



Did You Know? According to Worksupport.com:

- ◆ One in nearly five Americans is affected by a disability.
- ◆ Almost 500,000 students with disabilities attend two- or four-year colleges and universities.
- ◆ 72 percent of adults with disabilities want to work.
- ◆ Studies indicate that workers with disabilities rate average or above average in performance, attendance and work safety.
- ◆ According to research, workers with disabilities are more inclined to stay in jobs longer, reducing high turnover costs.



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This fact sheet and others can be found at www.mdod.maryland.gov and www.mdworkforcepromise.org.

Questions?

Contact the Maryland Business Leadership Network.

Quick Tips: Job Seekers & Employees with Disabilities

Overview

Americans with disabilities participate in the same activities as everyone else. They play, vote, go to school, shop, live independently and work. The tips in this fact sheet offer guidance as you interact with, hire and welcome individuals with disabilities into your work place. For information on the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities, refer to the brochure entitled *The Business Case – Hiring Individuals with Disabilities*.

Interacting with People with Disabilities

The U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy offers the following tips for interacting with people with disabilities:

- ◆ Listen to the person with the disability. Do not make assumptions about what that person can or cannot do.
- ◆ When speaking with a person with a disability, talk directly to that person, not through a companion or interpreter.
- ◆ Extend common courtesies to people with disabilities as you would anyone else. Shake hands or hand over business cards. If the person cannot shake your hand or grasp your card, he will tell you.
- ◆ If you are having trouble understanding what a person is saying, ask the person to repeat rather than pretend you understand.
- ◆ Offer assistance to a person with a disability, but wait until your offer is accepted before you help.

Ten Steps to Put Ability to Work

The Maryland Business Leadership Network (MD BLN) recommends the following strategies for diversifying your workforce by including people with disabilities:

- ◆ Get executive commitment. This sends a clear message that diversity is a serious and relevant business initiative.
- ◆ Articulate the desired outcomes of the initiative.
- ◆ Assess the climate, needs and issues at your organization.
- ◆ Create and maintain open channels of communication with employees at the launch of your disability initiative and throughout the process.
- ◆ Incorporate disability into existing diversity initiatives.
- ◆ Develop a mechanism for dealing with systemic changes and procedural problems.
- ◆ Design relevant, interactive, applicable training.
- ◆ Evaluate and measure each component of your diversity initiatives.
- ◆ Ensure integration by incorporating the concepts, skills and results of your efforts into the fabric of the organization.
- ◆ Create partnerships and seek out best practices to integrate people with disabilities into your workforce.

The publication *Ten Steps to Put Ability to Work* is available for download at www.vabltn.org.

Is Your Work Site Accessible?

AbilityLinks.org offers the following list of questions to assist when determining the accessibility of your work site.

- ◆ Are there designated parking spaces for people with disabilities that are close to the entrance of the work site?
- ◆ 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, have easily grasped handles or are automatic)?
- ◆ Is the personnel office in an accessible location?
- ◆ Are the bathrooms, water fountains and public telephones accessible?
- ◆ Are elevators accessible to all people with disabilities (control panels lower than 54 inches from the floor, raised symbols or numbers on the control panels)?
- ◆ Is all signage appropriate and accessible for people with visual, learning and cognitive disabilities (including the use of symbols and graphics)?
- ◆ Does the emergency warning system include both audible and visual alarms?

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is the federal entity responsible for enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The EEOC's Baltimore Field Office will assist with technical compliance of your company's work site and practices. The EEOC's technical assistance programs are independent of its enforcement programs, so you will not be penalized for compliance issues when you ask for technical assistance. ADA compliance materials are also available on the EEOC's website.

The Baltimore Field Office of the EEOC has jurisdiction over the State of Maryland (www.eeoc.gov; Voice (410) 962-3932; TTY (410) 962-6065).

Six Steps to Integrating Your Workforce

- ◆ **Commitment:** Commit to employing, advancing and retaining people with disabilities. Make workforce diversity a part of your company's culture.
- ◆ **Recruitment:** Aggressively seek job candidates with disabilities. Inform disability-related organizations and agencies of your job openings. Search for résumés on disability-related websites.
- ◆ **Interviewing:** As you would with any job seeker, focus on the individual's skills, abilities and achievements.
- ◆ **Accommodations:** Include the employee in the process of determining appropriate accommodations. Who knows better than the employee what is needed to perform the essential functions of the job?
- ◆ **Training:** Training offered by the company should be accessible to all employees. This includes new employee orientation, skills improvement, career advancement training and off-site seminars.
- ◆ **Awareness / Sensitivity:** Educate your workforce on topics such as interacting with individuals with disabilities, reasonable accommodations and misconceptions about disabilities.

Resources

DBTAC: Mid-Atlantic ADA Center
Voice / TTY: (800) 949-4232
Email: adainfo@transcen.org
Website: www.adainfo.org

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)
Voice/ TTY: (800) 526-7234
Email: jan@jan.wvu.edu
Website: www.jan.wvu.edu

Maryland Business Leadership Network
Voice: (866) 624-3502
Email: bln@suntrust.com
Website: www.usbln.com

Maryland Department of Disabilities
Voice / TTY: (410) 767-3660
Voice / TTY: (800) 637-4113
Email: mdod@mdod.state.md.us
Website: www.mdod.maryland.gov

Maryland Disability WorkFORCE Information Exchange
Voice: (301) 662-0099
TTY: (301) 662-4853
Email: info@mdworkforcepromise.org
Website: www.mdworkforcepromise.org

Maryland State Dept. of Education Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)
Voice: (410) 554-9385 / (888) 554-0334
TTY: (410) 554-9411
Email: dors@dors.state.md.us
Website: www.dors.state.md.us

TransCen, Inc.
Voice: (301) 424-2002
TTY: (301) 309-2435
Email: inquiries@transcen.org
Website: www.transcen.org

U. S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy
Voice: (866) 633-7365
TTY: (877) 889-5627
Website: www.dol.gov/odep

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Baltimore Field Office
Voice: (410) 962-3932
TTY: (410) 962-6065
Website: www.eeoc.gov

Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research & Training Center
Voice: (804) 828-1851
TTY: (804) 828-2494
Website: www.worksupport.com