

Hiring People with Disabilities



Hiring People with Disabilities (PwD) is:

- A way to add value to your organization
- A strategic way to strengthen your workforce
- An informed business decision
- An achievable goal

This guide will:

- Highlight the benefits
- Outline a proven path forward, customizable to your business
- Provide contacts and resources to get you started

How-To Guide

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Our Single
Point of Contact
(SPOC) approach
streamlines and
simplifies hiring
people with
disabilities.

Foreward

- Many leading employers are finding that People with Disabilities (PwD) are outstanding employees.
- This guide will help you develop processes to hire even more PwD than you currently employ.
- The guide is experienced-based, reflecting the success that leading employers such as Walgreens and Lowes have experienced.
- Our Single Point of Contact (SPOC) approach streamlines and simplifies hiring PwD.
- The SPOC cuts red tape and bureaucracy, saves time, and means a business can efficiently work through one person.
- The philosophy and commitment of the proven hiring model covered in this guide is simply this—that the employer is the customer of those agencies that can support your hiring of people with disabilities.



How to Use this Guide

- This guide is designed to be a modular reference for your ease of use.
- Each module represents a process phase, ranging from considering a PwD employment initiative to interviewing, training, and workplace preparation.
- While the phases are shown in a generic sequential order, the guide does not have to be read in its entirety—certain sections may have more relevance to you than others.
- This document provides a fairly high-level overview. Your SPOC will provide you with a clear and in-depth understanding of what is to be considered and/or accomplished at each phase.
- This provides a real-world flexible approach customized to your needs, rather than a rigid model.
- The guide has been developed based on the successful experience of leading employers. You are encouraged to reach out to employers that have achieved success.

Phase

1

Consider the Opportunity

Why is hiring more people with disabilities an opportunity?

Overview

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 have demonstrated the benefits of employing PwD. The best way to begin to understand the opportunity and potential is to visit a company that has developed a successful PwD talent acquisition workforce initiative.

Key Points

- Start by reviewing this guide and then contact your PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), who will connect you with the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) in your region (see next page).
- As a first step, your SPOC can facilitate contacts with successful businesses and highlight best or promising practices for PwD talent acquisition, retention, and promotion.

Hiring people with disabilities is good business.

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“Walgreens is fortunate to have made the commitment to invest in employing people with disabilities who make such an enormous contribution to our company, customers, and community, and who succeed in pursuing their dreams and careers.”

~Randy Lewis
Retired Senior Vice President
Walgreens

Your Single Point of Contact — A Unique and Invaluable Resource

Your Single Point of Contact (SPOC) is a professional trained by the PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) who is committed to long-term success of your PwD hiring decisions and adding value to your business or organization. Broadly, a SPOC’s services (provided at no cost to you), include:

- Serving as a liaison between you (the employer) and the many resources available, simplifying communication and implementation.
- Assembling and facilitating the PwD core team (discussed in Section 3), and resolving any issues or questions among team members.
- Providing leadership, experience, and knowledge. You can be sure that your SPOC will be able, responsive, a motivator, and a problem solver.
- Serving you and your business or organization as a respected resource, advocating for your interests as well as your employees.
- Guiding you through every step of the process.

The SPOC may assist federal contractors in satisfying their U.S. Department of Labor Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs outreach requirements.

Phase

2

Make the Business Case

Is there benefit for my company to hiring more people with disabilities?

Overview

Executive-level support is crucial to success. Building support begins by communicating clear evidence that employing PwD is worthwhile and of strategic value to your company.

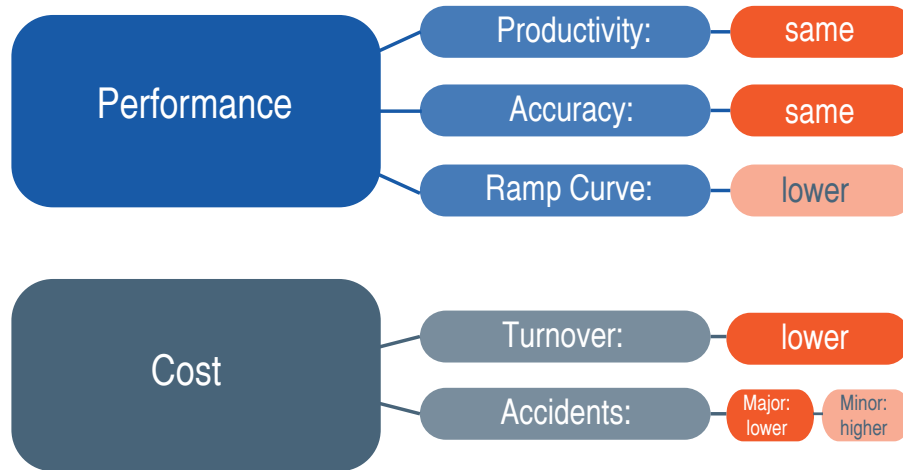
The business case for hiring PwD has been successfully demonstrated by Walgreens, Lowes, CVS Caremark, and other employers. Your SPOC will provide information to support your decision-making, including assessing the opportunity for your specific business to benefit from PwD employment.

Key Points

- Research proves that employees with disabilities meet or exceed productivity, quality, and attendance/on-time standards of employees without disabilities.
- Hiring PwD leads to diversity; diversity promotes business and organizational innovation; and innovation adds value and creates wealth or savings for any business or organization.
- Working collaboratively with your SPOC, there is normally minimal or no additional cost to an employer to hire/train a person with a disability.
- Your SPOC will assist in making the business case and securing management support. This includes:
 - Providing data on costs, benefits, and return on investment (ROI) achieved by similar organizations.
 - Assessing opportunities for your industry and company, including labor demand, supply, and resources.

The business case for hiring PwD has been successfully demonstrated by Walgreens, Lowes, CVS Caremark, and other employers.

What about performance and cost?



Same work . . . same pay.
Minor enhancements to recruitment, training, and management . . . long-term payback.

- Navigating Corporate Social Responsibility / Linking to Diversity Initiatives.
- Providing an overview of PwD hiring and accommodation business tax incentives, deductions, no-cost technical assistance, or training from the PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR).
- Outlining how the SPOC/core team will provide candidates that meet your criteria.

Resources / For Your Consideration

- Your SPOC will introduce you to resources such as the Pennsylvania Business Leadership Network (PA BLN).
- On-boarding supports are available through PA OVR at no cost including information about tax incentives, technical assistance for job accommodations, and front line supervisor training on disability etiquette (also covered in Sections 6 and 7).

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Build Your Core Team

What is a core team, who is on it, and what value does it have for my company?

Overview

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. Your SPOC will facilitate this team and focus its efforts on achieving your PwD goals with their combined resources.

Key Points

- The core team is responsible for establishing and carrying out a basic plan for hiring, accommodating, and training PwD.
- An executive sponsor or champion from your company should be established, as well as a PwD project manager. Additional strong champions should be identified at each appropriate level of the organization to energize and inspire all managers and supervisors.
- Members of the core team from your company may include management, supervisors, human resources, and senior employees (or a union representative) at the implementing site. Corporate oversight may include a CEO/COO representative, human resources executive, legal counsel, and public relations.
- For companies implementing PwD at multiple sites, the employer's site liaison may be supported by an on-site representative of the SPOC/core team.

Having “champions” at each appropriate level of your organization will help keep your current workforce energized and inspired as you develop and implement your PwD employment plan.

“There are 33 million working-age adults with disabilities in the United States, and the prevalence of autism is growing (now 1 in 88 children). The likelihood of finding enthusiastic champions in your workforce who have been affected, directly or indirectly, by disability, is very good.”

~Stacy Orwan
Supply Chain Modeler
The Hershey Company

- The PwD project manager also serves as a liaison between corporate oversight and the implementing site.
- A structured reporting/status system should be implemented.
- While facilitating the core team, your SPOC will work to resolve any issues or questions that may arise between your company and external members of the core team.
- If necessary, the SPOC will appoint an adjunct SPOC (ASPOC) to address issues that the SPOC may not be able to address due to regulations or policies.

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Develop a Plan

What are the key components in developing a PwD employment plan for my business?

Overview

The planning phase involves setting expectations and outlining steps and a schedule for identifying, hiring, accommodating, and training PwD employees.

Plans establish the timeline, goals, milestones, tasks, resources, and project status/review dates. Building the plan involves clarifying employer requirements and expectations for each position.

Key Points

- Proceed in a deliberate fashion to define your steps for moving forward, develop a schedule for each step, and identify the key people involved. The walk, jog, run approach of incremental successes is effective.
- Select a department in which to launch your initiative—such as Distribution—and evaluate your near- and mid-term workforce needs.
- A good target is to fill two to four positions in the first six months, gradually increasing the number of new candidates and the frequency they are brought on (for example, quarterly vs. semi-annually).
- It is critical to thoroughly develop job descriptions and candidate eligibility criteria to help your agency team members identify appropriate candidates in future phases (see next page). Your SPOC should complete a Job Task Analysis to facilitate skill matching.
- If any exceptions to standard job requirements are considered (for example, extending the training period), those considerations are determined by the employer and described prior to implementing the program.

The planning phase involves setting expectations and a schedule.

“Diversity fosters creativity. We need to generate the best ideas from our people in all levels of the company and incorporate them into our business practices.”

~Frédéric Rozé
Chief Executive Officer
L'Oréal USA

as quoted in “Fostering Innovation through a Diverse Workforce,” Forbes Insights, July 2011
http://images.forbes.com/forbesinsights/StudyPDFs/Innovation_Through_Diversity.pdf

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How can I help my agency partners identify appropriate PwD candidates?

Your plan should include details on the skill sets for the positions to be filled. Your SPOC can help develop this list, which should include:

- A complete job description and thorough explanation of performance expectations. Include the nature of work, pay, benefits, and special criteria.
- Requirements for lifting, bending, or stooping.
- The need to grasp or precisely hold or manipulate objects.
- Prerequisites such as reading and/or counting.
- A list of equipment to be used or operated.
- Required certifications, licenses, or training.
- Mandatory prior work experience.
- Education requirements.
- Important “soft skills.”
- Preferred level of communication with co-workers and supervisors.
- Drug screening requirements.
- Any disqualification for past criminal histories.
- The type and duration of training normally provided to new hires.

Source: Ralph Roach, MS, CRC, LPC
Employment Rehabilitation Specialist
PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

Phase

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Leverage Resources

How can I leverage available resources such as those provided by support agencies?

Overview

Coordinating with the many agencies whose resources may be of assistance in implementing your PwD employment plan is fairly simple—your SPOC handles it. He or she has agency awareness and contacts, knowledge of each agency’s capacities or services, and typically functions as a liaison (within the limits of confidentiality protection).

Agency representatives on the core team, as well as other agency partners with a PwD-related mission, help identify candidates to be interviewed for your job openings. Therefore, it is essential to make them as familiar as possible with your company and the jobs being filled.

Key Points

- Rely on your SPOC to keep things simple.
- Your SPOC will engage those agencies/educators necessary to provide the initial qualified candidates, and then a steady stream of qualified candidates as your PwD employment program advances.
- Consider hosting a kickoff event and conducting work site tours for agency representatives to get to know your organization’s people, products, and processes. The tours and briefings on specific job functions are invaluable for communicating the nature of the work, including required physical abilities, pace, repetition, communication, and interaction with other employees.

The better each agency partner knows your job criteria, the better they can fit qualified candidates to job openings.

“We must not limit our view of diversity to just gender, race, or ethnicity. We should embrace all aspects of difference, including disability. To me, incorporating, fostering, and celebrating diversity means acting in recognition and reverence of our common humanity.”

~Randy Lewis
Retired Senior Vice President
Walgreens

- As discussed in Section 3, the employer should provide to all agency team members (via the SPOC) the detailed job descriptions and other criteria articulated during the planning phase. This includes documentation on work and personal conduct standards, employer policies, safety issues and requirements, and job preparedness requirements.
- It may be valuable to have one of the agencies experienced with PwD conduct a task analysis to help precisely define the essential job functions and prerequisites for a position.
- Ultimately, you as the employer determine all job and work site related criteria, and all candidates must meet those criteria and be able to perform work to your standards.

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Prepare Your Company

What steps will our company need to take to prepare for any new PwD employees?

Overview

This phase involves effectively preparing your existing workforce and work sites for new PwD employees. This typically includes:

- Assessing and mitigating potential risks
- Preparing and implementing a communications plan or strategy
- Evaluating and possibly fine-tuning your current application and interviewing processes
- Sensitivity training
- Orientation of Job Coaches

Key Points

- With help from your SPOC and Human Resources (HR) department, develop a brief presentation for your employees. This may address topics such as the reasons for hiring PwD and the benefits to the company, to co-workers, and to the overall community. This is also a chance to identify perceived barriers and their solutions. Success stories such as those from Walgreens, Lowes, and CVS Caremark may be very effective.
- Clarify your communication plan/strategy for both internal communications (other employees) and the general public. Companies may elect not to publicize their PwD employment efforts until they can point to successes.
- Sensitivity training for existing staff is essential. This will help relieve any concern they might have regarding interactions with PwD and productivity/quality expectations for PwD. Your SPOC and core team agency partners can provide this training.

Straightforward two-way communication with your existing workforce about the initiative, expectations, and benefits, and any concerns is fundamental to the success of your new hires and your existing team.

“Cargill needs a talent pool as broad as possible to succeed in a competitive global environment. Therefore, we are building our awareness and understanding of the contributions, experiences, and skills that employees with disabilities bring to our company.”

~Greg Page
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Cargill

as quoted in “Leading Practices in Disability Inclusion,” U.S. Business Leadership Network, 2012
http://usbln.org/pdf-docs/Leading_Practices_on_Disability_Inclusion.pdf

- Determine the need for job coaches—agency professionals to support the new hires during the initial transition. Job coaches are arranged by your SPOC, and have the expertise and experience to help employees adjust to the new work environment and to assist with a wide range of work readiness needs. If there is a clear need for job coaches, they must be brought up to speed on the requirements of the positions they will support.
- Your SPOC and/or HR may develop classes/guidance on commonly accepted do’s and don’ts for interviewing PwD (also see Section 7).
- Determining what work site accommodations are necessary depends upon an employee’s particular type of disability. Your SPOC can work with appropriate agencies in advance of hiring based on the type of disability expected, and will follow through to ensure the individual hired has the necessary accommodations to perform the job well.
- Be sure to involve employee representatives from the earliest planning stages and make sure that legal requirements are understood.

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Interview and Hire

Will my existing interview and hiring processes be sufficient?

Overview

Consider your existing interviewing and hiring processes or protocols as the foundation or base, recognizing that they may need to be adapted somewhat to reasonably accommodate PwD candidates. Your agency team members will identify and pre-screen potential candidates. The employer conducts the interviews and makes the hiring decisions.

Key Points

- Establish interview and hiring target dates as part of your overall plan (during Phase 4), including milestone dates for launching the process and a target for bringing the candidate on board.
- If you require candidates to apply online and provide employer references, etc., it is recommended that you indicate how an individual with a disability can request an accommodation to complete the employment application and/or to search for a job.
- The SPOC and the agency supporting a particular candidate may assist your HR staff in developing and conducting an effective interview for each candidate.
- A “getting to know you” interview can be invaluable so that the employer gains a firsthand sense of how best to transition each prospective employee.
- Employers considering an apprentice program or some equivalent intake program may opt to hire on a temporary basis.

The employer conducts the interviews and makes all hiring decisions.

“From a strategic perspective, a diverse workforce that includes persons with disabilities is a major priority for HCSC. To help as many people as possible find quality, affordable health care, we must reach out to a more diverse population than ever before. That requires insights and strategies that can come only from a workforce that is equally diverse.”

~Patricia Hemingway Hall
President and Chief Executive Officer
Health Care Service Corporation

as quoted in “Leading Practices in Disability Inclusion,” U.S. Business Leadership Network, 2012

- A third-party employer is a possibility. Options could include a temporary employment agency, a subsidiary of your company, or even a partner firm. This “delegated” approach may be the way to make expanded PwD hiring work for your firm.
- On-boarding supports are available through PA OVR at no cost including information about tax incentives, technical assistance for job accommodations, and front line supervisor training on disability etiquette.

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Train and Evaluate

How can a well-structured training and evaluation process lead to top performance?

Overview

The employer determines the scope of training that will be provided based on the quality and speed of job performance expected from the position once training has ended. Much of the PwD's training will be identical to the training received by all your new employees.

Employers identify any additional training or variations that may be needed, and draw upon the resources of the SPOC/core team to help develop that training. As mentioned in Section 6, your SPOC can help to secure job coaches who help the employee with soft skills and various work force readiness needs.

Once the PwD employee is on board, the employer works with the SPOC and the employee to customize the training as needed to match the individual's specific abilities.

Your SPOC can help you be appropriately flexible without lowering your standards.

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“At Lowe’s, inclusion means creating a place where everyone has the opportunity to grow and succeed.”

~Stephen Szilagy
Senior Vice President
Lowe’s

as quoted in “Leading Practices in Disability Inclusion,” U.S. Business Leadership Network, 2012

Key Points

- Draw upon the resources of the SPOC and appropriate members of the core team to refine the employer training approach, based on each candidate, and also provide support to develop/deliver the training, if needed.
- Your SPOC will research funding mechanisms to support individual needs.
- The SPOC will also identify educational and other resources that any individual may need and arrange for those to be engaged.
- Your SPOC can help you be appropriately flexible without lowering your standards.

Phase

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Build on Your Successes

How can this initiative add value to our bottom line and maintain a continuous pipeline of talent into our business?

Overview

This final phase supports a process of ongoing learning and continuous improvement. Good feedback is important for any company project or initiative. Your plan for PwD hiring should identify what kind of feedback you will need in order to evaluate and enhance your efforts. Document what works and be receptive to ideas for improvement.

To keep your organization motivated and interested, success stories should be celebrated, including those who contributed to the program's success and a candidate's success.

Key Points

- Your plan should include a timeline for conducting periodic assessments of your PwD employment initiative.
- Supervisors and others engaged with your PwD employees should be provided with a simple way to communicate progress, benefits, and to identify any remaining challenges to address.
- Sharing this information among the team will help to reinforce effective practices.
- The feedback plan may also include benchmarking with other companies—this may be a general benchmarking in terms of program effectiveness or be specific to the type of work or other elements that are of greatest interest and importance to you. The SPOC should help you to find an appropriate employer to benchmark against.

Publicize your success stories internally and generously share your lessons learned with other organizations.

“At Ernst & Young, we pride ourselves on attracting, developing, and retaining the best people; I’m proud of the progress we’ve made at increasing awareness, educating our people, and working to make sure we support those with differing abilities in the most effective ways.”

~Steve Howe
Americas Managing Partner
Ernst & Young

as quoted in “Leading Practices in Disability Inclusion,” U.S. Business Leadership Network, 2012

- The program should be part of all internal communications, from inception to it becoming accepted and routine. Success stories from other organizations, such as Walgreens, are inspiring. As your organization develops its own success stories, publicize them internally to maintain employee support and motivation.
- Determine if and when to communicate externally. It is wise to wait until your program is a solid success—perhaps a year or more—before discussing it publicly.
- Once you can confidently point to a successful ongoing initiative, generously share your lessons learned with other organizations who may be considering implementing their own program.

Resources / For Your Consideration

- As a corporate citizen, consider providing support for other businesses in replicating your success through associations, professional organizations, and business groups such as the Pennsylvania Business Leadership Network and your Chamber of Commerce.

http://www.rehabnetwork.org/investing_in_america/default.htm

<http://whatcanyoudocampaign.org/>

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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:

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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