

Hiring People with Disabilities



Consider the Opportunity

- Hiring People with Disabilities (PwD) is good business. These candidates are keenly dedicated, hard working, and have a great appreciation for the opportunity to work.
- With an aging workforce and projected shortfall in the overall workforce, we are fortunate to have a largely untapped resource pool, ready and able to work.
- Major employers such as Walgreens, Lowe's, and Hershey have demonstrated the benefits of employing PwD.

How-To Guide SUMMARY

Proven Steps toward Success

Your Single Point of Contact makes it easy to get started.

Employers who are open to expanding their PwD hiring initiatives can easily access no-cost resources provided by various Pennsylvania agencies.

Your central resource is a trained professional who serves as your Single Point of Contact, or “SPOC,” to guide you through the process.

Your SPOC is committed to your organization’s long-term success as an inclusive employer. He or she will answer questions, leverage resources, solve problems, and advocate for your interests as well as those of your employees.

Make the Business Case

- Achieving executive-level buy-in is fundamental.
- Your SPOC will provide data, case studies, and arrange site visits to demonstrate that including people with different abilities in your workforce is a strategic business decision.
- Your SPOC will help you gain the support of senior executives at your company.

Build Your Core Team

- You’ll work with your SPOC to build a core team of internal and external members who will collaborate to implement PwD employment at your company.
- Your SPOC will serve as liaison to the external members, who may include representatives of local Workforce Investment Boards, Intermediate Units, school districts, Veterans Affairs, county mental health/intellectual disabilities agencies, and others.

Develop a Plan

- Your SPOC and team will evaluate your near- and mid-term workforce needs.
- The team will work with you to match PwD to the most appropriate position by understanding individualized skills and abilities, while maintaining pre-existing employer requirements and expectations.
- Together you will develop a plan—with goals and a timeline—for identifying, hiring, accommodating, and training PwD employees.

Leverage Resources

- A wealth of knowledge, experience, and support is available from a range of agencies, including and in addition to those on your core team.
- Your SPOC will help you navigate the resources that are most valuable to your specific company and the types of individuals you will employ.
- This may include understanding tax incentives, available technical assistance for job accommodations, and job coaches during an employee’s transition.



“This was not about charity. We did not lower our standards; we did not lower the expectations for quality and output. We offered same pay for same work.
...Those with disabilities are waiting for us to discover their gifts, abilities, and contributions.”

~Randy Lewis
Retired Senior Vice President
Walgreens

Prepare Your Company

- This begins with straightforward, two-way communication with your existing workforce to discuss the benefits of employing PwD and address any concerns.
- “Diversity etiquette” training and communication tips may be helpful—your SPOC can coordinate.
- You’ll work with your SPOC to evaluate the need for low-cost or no-cost accommodations for your new employees.
- If used, job coaches are introduced to the site and job requirements.

Interview and Hire

- Based on the expectations and requirements for each job, your SPOC and team identify and pre-screen PwD candidates, drawing from their understanding of individual skills and abilities.
- You as the employer conduct interviews and make hiring decisions.
- Your SPOC can offer tips on effective interviewing techniques.
- Your SPOC and team will help you adapt your existing recruiting procedures if necessary—for example, modifying a requirement for online applications.

Train and Evaluate

- Much of the new employee’s training will be identical to the training received by all your new employees.
- You’ll work with your SPOC to tailor training to an individual’s abilities, as appropriate. For example, it may be more effective to break down a process into six steps instead of four.
- Job coaches may help your PwD employees with soft skills as well as mastering the details of their new job.

Build on Your Successes

- Your goal is continuous improvement as you include a continuous stream of PwD into your workforce.
- Document what works and be receptive to ideas for improvement.
- Your plan should include periodic assessments of your PwD employment initiative.
- Provide supervisors and others engaged with PwD employees with a simple way to communicate progress and identify any remaining issues to address.
- Celebrate successes and generously share lessons learned with other employers.

Congratulations on taking the first step in this journey toward integrating people with disabilities into your workforce. Before you put this document down, make a call to the:

Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
800-442-6351

and/or

Pennsylvania Business Leadership Network
866-902-4333 x90115
ASKTHEBLN@blnofpa.org

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