

Employing People with Disabilities

A Guide to Getting Started



YOU CAN BE AN EMPLOYER OF CHANGE And we'll help you get there

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) represent a vast pool of potential employees across the U.S.—and yet, it's a market that is largely untapped. In fact, estimates have shown there is a potential talent pool of 10.7 million Americans with disabilities who are ready and willing to work¹. And yet, only 21 percent of people with disabilities are in the labor force, compared to nearly 69 percent of those without a disability².

 **10.7 Million**
Americans with disabilities are ready and willing to work.



Zac



Mary



Kevin

If you're not familiar with the world of disability, it can feel a little daunting to think about bringing people with disabilities into the workplace. Will they need accommodations, and if so, what kind? Will it impact the bottom line? What will customers think?

It's okay to ask these kinds of questions. But you don't have to look far to find that creating a workplace inclusive of people with disabilities can do wonders for you, your employees and your business.

That's why we put together this guide—to address some of the myths surrounding people with disabilities in the workforce and help point you in the right direction so you can become an employer of change.

THE MYTHS: BUSTED

There are a number of concerns employers have about people with disabilities in the workplace. Here are few of the most common ones—along with all the reasons you don't need to worry.

They won't show up on time.

An employer may look at a person with a disability and worry they won't be reliable or will have too many medical appointments. But according to employers who actively hire people with developmental disabilities, that's not true. In fact, 89 percent of employers report that people with disabilities are extremely dependable employees, according to the Institute for Corporate Productivity.

They'll need too much help.

It's true some people with disabilities may need some assistance to get going, whether it's more hands-on training or some physical help. For example, a restaurant worker might need a special knife for food prep or an alternate stool or chair to sit on. But once trained, they will work—hard. Plus, funds for accommodations may be available through state Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation and Medicaid waivers.

Nik loves his job—and is beloved by his customers.



They won't be around long.

Actually, people with disabilities often stay at the same company for long periods of time. According to one study, 62 percent of employees with developmental disabilities stayed in the same job for three years or more³. In short, there is less risk of employee turnover when businesses hire people with IDD.

It doesn't matter to our customers.

Organizations that employ individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities are looked upon more favorably than ones that don't. According to one study, 92 percent of the public has a more favorable view toward businesses who employ people with disabilities⁴. Plus, being open to people with disabilities in a public way attracts another potential customer base: people with disabilities and their families.

It doesn't help our bottom line.

In fact, companies who actively employ people with disabilities are more profitable than those who don't—28 percent more profitable, in fact⁵. They include companies like Bank of America, which recently hired 300 people with intellectual disabilities to create a customer support team, and Microsoft, which has implemented a hiring and training program aimed at supporting people with autism.



People with disabilities tend to have really high retention rates, and there's evidence to support that other employees are also more likely to stay with a business that employs people with disabilities. It's an employer's dream.



-Cody Kriewald, Job Developer

LOW RISK, HIGH REWARD

Hiring people with disabilities is good for business

It's normal to wonder how hiring people with disabilities could affect your bottom line, or if the costs of accommodations will pile up. But let's take a look at the facts and you'll quickly see that creating an inclusive environment won't hurt your business and, in fact, can help it—and the overall economy—immensely.



59%

of disability accommodations cost nothing⁶



87%

of customers prefer to frequent businesses who employ people with disabilities⁷



29%

of companies have seen increased profitability⁸



\$25 billion

The potential boost to GDP if just 1% more people with disabilities joined the U.S. labor force⁹

These are just a few of the direct benefits hiring someone with IDD could have on your business.

“

The employees we hire are more than capable of completing the jobs we give them. It's easy to look past their disability and just see an employee.

They prove themselves over and over with their work ethic.

”

-Nancy Leibhart, Employer

TAKING THE FIRST STEP

Resources to get started

State Agencies

Are you ready to dive deeper into how you can make your place of business more inclusive of people with IDD? A good first step is to familiarize yourself with your state's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or similar agency. Below you can find a listing of state agencies that can help you get started on the road to a more inclusive, integrated workplace.

STATE	AGENCY LINK
Alabama	rehab.alabama.gov
Alaska	labor.alaska.gov/dvr
Arizona	azdes.gov/RSA
Arkansas	ace.arkansas.gov/arRehabServices/Pages/default.aspx
California	rehab.cahwnet.gov
Colorado	dvrcolorado.com
Connecticut	brs.state.ct.us
Delaware	dvr.delawareworks.com
District of Columbia	dds.dc.gov
Florida	rehabworks.org
Georgia	gvs.georgia.gov
Hawaii	humanservices.hawaii.gov/vr
Idaho	vr.idaho.gov/
Illinois	dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?
Indiana	in.gov/fssa
Iowa	ivrs.iowa.gov
Kansas	dcf.ks.gov/services/rs/pages/employment-services.aspx
Kentucky	kcc.ky.gov/Vocational-Rehabilitation/Pages/default.aspx
Louisiana	laworks.net/WorkforceDev/LRS/LRS_Main.asp
Maine	maine.gov/rehab/index.shtml
Maryland	dors.maryland.gov/Pages/default.aspx
Massachusetts	mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-rehabilitation-commission
Michigan	michigan.gov/leo
Minnesota	mn.gov/deed
Mississippi	mdrs.ms.gov/Pages/default.aspx
Missouri	dese.mo.gov/adult-learning-rehabilitation-services/vocational-rehabilitation
Montana	dphhs.mt.gov/detd/vocrehab

STATE	AGENCY LINK
Nebraska	vr.nebraska.gov
Nevada	detr.nv.gov
New Hampshire	education.nh.gov/career/vocational
New Jersey	state.nj.us/humanservices/cbvi/home
New Mexico	dvr.state.nm.us
New York	acces.nysed.gov/vr
North Carolina	ncdhhs.gov/divisions/dvrs
North Dakota	nd.gov/dhs/dvr/index.html
Ohio	ood.ohio.gov
Oklahoma	okrehab.org
Oregon	oregon.gov/dhs/employment/VR/Pages/index.aspx
Pennsylvania	dli.pa.gov/Individuals/Disability-Services/ovr/Pages/default.aspx
Rhode Island	ors.ri.gov
South Carolina	scvrd.net
South Dakota	dhs.sd.gov/rehabservices/default.aspx
Tennessee	tn.gov/humanservices/ds/vocational-rehabilitation.html
Texas	twc.texas.gov
Utah	jobs.utah.gov/usor
Vermont	vocrehab.vermont.gov
Virginia	vadors.org
Washington	dshs.wa.gov/office-of-the-secretary/division-vocational-rehabilitation
West Virginia	wvdrs.org/
Wisconsin	dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr
Wyoming	wyomingworkforce.org/workers/vr

Other Resources

Office of Disability Employment Policy: dol.gov/odep/

The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) is the only non-regulatory federal agency that promotes policies and coordinates with employers and all levels of government to increase workplace success for people with disabilities.

Workforce Recruitment Program: wrp.gov/wrp

Managed by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy and the Department of Defense, The Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) is a recruitment and referral program that connects employers with highly motivated college students and recent graduates with disabilities who are eager to demonstrate their abilities in the workplace through summer or permanent jobs.

Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion: askearn.org/

The Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN) is a free resource that helps employers tap the benefits of disability diversity by educating public- and private-sector organizations on ways to build inclusive workplace cultures.

Job Accommodation Network: askjan.org/

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is a leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues.

Employer Pam can—and does—create an inclusive work environment for people of all abilities, like Eric.



ABOUT BETHESDA

Bethesda is a national leader in providing community supports, promoting awareness and advocating for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Operating at program locations across 13 States, we are a Christian nonprofit organization that succeeds through the passion of our employees, donors and volunteers who make a difference every day in the lives of those we support.

Bethesda's spectrum of services continues to evolve as we strive to reflect the needs of the people and families we support, which in recent years has focused on independence and community inclusion. Our organization is proud to be a change agent in implementing forward-thinking solutions that improve the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Bethesda's Employment Support Services are an example of our offerings that exemplify the level of self-direction and choice that people we support, parents and guardians seek.

Bethesda's services include:*

- **Residential Support Programs**
- **Community Connections (Community Activities and Day Programs)**
- **Careers Connections (Integrated Employment)**
- **Faith Supports**
- **Bethesda College of Applied Learning**

* Bethesda services vary by state. Visit BethesdaLC.org/Locations for specific offerings in your area.



Zach



Jessica



Anthony

¹ "Getting to Equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage." Accenture, 2018, 4.

² U.S. Department of Labor, August 2019

³ *Employing People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, Institute for Corporate Productivity

⁴ *A hidden market: The purchasing power of working-age adults with disabilities*, American Institutes for Research, April 2018

⁵ *Inclusion Advantage*, 7.

⁶ *Ibid*, 8.

⁷ *Employment First study*

⁸ *Accommodation and Compliance: Low Cost, High Impact*, Job Accommodation Network, 2018

⁹ *Ibid*, 4