of the Committee's success. Here are a few recent examples:

- ◆ The Business Leadership Network (BLN) is a business-led nationwide partnership among the President's Committee, employers and state Governor's Committees. Localized to meet the needs of the particular geographic area, each BLN includes a coalition of employers who are committed to hiring employees with disabilities. This program offers employers pertinent disability employment information; a network of companies sharing information on specific disability employment issues; the opportunity to provide training and work experience for job seekers with disabilities; and recognition for best disability employment practices. This employer-to-employer effort has as its national CEO the President and Chief Executive Officer of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce.
- ◆ The Youth Leadership Forum for Students with Disabilities is a career leadership training program for high school juniors and seniors. The President's Committee has worked closely with the California Governor's Committee for Employment of Disabled Persons, which developed the forum, to replicate this initiative around the nation. The Social Security Administration has provided key financial support to make this goal a reality and the American Legion has committed its national support to the program.

- ◆ High School/High Tech encourages secondary students with disabilities to consider careers in engineering, science and high technology fields. Cooperative efforts with public and private funding sources, businesses and school districts throughout the United States make paid internships and mentoring opportunities possible. Significant funding for this program has been made available through the National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA). Other major sponsors include the Mitsubishi Electric America Company and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).
- ◆ The Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities, which is cosponsored with the U.S. Department of Defense, identifies college and university students with disabilities seeking summer and permanent jobs. Each year, a free CD-ROM database containing information about pre-screened candidates is made available to interested employers in both the private sector and the federal government. Approximately 10 federal agencies provide recruiters to visit schools nationwide and hire summer interns from the program on an annual basis.
- ◆ The Cultural Diversity Initiative is a major effort to develop leadership in minority communities in order to improve job opportunities for individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds. With significant financial support from the U.S. Department of Education, the President's Committee is working closely with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and other minority organizations to achieve the goals of this project.

HOW CAN THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE HELP ME?

The President's Committee provides a variety of resources to help both employers and job seekers.

- ◆ Chief among the Committee's resources is the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), a toll-free information service on workplace accommodations and the employment provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Anyone may call JAN at (800) 232-9675 (V/TDD) or (800) 526-7234 (V/TDD). Hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. to 8:00

p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Friday, Eastern Standard Time. The JAN Website also contains extensive information and links to other sites related to disability and employment issues. Visit JAN at <<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/english/homeus.htm>>.

- ◆ The Committee produces an annual Educational Kit containing fact sheets on timely disability employment issues. Recent topics include "What To Do if You Think that You Have Been Discriminated Against," "Essential Elements in an Effective Job Search," and "Pre-Employment Inquiries." A particular publication, or a list of available publications, may be requested by calling (202) 376-6200, Extension 60 (V) or (202) 376-6205 (TDD).
- ◆ The Committee's Website on the Internet <http://www.pcepd.gov> provides visitors direct access to President's Committee publications, speeches and press releases, as well as to information on statistical data, workplace laws, job accommodations, interviewing, hiring and communicating with people with disabilities, among other topics. A special "Business Focus" section responds to information generally requested by the business sector and has links to a number of government agencies that provide additional resources. A "Job Links" page takes job seekers directly to lists of job openings at companies seeking to hire people with disabilities.

Neither the President's Committee nor its Job Accommodation Network is a job placement service. The Committee does not have the authority to regulate or enforce any laws, nor is it permitted to advocate any federal action on behalf of any individual or group. However, to the degree possible, staff will provide referrals to the most appropriate agencies and organizations.

HOW MAY I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE?

- Visit our Web site at <<http://www.pcepd.gov>>
- E-mail us at <info@pcepd.gov>
- Call us at (202) 376-6200 (V) or (202) 376-6205 (TDD)
- Write to us at 1331 F Street NW, Washington, DC 20004

July 1998
President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities

Basic Facts

Who are persons with disabilities? What do we know about their employment status? Outlined below are key facts which provide information on persons with disabilities and their current employment picture.

EMPLOYMENT

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) data, there was a significant increase in the percentage of persons with severe disabilities employed from 1991 to 1994 (see table below). These figures tell both a "good news" and "bad news" story.

THE GOOD NEWS IS...

Among persons with severe disabilities who are 21 to 64 years of age, 800,000 more were working in 1994 than in 1991. While some of that growth might be due to growth in the population of persons with severe disabilities, it is still a significant gain! The following employment trend was reported in the (SIPP) survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau:

Persons with Severe Disabilities Employed

	1991	1993	1994
Percentage	23.3%	25.0%	26.1%
Number	2.91 million	3.45 million	3.71 million

Note: In 1994, there were 29.4 million working-age persons with disabilities. Of that number, 14.2 million had severe disabilities.

THE BAD NEWS IS...

As of the last year surveyed (1994), 73.9 percent of persons with severe disabilities 21 to 64 years of age were not employed. This figure is calculated by subtracting those employed (26.1%) from 100 percent. When we view the above table from this perspective, we realize how much further we have to go.

An examination of the Census surveys (SIPP) for the population of all persons with disabilities reveals more information.

All Persons with Disabilities Employed

	1991	1993	1994
Percent	52.0%	52.4%	52.3%
Number	14.26 million	15.11 million	15.39 million

In view of the fact that approximately 82 percent of the total U.S. working age population works, it becomes clear how much further we must go before people with disabilities reach employment parity with the general population. Here is the breakdown as of 1994:

People with Severe Disabilities Employed = 26.1%
 All People with Disabilities Employed = 52.3%
 General Population Employed = 82.1%

As defined in the Census survey, a person with a severe disability is one who is unable to perform one or more activities of daily living; or, has one or more specific impairments; or, is a long term user of assistive devices such as wheelchairs, crutches, and walkers.

As defined in the Census survey, a person with a non-severe disability is one who has difficulty performing functional activities such as hearing, seeing, having one's speech understood, lifting and carrying, climbing stairs and walking; or, difficulty with activities of daily living.

COST OF ACCOMMODATIONS

For the past 10 years, the President's Committee's Job Accommodation Network (JAN) has been assisting employers, people with disabilities, and others to determine needed job accommodations for employees with disabilities. As a result of handling well over 100,000 such cases, our JAN service has learned, first hand, how much it costs to accommodate workers with disabilities, and how much money is saved by the employer as a result of providing a job accommodation. This time the story is nothing but "Good News."

The facts about the cost of job accommodations:

Cost	Percentage
No cost	20%
Between \$1 and \$500	51%
Between \$501 and \$1,000	11%
Between \$1,001 and \$1,500	3%
Between \$1,501 and \$2,000	3%
Between \$2,001 and \$5,000	8%
Greater than \$5,000	4%

According to the JAN's September 1996 Report:

- ◆ The average cost of a job accommodation for a person with a disability is \$200.
- ◆ For every dollar an employer spends for a disability-related job accommodation, the company saves \$34 (e.g., workers's compensation and other insurance savings, training of new employees, increased productivity).

OTHER FACTS

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 1992 SIPP:

An estimated 48.9 million people, or 19.4 percent of the non-institutionalized civilians in the United States, have a disability.

- ◆ An estimated 24.1 million people have a severe disability.
- ◆ An estimated 34.2 million people in the United States, or 17.5 percent, have a functional limitation.

Functional Limitation	Number
Going up a flight of stairs	17.5 million
Walking a quarter of a mile	17.3 million
Lifting a bag of groceries	16.2 million
Hearing what is said in a normal conversation	10.9 million
Seeing words or letters in ordinary newsprint, even when wearing glasses	9.7 million
Having one's speech understood,	2.3 million

- ◆ More than half the population over age 65 have a disability.

According to Accepted Estimates [National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research's (NIDRR) Chartbook on Disability, 1996]:

- ◆ An estimated 2.5 million persons, or one percent of the population, experience mental retardation.
- ◆ An estimated 51.3 million persons, or 28.1 percent of the population, have a mental disability in any given one-year period. About 5 million people, or 2.8 percent of the adult population, experience a severe mental disability.

According to the 1992 National Health Interview Survey:

- ◆ An estimated 4.0 million children and adolescents, or 6.1 percent of the population under 18 years of age, have disabilities.

According to the 1990 Family Resource Supplement to the National Health Interview Survey:

- ◆ An estimated 20.3 million families, or 29.2 percent of all families in the United States, have at least one member with a disability.
- ◆ The family disability rate is 28.5 percent among partnered families and slightly higher (32.1%) among single parent families.

Hiring People With Disabilities

Listed below are commonly asked questions regarding hiring people with disabilities and resources to obtain answers.

Q: • Where can I get information at the national level regarding employment issues and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

• Where can I obtain written information about the ADA and my obligation as an employer?

• Where can I get ADA technical assistance at the national level?

R: • The President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities: (202) 376-6200 (V), (202) 376-6205 (TDD), info@pcepd.gov (E-mail), <http://www.pcepd.gov> (Internet)

• Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC): For Technical Assistance: (800) 669-4000 (V) or (800) 669-6820 (TDD)
To Obtain Documents: (800) 669-3362 (V) or (800) 800-3302 (TDD),
<http://www.eeoc.gov> (Internet)

Q: • I just hired an employee who uses a wheelchair. What accommodation(s) will be needed?

• My new employee informed me that she has a learning disability. Where can I go to get more information?

• What if I need information regarding accommodations for persons with psychiatric disabilities? Who can I call?

• What kind of equipment or technology is available to enable my employees with disabilities to complete their job tasks?

• How much will a workplace accommodation cost and will I be able to save money to implement the modification?

• Who can assist me with writing a job description and identifying the essential job requirements?

R: • The President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities' Job Accommodation Network (JAN): (800) 526-7234 (V/TDD), <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/english/homeus/htm> (Internet)

• Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTACs): (800) 949-4232 (V/TDD)

Q: • I want my employment application and other employment materials available in alternate formats for my job applicants and employees with visual disabilities. Who can I call?

• Our human resources staff would like to have their business cards brailled. How can we get them done?

R: • National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped: (202) 707-9275(V), (800) 424-8567– ask for reference(V), nls@loc.gov (E-mail), <http://www.loc.gov/nls/reference> (Internet)

Q: • Am I legally required to comply with the employment provisions of ADA? If so, what are my responsibilities?

• What are the regulations under Title I of the ADA that apply to me as a small business employer?

• How do I know whether my employment practices are nondiscriminatory?

• Who is a "qualified individual with a disability"?

• What is an "undue hardship"?

• How does the ADA affect my employees' health benefit plans and the company's workers' compensation program?

• Does the ADA impact medical examinations that I require of all employees? If so, how?

- R: • Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC):
For Technical Assistance: (800) 669-4000 (V) or (800) 669-6820 (TDD)
To Obtain Documents: (800) 669-3362 (V) or (800) 800-3302,
<http://www.eeoc.gov>(Internet)
- Disability Rights Education Defense Fund (DREDF) ADA Hotline: ADA questions and publications: (800) 466-4232 (V/TDD)
- Q: • I need help with structural modifications to make my business accessible to employees and customers with disabilities. Where can I get help with architectural questions?
- R: • Architectural & Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board):
Documents and questions (800) 872-2253 (V), (800) 993-2622 (TDD), (202) 272-5448 (Electronic Bulletin Board),
<http://www.access-board.gov> (Internet)
- Q: • I am holding a business function for my employees. Where can I find qualified sign language interpreters for employees who are deaf?
- R: • Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf: (301) 608-0050 (V/TDD), (301) 608-0508 (FAX)
- Q: • What kind of tax incentives are there if I make reasonable accommodations in my company?
- Are there any resources that provide financial assistance when I hire a person with a disability?
- R: • Internal Revenue Service: (800) 829-1040
- U.S. Department of Labor: (202) 219-6871
- Q: • How can I find out about local agencies that can help me with issues regarding hiring a person with a disability?
- Who in my state can assist me in implementing a workplace accommodation?
- Where can I recruit qualified individuals with disabilities?
- R: • National Council for Independent Living: (703) 525-3406, ncil@tsbbs02.tnet.com (E-mail)
- Department of Veterans Affairs: (202) 273-7419 (Check your local telephone directory for the regional or local office.)
- President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities: (202) 376-6200(V), (202) 376-6205 (TDD), info@pcepd.gov (E-mail), <http://www.pcepd.gov/state/htm> (Internet)
- Rehabilitation Services Administration: (202) 205-8719 (Check your local telephone directory for state or local office.)
- Project with Industry: (202) 543-6353 or inabir@poltech.com (E-mail)
- Q: • Where can I learn more about specific disability groups?
- Are there other businesses in my area with which I can network concerning disability issues?
- How can I find out about conferences and workshops in my state?
- R: • To find out how to contact State Governors' or Mayors' Committees on the Employment of People with Disabilities, contact the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities at (202) 376-6200 (V), (202) 376-6205 (TDD), info@pcepd.gov (E-mail), <http://www.pcepd.gov/state.htm> (Internet), or check your local telephone directory
- Regional Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTACs): (800) 949-4232
- President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities' Business Leadership Network (BLN): (202) 376-6200 (V), (202) 376-6205 (TDD), info@pcepd.gov (E-mail)

Pre-Employment Inquiries

Aside from the common courtesy due to anyone being interviewed, regardless of disability, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) places some restrictions on the employer's pre-employment inquiries.

What are the Restrictions on Pre-Employment Inquiries?

Questionnaires, applications, medical examinations, and tests are often used by employers to determine the competency of the applicant. Keep in mind that, at the pre-offer stage, disability-related questions and medical examinations are prohibited under the ADA.

How Can I Make Sure I Comply with the ADA Restrictions on Pre-Employment Inquiries?

Develop a thorough job description that identifies the essential elements of the job. By relying on this description, both the interviewer and applicant are aware of the essential elements of the job. Employers should also review old application forms to ensure that medical histories are not requested, since this is no longer appropriate.

How Should I Handle Pre-Employment Inquiries During the Interview Process?

Make sure to ask only questions regarding the information on the individual's application form. You may ask the applicant what prior job duties he or she performed. Be careful not to ask applicants about visible physical characteristics or their health status. It is not legal to inquire if the applicant has a psychiatric disability, a history of having a psychiatric disability, or if he or she has consulted with a psychiatrist.

Nor may questions be asked about past drug addiction.

May I Conduct An Employment Physical?

The law permits a medical examination if the medical evaluation is conducted after an offer of employment has been made. However, if physicals are conducted, they must be conducted for all employees in that job category and the medical information must be kept separate from the personnel file. Drug testing is not considered a "medical examination" under the law. Therefore, pre-employment tests for illegal drug use are permitted by the ADA.

Where Can I Obtain Additional Information?

President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
(202) 376-6200 (VOICE), (202) 376-6205 (TTY/TTD),
(202) 276-6219 (FAX)

President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities Job Accommodation Network (JAN)
(800) 526-7234 (VOICE/TTY/TTD),
(304) 293-5407 (FAX)
jan@jan.icdi.wvu.edu (e-mail)

Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTACs)
(800) 949-4232 (VOICE/TTY/TTD),
(703) 525-6835 (FAX)

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
(800) 669-4000 (VOICE), (800) 669-6820 (TTY/TTD)
(513) 489-8692 (FAX)

(EEOC has issued Final Guidance on Pre-Employment Disability-Related Questions and Medical Examinations under the ADA, October 10, 1995)

How Do I Know if My Workplace is Accessible?

The following are some questions to keep in mind when determining physical accessibility:

- Are there designated parking spaces for persons with disabilities that are close to the entrance of the worksite?
- Is there a pathway without abrupt level changes or steps that leads from the parking area to the entrance?
- If ramps are used to provide access, are they appropriately graded and are handrails provided?
- Are the doors wide enough (36 inches) for people using wheelchairs? Are they easy to open (e.g., not excessively heavy, with easily grasped handles, or automatic)?
- Is the personnel office in an accessible location?
- Are pathways to the bathroom, water fountain, and public telephone accessible? Can people with disabilities use them?
- Are elevators accessible to all persons with disabilities (e.g., control panels lower than 54 inches from the floor, raised symbols or numbers on the control panels)?
- Is all signage appropriate and accessible for persons with visual, learning, and cognitive disabilities (including the use of symbols and graphics)?
- Does the emergency warning system include both audible and visual alarms?

Where Can I Obtain Additional Information?

President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities

(202) 376-6200 (VOICE), (202) 376-6205 (TTY/TTD),
(202) 276-6219 (FAX)

President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

(800) 526-7234 (VOICE/TTY/TTD),
(304) 293-5407 (FAX)

jan@jan.icdi.wvu.edu (e-mail)

Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTACs)

(800) 949-4232 (VOICE/TTY/TTD),
(703) 525-6835 (FAX)

Access Board

(VOICE) (800) 872-2253, (202) 272-5449 or (800) 993-2822 (TTY/TTD), (202) 272-5447 (FAX)

Recruitment Resources

“The cry of every employer is: I need people whose skills are better matched with our needs,” says Mitchell S. Fromstein, Chairman of Manpower, Inc. Persons with disabilities represent an untapped labor pool and may very well be the answer to this critical need. Recent employer surveys clearly show that the number one problem for American companies today is finding an adequate supply of qualified employees. The high costs of employee turnover coupled with the insufficient number of qualified employees present a risk to America’s businesses maintaining the competitive edge.

One step an employer can take to find qualified applicants with disabilities is to disseminate vacancy announcements to disability-related agencies and organizations. Another is to state clearly in job advertisements and on application forms the company’s interest in receiving applications from persons with disabilities. Community based disability-related organizations are listed in local telephone directories. The President’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities can also provide information on recruitment sources and disability organizations.

The following list of national agencies and organizations offers a good starting point to employers looking for recruitment sources to locate qualified people with disabilities.

Workforce Recruitment Program
President’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
Job Accommodation Network (JAN)
(800) 232-9675 (V/TDD)

Through JAN, employers may request a data base of pre-screened college students with disabilities to fill summer or permanent hiring needs. These candidates, from more than 140 colleges and universities, represent all academic majors and range from college freshmen to students in graduate school or law school.

Rehabilitation Services Administration
(202) 205-8719 (V)

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) oversees programs that help individuals with physical or mental disabilities obtain employment. RSA’s major formula grant program provides funds to state vocational rehabilitation agencies to provide employment-related services for people with disabilities. *State and local vocational rehabilitation agencies are listed under state government agencies in the telephone directory.*

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
(800) 827-1000 (V)

The Department of Veterans Affairs supports a nationwide employment training program for veterans with service-connected disabilities who qualify for vocational rehabilitation. *Regional or local offices are listed under federal government agencies in the telephone directory.*

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION
Attn: Project ABLE
(757) 441-3362 (V), (757) 441-3374 (Fax),
projable@opm.gov

Project ABLE is a national resume bank which offers employers an accessible applicant pool of qualified individuals with disabilities who are receiving Social Security or Supplemental Social Security disability benefits. The resume bank operates through the joint efforts of state vocational rehabilitation agencies, Rehabilitation Services Administration, Office of Personnel Management, Social Security Administration and Department of Veterans Affairs.

STATE GOVERNORS’ COMMITTEES ON EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
<http://www.pcepd.gov/state.htm> (Internet)

The governors’ committees serve as state liaisons to the President’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. The committees provide employment information and referral service. *Governors’ Committees are listed under state government agencies in the telephone directory.*

**OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS
(OSEP)**

**Division of Educational Services,
Secondary Education and Transitional Services Branch**
(202) 205-8112 (V), Bill_Halloran@ed.gov (E-mail)

The Secondary Education and Transitional Services for Youth With Disabilities program assists youth with disabilities in the transition from secondary school to post-secondary environments, such as competitive or supported employment. Through awards to institutions of higher education, state educational agencies, local educational agencies and other appropriate public and private nonprofit institutions, the program ensures that secondary special education and transitional services result in competitive or supported employment for youth with disabilities. *Contact the Division for the location of transition programs in your area.*

**I-NABIR, THE ASSOCIATION OF PROJECTS
WITH INDUSTRY**

(202) 543-6353 (V) or inabir@paltech.com (E-mail)

I-NABIR is an organization of federally funded programs that provide employment preparation and job placement services for persons with disabilities under the guidance of employers. *Contact I-NABIR for the location of projects with industry programs in your area.*

**ASSOCIATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND
DISABILITY (AHEAD)**

(614) 488-4972 (V/TDD), (614) 488-1174 (Fax)

AHEAD is a member organization involved in the development of policy and in the provision of quality support services to serve the needs of persons with disabilities in higher education programs. *The organization can provide the name and number of the college and/or university coordinators of services for students with disabilities in your area.*

GOODWILL INDUSTRIES INTERNATIONAL

(301) 530-6500 (V),
<http://206.135.232.3/index.htm> (Internet)

Goodwill Industries of America offers employment, training and placement services for people with disabilities in programs throughout the United States. *Contact Goodwill headquarters for the programs in your area or visit the Web site at <<http://206.135.232.3/states/map.htm>>.*

**CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT INSTITUTE (CEI)
National Center for Disability Services**

(516) 465-3737 (V),
<http://nestegg.iddis.com/ncds/> (Internet)

CEI offers education, training and job placement services. To learn more about CEI visit the Web page at <<http://nestegg.iddis.com/ncds/cei.html>>.

Material for this fact sheet was developed from a 1997 President's Committee's Employer Subcommittee forum "Recruitment and Retention of Employees with Disabilities."

July 1998
President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
1331 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20004-1107
<http://www.pcepd.gov>

Tax Incentives For Business

There are three tax incentives available to help employers cover the cost of accommodations for employees with disabilities and to make their places of business accessible for employees and/or customers with disabilities.

SMALL BUSINESS TAX CREDIT: IRS CODE SECTION 44, DISABLED ACCESS CREDIT

What is it? Small businesses may take an annual tax credit for making their businesses accessible to persons with disabilities.

Who is eligible? Small businesses that in the previous year earned a maximum of \$1 million in revenue or had 30 or fewer full-time employees are eligible.

What is the amount? The credit is 50 percent of expenditures over \$250, not to exceed \$10,250, for a maximum benefit of \$5,000. The credit amount is subtracted from the total tax liability after calculating taxes.

What expenses are covered? The credit is available every year and can be used for a variety of costs such as:

- ◆ sign language interpreters for employees or customers who have hearing impairments;
- ◆ readers for employees or customers who have visual impairments;
- ◆ the purchase of adaptive equipment or the modification of equipment;
- ◆ the production of print materials in alternate formats (e.g., braille, audio tape, large print);
- ◆ the removal of architectural barriers in buildings or vehicles.

What expenses are not covered? The tax credit does not apply to the costs of new construction, and a building being modified must have been placed in service before November 5, 1990.

How can this credit be claimed? Businesses can claim the Disabled Access Credit on IRS Form 8826.

Where can I obtain additional information? Contact Mark Pitzer, Attorney, Office of Chief Counsel, IRS, 1111 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20224, (202) 622-3110.

ARCHITECTURAL/TRANSPORTATION TAX DEDUCTION: IRS CODE SECTION 190, BARRIER REMOVAL

What is it? Businesses may take an annual deduction for expenses incurred to remove physical, structural, and transportation barriers for persons with disabilities at the workplace.

Who is eligible? All businesses are eligible.

What is the amount? Businesses may take a tax deduction of up to \$15,000 a year for expenses incurred to remove barriers for persons with disabilities. Amounts in excess of the \$15,000 maximum annual deduction may be depreciated.

What expenses are covered? The deduction is available every year. It can be used for a variety of costs to make a facility or public transportation vehicle, owned or leased for use in the business, more accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities. Examples include the cost of:

- ◆ providing accessible parking spaces, ramps, and curb cuts;
- ◆ providing telephones, water fountains, and restrooms which are accessible to persons using wheelchairs;
- ◆ making walkways at least 48 inches wide.

What expenses are not covered? The deduction may not be used for expenses incurred for new construction, or for a complete renovation of a facility or public transportation vehicle, or for the normal replacement of depreciable property.

May I use the tax credit and tax deduction together?

Small businesses may use the credit and deduction together, if the expenses incurred qualify under both Sections 44 and 190. For example, if a business spent \$12,000 for access adaptations, it would qualify for a \$5,000 tax credit and a \$7,000 tax deduction.

Are there limits on annual usage? Although both the tax credit and deduction may be used annually, if a business spends more than may be claimed in one year, it cannot carry over those expenses and claim a tax benefit in the next year.

How can this credit be deducted? The amount spent is subtracted from the total income of a business to establish its taxable income. In order for expenses to be deductible, accessibility standards established under the Section 190 regulations must be met.

Where can I obtain additional information? Contact Mark Pitzer, Attorney, Office of Chief Counsel, IRS, 1111 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20224, (202)622-3110.

WORK OPPORTUNITY TAX CREDIT (WOTC)

What is it? The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), which replaces the Targeted Jobs Tax Credit (TJTC) program, provides a tax credit for employers who hire certain targeted low-income groups, including vocational rehabilitation referrals, qualified AFDC recipients, veterans, ex-felons, food stamp recipients, and summer youth employees.

How does it apply to persons with disabilities? Applicants who are vocational rehabilitation (VR) referrals are eligible.

A VR referral is certified by the State Employment Security Agency (SESA) as:

- ◆ having a physical or mental disability resulting in a hindrance to employment, and
- ◆ referred to an employer upon completion of or while receiving rehabilitative services, pursuant to the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

What is the amount? An employer may take a tax credit of up to 35 percent of the first \$6,000, or up to \$2,100, in wages paid during the first 12 months for each new hire.

What are the effective dates? October 1, 1996 through September 30, 1997. This program is subject to yearly Congressional renewal.

What are the Minimum Employment Requirements? Eligible employees must work 180 days or 400 hours; summer youth must work 20 days or 120 hours.

What agency provides the WOTC certification? The local State Employment Security Agency (SESA).

How do I file for this credit? Complete and submit IRS Form 8850, "Work Opportunity Credit Pre-Screening Notice and Certification Request," to your local SESA.

How does it work?

- ◆ The employer determines likely eligibility by including the WOTC Pre-Screening Notice as part of the applications process.
- ◆ On or before the day employment is offered, the Pre-Screening Notice must be signed by the employer and employee and mailed to the SESA within 21 days after the employee begins work.
- ◆ The employer documents eligibility (based on information received from the employee) and submits documentation to the SESA.
- ◆ SESA certifies which individuals are eligible for WOTC, and notifies the employer in writing for purposes of filing the tax credit.

Where can I obtain IRS Form 8850? Call (800) TAX-FORM (829-6676) or visit the IRS Web site at <http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/prod>.

Where can I obtain additional information? U.S. Department of Labor, Employment & Training, Public Affairs, (202) 219-6871, or your local SESA.

Contact Robert Wheeler, Staff Attorney, Office of the Associate Chief Council, Employee Benefits and Exempt Organizations, IRS, (202) 622-6060

Workplace Accommodation Process

The 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that employers with 15 or more employees make reasonable accommodations in the workplace for employees with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations must be made on a case-by-case basis and are not required when costs would constitute an undue hardship for an employer.

WHAT ARE REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS?

Reasonable accommodations are adjustments or modifications which range from making the physical work environment accessible to restructuring a job, providing assistive equipment, providing certain types of personal assistants (e.g., a reader for a person who is blind, an interpreter for a person who is deaf), transferring an employee to a different job or location, or providing flexible scheduling.

Reasonable accommodations are “tools” provided by employers to enable employees with disabilities to do their jobs, just as the employer provides the means for all employees to accomplish their jobs. For example, employees are provided with desks, chairs, phones, and computers. An employee who is blind or who has a visual impairment might need a computer which operates by voice command or has a screen that enlarges print.

WHAT IS UNDUE HARDSHIP?

This legal term is defined in the ADA as an action requiring significant difficulty or expense for the business/ employer, considering the following factors:

- the nature and cost of the proposed accommodation;
- the overall financial resources of the business and the effect of the accommodation;
- upon expenses and resources; and
- the impact of the accommodation upon the operation of the facility.

WHEN MAY A JOB ACCOMMODATION BE REQUIRED?

A workplace accommodation may be requested by an employee with a disability at any time during employment. After initiating the workplace accommodation process, the individual and the employer should discuss the request. There are several considerations when determining reasonable accommodation requests, including the demands of the job, the employee’s skills and functional limitations, available technology, and cost. After both parties agree that a workplace accommodation is needed, an appropriate one must be selected.

WHAT ARE THE STEPS TO CONSIDER WHEN MAKING A WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATION?

Step 1: Decide if the employee with a disability is qualified to perform the essential functions of the job with or without an accommodation.

Step 2: Identify the employee’s workplace accommodation needs by:

- involving the employee who has the disability in every step of the process;
- employing confidentiality principles while exploring ways to provide workplace accommodations;
- consulting with rehabilitation professionals, if needed;
- using job descriptions and job analyses to detail essential functions of the job; and
- identifying the employee’s functional limitations and potential accommodations.

Step 3: Select and provide the accommodation that is most appropriate for the employee and employer.

Remember:

- Costs should not be an undue hardship.
- Accommodations selected should be effective, reliable, easy to use, and readily available for the employee needing the accommodation.
- An employee should try the product or piece of equipment prior to purchase.

Step 4: Check results by:

- monitoring the accommodation to see if the adaptation enables the employee to complete the necessary work task(s); and
- periodically evaluating the accommodation(s) to ensure effectiveness.

Step 5: Provide follow-up, if needed, by:

- modifying the accommodation if necessary; or
- repeating these steps if appropriate.

WHAT TAX CREDITS ARE AVAILABLE TO ASSIST WITH WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS?

Disabled Access Tax Credit: This is a tax credit available to an “eligible small business” in the amount of 50 percent of “eligible expenditures” that exceed \$250 but do not exceed \$10,250 for a taxable year.

Architectural Barrier Tax Deduction: Businesses may deduct up to \$15,000 of the costs incurred each year to remove physical, structural, or transportation barriers in the workplace.

WHERE CAN I OBTAIN ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS?

The President’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities’ Job Accommodation Network (JAN):
(800) 526-7234 (V/TDD),
<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/english/homeus.htm> (Internet)

Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTACs): (800) 949-4232 (V/TDD)

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC):
For Technical Assistance: (800) 669-4000 (V) or
(800) 669-6820 (TDD)
To Obtain Documents: (800) 669-3362 (V) or
(800) 800-3302 (TDD),
<http://www.eeoc.gov> (Internet)

Mark Pitzer, Attorney, Office of Chief Counsel, IRS,
1111 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20224,
(202) 622-3110

JAN: Opening Doors to Job Accommodation

WHAT IS JAN?

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN), a service of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, is a toll-free resource for anyone who has questions about job accommodations, or about the employment sections of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Trained consultants respond to questions, discuss specific job accommodations, and suggest additional resources to assist you.

WHO SHOULD USE JAN?

Employers, persons with disabilities, service providers, rehabilitation counselors, or anybody involved in helping a person with a disability obtain or retain a job.

HOW DOES JAN WORK?

All calls to JAN are kept confidential. If you are calling about accommodating an individual on the job, the more you tell the consultant about the required tasks and the functional limitations and abilities of the individual, the better the consultant will be able to help. When you call, the following steps occur:

- ◆ The receptionist listens to each question and transfers the caller to the JAN consultant who is most knowledgeable in that particular area.

The consultant asks questions to obtain the information needed in order to develop the best solution(s).

- ◆ The consultant searches a database of previous accommodations and provides as many potential accommodation options as possible. These may include:
 - different approaches to job tasks
 - proposed policy changes
 - commercially available products
 - different ways to use existing products
 - resources for device modification/fabrication.
- ◆ The consultant provides methods of implementing and maintaining the accommodation(s) and recommends processes for reviewing the effectiveness of the accommodation(s).

- ◆ JAN staff will prepare and send materials in the format requested. Information can be sent electronically, faxed or mailed using the U.S. Postal Service.
- ◆ As follow-up, the caller may be asked to complete a questionnaire regarding the recommended accommodation(s) and their usefulness. This feedback helps JAN improve services and assist future callers with accommodation solutions.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE RESULT OF JAN SERVICES?

Following are examples of accommodations recommended by JAN that have assisted companies and agencies in hiring, retaining and promoting people with disabilities.

***Call Request:** A teacher with a hearing impairment had difficulties hearing the students' voices over the squeaks of chairs and desks moving over the linoleum floor. Also, the teacher could not see some of the students' faces and therefore could not effectively lip read.*

Accommodation Used: To eliminate noise, used tennis balls were cut and attached to the feet of the chairs and desks. The teacher rearranged the desks in a horseshoe in order to see the faces of all students. COST: \$0 (The tennis balls were donated by an avid tennis player who would have thrown them away.)

***Call Request:** Because of low reading skills a child care assistant with a learning disability had difficulty preparing lessons based on children's books.*

Accommodation Used: The employee was given a videotape of various children's stories and effective hand motions to review. COST: \$50

***Call Request:** A new restaurant employee who is legally blind used a service dog to travel to and from work. The employee did not need the dog to perform her job duties.*

Accommodation Used: A dog crate was placed in a back office with a clear path of travel in and out of the facility. The dog was crated during the work day and was out of any contact with food products or supplies used in the restaurant. COST: \$75

Call Request: *A company vice president with arthritis had difficulty maintaining stamina during the workday.*

Accommodation Used: The employer provided flexibility in the vice president's work hours and a recliner for her office so that she could change body positions to cut down on fatigue. COST: \$750

Call Request: *A cashier with mild mental retardation had difficulty making change.*

Accommodation Used: The worker used a talking calculator and a chart of bills and coins. COST: \$150

Call Request: *A worker who is deaf was responsible for inspecting underground water utilities. When the employee was underground alone, co-workers above ground needed to communicate with him.*

Accommodation Used: A wireless portable vibrating paging system was purchased for the employee. COST: \$445

Call Request: *A department store retail clerk with multiple sclerosis used a scooter and had problems with stamina.*

Accommodation Used: The employee was reassigned to a department on the first floor, provided with space for the scooter, given a sit/lean stool at the register, and scheduled for first shift with every third day off. COST: \$200

Call Request: *A technical editor in the publishing industry had a spinal cord injury and needed to work lying on his back.*

Accommodation Used: A work station was provided that enabled the editor to work on a computer while in a supine position. COST: \$2,000

Call Request: *An insurance claims adjuster became ill when exposed to certain chemicals in the air (chemical sensitivity).*

Accommodation Used: The ventilation system in the employee's office was modified, and co-workers were asked not to use scented products. The employee was also permitted to attend staff and training meetings remotely by speaker phone and to wear a mask when needed. COST: \$650

Call Request: *A greenhouse worker with mental retardation had difficulty correctly mixing various chemicals.*

Accommodation Used: Measuring cups, a checklist, and the chemicals were color-coded in a coordinated manner so the person could accomplish tasks by matching colors. COST: \$25

Call Request: *A human resources manager has seasonal affective disorder, a condition requiring adequate light during a sufficient number of daytime hours to ward off depression.*

Accommodation Used: A simple device called a sunlight box was installed in the person's office. COST: \$265

These accommodations are only a few examples of the types of effective solutions provided by the President's Committee's Job Accommodation Network. JAN staff has cumulatively over 100 years of experience and has delivered information on over 100,000 job accommodations since 1984.

HOW DO I REACH JAN?

Phone: (800) 526-7234 (V/TDD),
(800) 232-9675 (V/TDD)

Mail: President's Committees' Job Accommodation Network, 918 Chestnut Ridge Road, Suite 1, WVU PO Box 6080, Morgantown, WV 26506-6080

E-mail: JAN@jan.icdi.wvu.edu

Website: Visit the President's Committee's Web site at <<http://www.pcepd.gov>>. Then click on "Job Accommodation Network" in the table of contents, or go directly to JAN at <<http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu/english/homeus.htm>>.

July 1998

President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities

1331 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20004-1107

<http://www.pcepd.gov>

Recruiting Disabled Veterans: a Primer

Each year, in service to our nation, thousands of former military personnel join the ranks of disabled veterans. Overall, there are approximately 2.5 million disabled veterans. Disabled veterans represent a rich talent pool that is too often overlooked. Consider this.

- ◆ *Disabled veterans have proven their ability.* They have been trained in various military specialties that often offer knowledge and experiences transferrable to the civilian workforce.
- ◆ *Disabled veterans have proven their loyalty.* They volunteered to serve their nation and have proven they can commit to a job and an organization.
- ◆ *Disabled veterans know the meaning of discipline and teamwork.* From following orders to watching out for their buddies, they are serious and mature workers.
- ◆ *Disabled veterans come with support systems that enhance their employability.* A grateful nation acknowledges their sacrifice by offering disabled veterans special employment and training services.

RECRUITMENT RESOURCES

1. Vocational Rehabilitation

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs supports a nationwide employment training program for service connected disabled veterans who qualify for vocational rehabilitation. There are 56 regional offices which administer this program. These offices are a good place to recruit qualified disabled veterans. For the number of the vocational rehabilitation office nearest you call the VA's national toll free number (800) 827-1000 (V) or visit the VA Web site at <<http://www.va.gov>>.

In addition to employment and educational training programs, these offices can provide eligible disabled veterans with job specific and job related training. Therefore, employers may be able to work with these offices to develop training programs that suit their employment needs.

2. State Veterans Employment Services

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), through its Veterans Employment Training Service (VETS), helps support a network of local employment service professionals dedicated to assisting disabled veterans with locating and securing employment. A corps of 1400 local area Disabled Veteran Outreach Personnel (DVOPs) stands ready to provide employers with qualified job candidates who are disabled veterans.

To contact them, call your area's employment or job service office and ask for the DVOP.

For more information on this program, contact DOL's national Web site at <<http://www.dol.gov/dol/vets/welcome.html>>.

3. Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs)

Many of the National Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), such as the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS, Paralyzed Veterans Association, Blinded Veterans Association, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Vietnam Veterans of America and Non-Commissioned Officers Association, offer employment related services for disabled veterans (and in many cases all veterans) in various localities. They can be excellent resources for locating disabled veteran job seekers. Contact your area's local post or chapter and ask about their services.

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Several federal laws support the employment of disabled veterans. Here is a brief overview:

Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The ADA establishes nondiscrimination practices for the employment of people with disabilities. Disabled veterans are considered people with disabilities and, therefore, are covered by this Act. For more information on Title I of the ADA, contact your area's EEOC office or call the National EEOC number (800) 669-4000 (V) or (800) 669-6820 (TDD). In addition, the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities' Job Accommodation Network (JAN) offers basic information on the employment provisions of the ADA. Call JAN at (800) 232-9675 (V/TDD).

Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act (VEVRAA)

Under this law, employers with federal contracts or subcontracts of \$10,000 or more are required to provide equal employment opportunity, take affirmative action, and comply with mandatory job listing requirements to employ and advance protected veterans. This means that federal contractors must take positive steps in all employment practices to enable protected veterans to be considered for employment opportunities, including hiring, promoting, and training. Protected veterans include Vietnam era and qualified "special" disabled veterans. A qualified "special" disabled veteran is:

- (1) a veteran who is entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation) under the laws administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for a disability rating of 30% or more; or, rated at 10% to 20% if it has been determined that the individual has a serious employment disability; or,

- (2) a veteran who was discharged or released from active duty because of a service connected disability.

This law is enforced by the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) of the U.S. Department of Labor. For more information, contact OFCCP at (888) 376-3227 (V) or visit the OFCCP Web site on <www.dol.gov/dol/esa>.

State Laws

Many states have employment laws covering either veterans or disabled veterans. For more information, contact your State Veterans Employment Service, a department of the State Employment Service. *The agency is listed under state government agencies in the telephone directory.*

July 1998
President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
1331 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20004-1107
<http://www.pcepd.gov>

Affirmative Action and People with Disabilities

WHAT IS AFFIRMATIVE ACTION?

Affirmative action is a set of positive steps that employers use to promote equal employment opportunity and to eliminate discrimination. It includes expanded outreach, recruitment, mentoring, training, management development and other programs designed to help employers hire, retain and advance qualified workers from diverse backgrounds, including persons with disabilities. Affirmative action means inclusion, not exclusion. Affirmative action does not mean quotas and is not mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

WHY SHOULD PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES BE INCLUDED IN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMS?

- ◆ ***To increase the pool of qualified job applicants available for hiring.*** Nearly one half of working age people with disabilities are unemployed. Any one of these individuals may be the best person for the job an employer is seeking to fill.
- ◆ ***To obtain diverse skills, viewpoints and backgrounds in the workforce that can lead to improvements in the bottom line.*** Including employees with disabilities on product development, marketing, advertising and sales teams can help employers gain insight about how best to tap into and serve the disability community.
- ◆ ***To demonstrate to customers a commitment to equal employment opportunities.*** Consumers with disabilities control more than \$175 billion in discretionary income. They, like all consumers, are more likely to patronize businesses where they feel welcome. Accessible stores, products and services, along with employees with disabilities, will help customers with disabilities feel that their business is appreciated.
- ◆ ***To comply with the following laws.*** Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and Section 4212 of the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974 (VEVRAA), as amended, require federal contractors and subcontractors to take affirmative action to ensure that all individuals have an equal opportunity for employ-

ment, without regard to disability or status as a Vietnam era or "special disabled" veteran. Government contracts of more than \$10,000 must include a clause that a contractor agrees to take affirmative action to employ, advance in employment, and treat qualified individuals with disabilities without discrimination in all employment practices. When a government contractor has 50 or more employees and a contract of \$50,000 or more, the contractor also must prepare and maintain an affirmative action program.

- ◆ As part of this program, contractors are obligated to institute outreach and recruitment efforts to employ and advance qualified individuals with disabilities at all levels of employment, including the executive level. The U.S. Department of Labor is responsible for administering Sections 503 and 4212 through its Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP). If OFCCP determines that a contractor has violated these provisions, it may impose a variety of sanctions, including canceling, terminating or suspending a contract or debarring the contractor from future government contracts.

WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PLAN TO RECRUIT, EMPLOY AND ADVANCE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

OFCCP regulations implementing Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act require covered federal contractors and subcontractors to develop affirmative action plans that include the 10 major components outlined below. These are equally effective for employers that are voluntarily implementing affirmative action plans. An employer should:

1. Assign a company official to be responsible for the implementation of affirmative action activities.
2. Prepare and post an equal opportunity policy statement.

3. Review personnel processes to ensure job applicants and employees with disabilities are considered for all job vacancies and training opportunities, and are not stereotyped in a manner which limits their access to all jobs for which they are qualified.
4. Review all job qualification standards to ensure that they are job-related for the position in question and consistent with business necessary.
5. Make reasonable accommodations to the known functional limitations of otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities.
6. Develop and implement procedures to ensure that employees with disabilities are not harassed because of disability.
7. Undertake appropriate outreach and positive recruitment activities such as:
 - a. establishing formal arrangements for applicant referrals with recruitment sources such as state employment security agencies, state vocational rehabilitation agencies, college placement offices, labor organizations and organizations of or for individuals with disabilities;
 - b. participating in work-study programs with schools which specialize in training or educating individuals with disabilities;
 - c. including current employees with disabilities in promotional literature and career programs;
 - d. sending written notification of company affirmative action policy to subcontractors, vendors and suppliers; and
 - e. considering applicants with known disabilities for all available positions for which they may be qualified, not just for which they have applied.
8. Train all personnel involved in recruitment, screening, selection, promotion, disciplinary action and related processes to ensure that affirmative action steps are taken.
9. Develop procedures to disseminate information about affirmative action policies within a company in order to ensure greater employee cooperation and participation.
10. Design and implement an audit and reporting system to measure the effectiveness of an affirmative action program. Where an affirmative action program is found to be deficient, actions must be taken to remedy the situation.

WHERE CAN I OBTAIN ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

- ◆ Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs: Please contact your nearest OFCCP regional office or the OFCCP ombudsperson at (888) 376-3227 (V).
- ◆ OFCCP Public Education Kits are available at (202) 219-9475 (V) or (202) 208-0452 (TDD).
- ◆ Internet <<http://www.dol.gov/dol/esa>>.

July 1998
 President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
 1331 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20004-1107
<http://www.pcepd.gov>

Personal Assistance Services in the Workplace

WHAT ARE PERSONAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES?

Personal Assistance Services (PAS) can be defined as people or devices that assist a person with a physical, sensory, mental, or cognitive disability with tasks that the person would perform for himself or herself if he or she did not have a disability. In general, these may include assistance with dressing, bathing, eating, toileting, and cognitive tasks such as handling money or facilitating communications access with a reader or an interpreter.

WHAT ARE PERSONAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES IN THE WORKPLACE?

In the workplace, PAS is provided as a reasonable accommodation to enable an employee to perform the functions of a job. The employer's responsibility for providing reasonable accommodations begins when the employee reaches the job site and concludes when the work day ends. PAS in the workplace does not include skilled medical care.

Work-related PAS might include filing, retrieving work materials that are out of reach, or providing travel assistance for an employee with a mobility impairment; helping an employee with a cognitive disability with planning or decision making; reading handwritten mail to an employee with a visual impairment; or ensuring that a sign language interpreter is present during staff meetings to accommodate an employee with a hearing impairment. Each person with a disability has different needs and may require a unique combination of PAS.

WHAT PERSONAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES HAVE BEEN PROVIDED IN THE WORKPLACE?

The following examples of PAS were drawn from the database of the President's Committee's Job Accommodation Network (JAN) and represent actual workplace accommodations that employers have provided for their employees with disabilities. These represent only a sampling of the many forms that PAS can take in the workplace:

A state agency maintenance mechanic with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, had difficulties climbing stairs and carrying materials. The job was restructured so that this individual always worked in a team with another mechanic. The co-worker was easily able to carry the equipment and do the required lifting on the job while this worker performed other necessary tasks. Because the facility had no elevator, the worker was assigned only to jobs on the first floor.

An engineering assistant who is paraplegic could not open the entry or exit doors because of the type of security system at the communication company where he worked. The system included a security guard on duty at the door. The guard opened the door for the employee.

A college professor with physical limitations resulting from a stroke was assigned a student worker to assist with transport of materials to and from classes. The cost was minimal as the worker was already assigned to the department and performed other duties, as well. This task took approximately five hours per week of the student worker's time.

An office employee who is paraplegic working for a food manufacturer was provided an escort to his car to assist him in going through the doors and in folding and loading his wheelchair.

An engineer who uses a wheelchair held a job in a manufacturing company that required employees to move throughout a campus facility inspecting various aspects of the buildings, typically using the ability to climb, scoot, and crawl into small spaces. The engineers worked in teams. One member of the team would videotape the areas that this worker could not access. The engineer then used the videotape to gather pertinent information for the task.

A proofreader in a publishing company who uses a wheelchair was not able to transport materials from an inaccessible location to her work station. She was provided a low file cabinet and drawer unit that she could access and some necessary materials were placed within her reach. This area was periodically stocked for her by co-workers. Other materials that needed to be housed elsewhere were brought to her on a daily basis by her co-workers, who were also obtaining their own materials when retrieving or returning hers.

A federal agency employed two-full time sign language interpreters to accommodate the communication needs of numerous employees who are deaf. Having the interpreters on staff eliminated the need to contract out for this service. This solution saved time and eliminated the necessity of scheduling interpreters two weeks in advance, allowing for impromptu meetings. In addition, the staff interpreters were familiar with the vocabulary, protocols, and individuals within the agency, enabling them to perform their duties better.

An insurance company program analyst who is deaf had to communicate with others 90 percent of the time. The person worked with a team, but team members rotated throughout various projects. An interpreter was hired to facilitate communication between this worker and other team members.

A private school employed a counselor who is blind. Accommodations included providing a screen reader and voice synthesizer for computer activities and a part-time support service assistant for completing handwritten paperwork and reading print materials.

A health care service case manager who is blind was provided a driver to assist in making home visits. The same driver also was used for other driving needs of the health care facility. As often as possible, trips were scheduled so that the driver was transporting this individual and meeting other needs of the agency at the same time.

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

The President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities' Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is a toll-free service that provides information about workplace accommodations and the employability of people with disabilities. Calls are answered by experienced consultants who have instant access to the most comprehensive and up-to-date information about accommodation methods, including personal assistance. Contact: (800) 526-7234 (V/TDD), <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/english/homeus/htm> (Internet)

The World Institute on Disability's Rehabilitation Research and Training Center conducts research to further understanding of how PAS can promote the economic self-sufficiency, independent living, and full integration of people with disabilities into society. A publication list of research results is available. For answers to questions, call the center's Information Connection voice mail response system at (510) 251-4301 or contact the World Institute on Disability, RTCPAS, 510 16th Street, Suite 100, Oakland, California 94612, (510) 763-4100 (V), (510) 208-9493 (TDD).

Disability and Cultural Diversity

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 1994-95 data approximately 72.2% of African Americans with disabilities and 51.9% of Hispanics with disabilities are not working.

The data further show that 85.5% of African Americans and 75.4% of Hispanics with severe disabilities are not working. Individuals with disabilities who are members of other minority groups are also disproportionately represented among the unemployed. The employment circumstances facing minorities with disabilities are bleak. Attention to this issue must become a priority for the nation.

In response to these unacceptably high unemployment statistics for persons with disabilities from culturally diverse backgrounds, the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities has been working with Howard University, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Urban League, ASPIRA and other minority organizations in an effort to respond to this challenge. It will take the efforts of many organizations and employers to reverse the negative employment picture for minorities with disabilities.

FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT

Here are some factors that help to perpetuate the high unemployment rates of persons with disabilities from culturally diverse backgrounds:

- ◆ People with disabilities from culturally diverse backgrounds experience twice the discrimination experienced by non-disabled people in the minority community. Both disability and race complicate the situation.
- ◆ There is disparity in rehabilitation services provided to minority persons with disabilities.

- ◆ Educational opportunities are less available and affordable to individuals with disabilities from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- ◆ Inadequate transportation and housing in disadvantaged communities intensify the employment barriers for minority people with disabilities.
- ◆ There is a lack of mentors and role models for minority individuals with disabilities in the workplace.
- ◆ Mainstream job coaching, on the job training and internships are often not readily available to minority individuals with disabilities.
- ◆ Both mainstream and minority communities and religious organizations tend to overlook their capability to support the employment of minority individuals with disabilities.
- ◆ Cultural differences are not clearly understood by individuals or organizations designing programs to support the employment of minority persons with disabilities.

ACTIONS THAT CAN HELP IMPROVE THE EMPLOYMENT PICTURE

Here are some actions that businesses and organizations can take to help reduce the level of unemployment of individuals with disabilities from culturally diverse backgrounds:

- ◆ ***Learn More.***
Focus on public awareness by learning more about minority disability issues.
- ◆ ***Change Attitudes.***
Conduct sensitivity training and awareness sessions for staff.
- ◆ ***Reach Out.***
Involve minority persons with disabilities in organizational programs.
- ◆ ***Make a Commitment.***
Designate an organization official to serve as a disability specialist.
- ◆ ***Help Tell the Story.***
Publicize stories about this issue, whenever possible, in company and organization newsletters, newspapers and magazines. Focus on minority individuals with disabilities who are working successfully.
- ◆ ***Educate.***
Help improve employment opportunities for minority persons by addressing this problem at all minority-related conferences and other events.

- ◆ ***Furnish Role Models.***
Identify role models and mentors for minority persons with disabilities.
- ◆ ***Recruit Wisely.***
Utilize local recruiting sources such as area minority organizations, religious institutions and disability related organizations to identify qualified job applicants with disabilities from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- ◆ ***Advance Training.***
Include minority persons with disabilities in job training and upward-mobility training programs.
- ◆ ***Provide Employment Opportunities.***
Develop targeted internships and job programs for minority persons with disabilities.

RESOURCES

- ◆ President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities' Cultural Diversity Initiative, (202) 376-6200 (V), (202) 376-6205 (TDD), (202) 376-6219 (Fax)
- ◆ Howard University Research and Training Center, 2900 Van Ness Street, NW, Washington, DC 20008, (202) 806-8086 (V), (202) 224-7628 (TDD), (202) 806-8148 (Fax)

July 1998
President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
1331 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20004-1107
<http://www.pcepd.gov>

Marketing to Customers with Disabilities

THE POTENTIAL MARKET

According to a 1992 U. S. Census study, there are 49 million Americans with disabilities—that's nearly one out of every five Americans. Approximately half those over the age of 65 are disabled. The more the population ages, the more likely it will be that the number of persons with disabilities will increase.

The 49 million Americans with disabilities currently control \$175 billion in discretionary income, despite the fact that only 52 percent of the working-age population, 15.3 million persons with disabilities, is employed. People with disabilities who are unemployed receive public and private direct income support totaling \$109 billion. As more and more individuals with disabilities enter the workforce, their purchasing power will increase.

Added to these dollars is the purchasing potential of families of persons with disabilities. A recently released study by the U. S. Department of Education, based on 1990 data, reports that of the 69.6 million families in the United States, 20.3 million have at least one member with a disability.

Except for products geared specifically to disability-related needs, this segment of the consumer market has been largely ignored. Only in recent years have advertisers of general merchandise begun to recognize persons with disabilities as an important market segment.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The first thing to remember when marketing to persons with disabilities is that they have the same range of preferences, perceptions, attitudes, habits, and needs that drive consumer behavior of persons without disabilities. Customers with disabilities have the same requirements as customers without disabilities – quality products and services that meet their needs, reliability, and competitive market prices. Company outreach initiatives need to

convey that people with disabilities are valued as customers. If their needs are satisfactorily met, customers with disabilities become loyal users and “advertisements” for the products and services. In addition to the discretionary purchasing potential that individuals with disabilities and their families may have, public and private third party payers, such as veteran service organizations, vocational rehabilitation programs, and the educational system, purchase services, equipment, and/or products for persons with disabilities. In 1993, direct service expenditures by the Veterans Administration, the U. S. Department of Defense, and the Rehabilitation Services Administration totaled \$3 billion.

According to a recent General Accounting Office report, implementing the access provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act has increased revenues in the hotel and hospitality industry by 12 percent. Other industries should take note and follow suit. Some advertisers cater heavily to the teen market, which controls only \$67 billion in spending power—less than half that of the disability market. A largely untapped consumer market exists, and business has a lucrative window of opportunity to tap into this market if it becomes customer responsive to persons with disabilities.

MARKETING STRATEGY

As with any market, it is important to segment and define the disability market and to utilize a variety of strategies that include both generic and niche marketing. In developing a marketing strategy, perhaps the most important thing to remember is that people with disabilities are the only ones who really know what they need or want. For much too long, assumptions have been made for them, rather than with them.

The following ideas should be considered in a marketing strategy for consumers with disabilities:

- ◆ Test your marketing approach with people with disabilities. Select people with a variety of disabilities to be part of your strategy development team.
- ◆ Keep an open mind about what persons with disabilities can or cannot do, want or need, to drive your marketing strategy. Advances in technology, rehabilitation, and medicine, coupled with changes in societal attitudes, make many activities previously thought “impossible” for persons with disabilities possible.
- ◆ Recognize the diversity of the disability market. Do not assume that “one size fits all.” Define why this market sector, and its individual components, needs your services or products.
- ◆ Include people with disabilities in your product development. Remember that products geared to meet the needs of persons with disabilities often can be marketed to the public at large (e.g., the electric garage opener).
- ◆ Develop simple modifications to make existing services and products user-friendly to persons with disabilities.
- ◆ Test market your products and services with the disability community to measure accessibility and/or usability by persons with different types of disabilities.
- ◆ Develop promotional strategies that target persons with disabilities and their family members as desired customers.
- ◆ Integrate persons with disabilities in your print and television advertising. Use persons with disabilities as models, actors in your commercials, or as spokespersons.
- ◆ Include disability community newspapers, magazines and newsletters in your print advertising budget.
- ◆ Attend and exhibit at annual consumer disability conferences, as well as disability-related conferences for third party payers and professional organizations.
- ◆ Become involved with the disability community by sponsoring and/or participating in a national or local event or project.

RESOURCES

President’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities:

(202) 376-6200 (V), (202) 376-6205 (TDD),
info@pcepd.gov (E-mail),
<http://www.pcepd.gov> (Internet)

State Governors’ Committees:

(For a list of state liaisons, see President’s Committee’s Web page: < <http://www.pcepd.gov/state.htm>>.)

National Council on Independent Living:

(703) 525-3406 (V), ncil@tsbbs02.tnet.com (E-mail)

Providing Quality Services to Customers with Disabilities

POTENTIAL CUSTOMER BASE

The business community constantly tries to provide better services to existing customers and to expand its market by developing new customer bases. A large untapped customer market is the disability market, which can be an economically advantageous niche for business.

At 20 percent of the population, people with disabilities comprise the nation's largest minority group. As the population ages, approximately 40 percent of those over 65 will likely have disabilities. According to the Census Bureau's 1997 edition of "Current Population Reports," there are 54 million Americans with disabilities, a figure which does not include friends or relatives who wish to share business and entertainment activities.

Serving customers with disabilities provides significant opportunities for the business community. More than 20.3 million families in the U.S. have at least one member with a disability. Persons with disabilities themselves have a combined income of nearly \$700 billion. Of that figure, \$175 billion is discretionary income.

KEY TO QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

The key to providing quality services to customers with disabilities is to remember that all customers are individuals. Persons with disabilities come in all shapes and sizes with diverse personalities, abilities, interests, needs, and preferences—just like every other customer. Below are some basic tips for interacting with customers who have disabilities. However, in most cases, the best way to learn how to accommodate customers with disabilities is to ask them directly.

Etiquette considered appropriate when interacting with customers with disabilities is based primarily on respect and courtesy. Listen and learn from what the customer tells you regarding his or her needs. Remember, customers with disabilities will continue to patronize businesses that welcome them, are helpful, are accessible and provide quality products and/or services at competitive market prices.

SERVING CUSTOMERS WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

- Speak to the customer when you approach her or him.
- State clearly who you are; speak in a normal tone of voice.
- Never touch or distract a service dog without first asking the owner.
- Tell the customer when you are leaving; never leave a person who is blind talking to an empty space.
- Do not attempt to lead the customer without first asking; allow the customer to hold your arm and control her or his own movements.
- Be descriptive when giving directions; give the customer verbal information that is visually obvious to persons who can see. For example, if you are approaching steps mention how many and the direction.
- If you are offering a seat, gently place the customer's hand on the back or arm of the chair and let her or him sit down by her or himself.
- When dealing with money transactions, tell the customer the denominations when you count the money he or she is receiving from you.
- Make sure the customer has picked up all of her or his possessions, before leaving.
- Ask if the customer needs assistance signing forms. Offer to guide her or his hand to the appropriate space for signature.
- Offer assistance if the customer appears to be having difficulty locating a specific service area.

SERVING CUSTOMERS WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD-OF- HEARING

- Gain her or his attention before starting a conversation (i.e., tap the person gently on the shoulder or arm).
- Identify who you are (i.e., show them your name badge).
- Look directly at the customer, face the light, speak clearly, in a normal tone of voice, and keep your hands away from your face; use short, simple sentences.
- Ask the customer if it would be helpful to communicate by writing or by using a computer terminal.
- If the customer uses a sign-language interpreter, speak directly to the customer, not the interpreter.

- If you telephone a customer who is hard of hearing, let the phone ring longer than usual; speak clearly and be prepared to repeat the reason for the call and who you are.
- If you telephone a customer who is deaf, use your state telecommunications relay service. The number is listed in the front of the telephone directory. Consideration should also be given to purchasing a TDD.
- Discuss matters that are personal (e.g., financial matters) in a private room to avoid staring or eavesdropping by other customers.
- Do not speak for the customer or attempt to finish her or his sentences.
- If you are having difficulty understanding the customer, consider writing as an alternative means of communicating, but first ask the customer if this is acceptable.
- If no solution to the communication problem can be worked out between you and the customer, ask if there is someone who could interpret on the customer's behalf.
- Discuss matters that are personal (e.g., financial matters) in a private room to avoid staring or eavesdropping by other customers.

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH MOBILITY IMPAIRMENTS

- Put yourself at the wheelchair user's eye level. If possible, sit next to the customer when having a conversation.
- Do not lean on a wheelchair or any other assistive device.
- Do not assume the customer wants to be pushed-ask first.
- Provide a clipboard as a writing surface if counters or reception desks are too high; come around to the customer side of the desk/counter during your interaction.
- Offer assistance if the customer appears to be having difficulty opening the doors.
- Make sure there is a clear path of travel.
- If a person uses crutches, a walker, or some other assistive equipment, offer assistance with coats, bags, or other belongings.
- Offer a chair if the customer will be standing for a long period of time.
- If you telephone the customer, allow the phone to ring longer than usual to allow extra time for her or him to reach the telephone.

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH SPEECH IMPAIRMENTS

- If you do not understand something do not pretend that you do; ask the customer to repeat what he or she said and then repeat it back.
- Be patient; take as much time as necessary.
- Try to ask questions which require only short answers, or a nod of the head.
- Concentrate on what the customer is saying; concentrate on listening and communicating.
- Avoid barriers like glass partitions and distractions, such as noisy, public places.

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

- Be prepared to provide an explanation more than once.
- Offer assistance with and/or extra time for completion of forms, understanding written instructions, writing checks, and/or decision-making; wait for the customer to accept the offer of assistance; do not "over-assist" or be patronizing.
- If a customer has difficulty reading or writing, she or he may prefer to take forms home to complete.
- Be patient, flexible, and supportive; take time to understand the customer and make sure the customer understands you.
- Consider moving to a quiet or private location, if in a public area with many distractions.

REMEMBER

Provide access to facilities and services.
 Relax.
 Listen to the customer.
 Maintain eye contact without staring.
 Make the customer feel comfortable.
 Treat the customer with dignity, respect, and courtesy.
 Offer assistance but do not insist.
 Ask the customer to tell you the best way to help.
 Deal with unfamiliar situations in a calm, professional manner.

July 1998
 President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
 1331 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20004-1107
<http://www.pcepd.gov>

EMPLOYMENT CHECKLIST FOR HIRING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

DO!

- **Do** learn where to find and recruit people with disabilities.
- **Do** learn how to communicate with people who have disabilities.
- **Do** ensure that your applications and other company forms do not ask disability-related questions and that they are in formats that are accessible to all persons with disabilities.
- **Do** consider having written job descriptions that identify the essential functions of the job.
- **Do** ensure that requirements for medical examinations comply with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- **Do** relax and make the applicant feel comfortable.
- **Do** provide reasonable accommodations that the qualified applicant will need to compete for the job.
- **Do** treat an individual with a disability the same way you would treat any applicant or employee – with dignity and respect.
- **Do** know that among those protected by the ADA are qualified individuals who have AIDS, cancer, who are mentally retarded, traumatically brain injured, deaf, blind, and learning disabled.
- **Do** understand that access includes not only environmental access, but also making forms accessible to people with visual or cognitive disabilities and making alarms/signals accessible to people with hearing disabilities.
- **Do** develop procedures for maintaining and protecting confidential medical records.
- **Do** train supervisors on making reasonable accommodations.

DON'T!

- **Don't** assume that persons with disabilities are unemployable.
- **Don't** assume that persons with disabilities lack the necessary education and training for employment.
- **Don't** assume that persons with disabilities do not want to work.
- **Don't** assume that alcoholism and drug abuse are not real disabilities, or that recovering drug abusers are not covered by the ADA.
- **Don't** ask if a person has a disability during an employment interview.
- **Don't** assume that certain jobs are more suited to persons with disabilities.
- **Don't** hire a person with a disability if that person is a significant risk of substantial harm to the health or safety of the public and there is no reasonable accommodations to reduce that risk or the harm.
- **Don't** hire a person with a disability who is not qualified to perform the essential functions of the job even with a reasonable accommodation.
- **Don't** assume that you have to retain an unqualified employee with a disability.
- **Don't** assume that your current management will need special training to learn how to work with people with disabilities.
- **Don't** assume that the cost of accident insurance will increase as a result of hiring a person with a disability.
- **Don't** assume that the work environment will be unsafe if an employee has a disability.
- **Don't** assume that reasonable accommodations are expensive.
- **Don't** speculate or try to imagine how you would perform a specific job if you had the applicant's disability.
- **Don't** assume that you don't have any jobs that a person with a disability can do.
- **Don't** make medical judgments.
- **Don't** assume that a person with a disability can't do a job due to apparent and nonapparent disabilities.
- **Don't** assume that your workplace is accessible.