IVRS partners with business and industry across Iowa to help them with their diversity and inclusion goals. We are excited to learn about the needs of our business partners and help them find amazing talent in our pool of job seekers with disabilities. IVRS thanks The Harkin Institute for the collaboration and use of the Toolkit.

There are many benefits to working with people that have disabilities that we had not anticipated. We have increased understanding regarding safety awareness and practices, our team experiences a higher sense of responsibility and accountability and it has been a wonderful growth opportunity for all of us at Four Mounds. We are all better as a result.

Rebecca Bodish, Program Manager

CPM partners with IVRS for one simple reason: It makes business sense. IVRS helps navigate the process of identifying talented individuals who fit your organization, and determines tools and support to help them succeed. A successful business partnership with IVRS has helped us identify talented team members, improve our training programs, and help our community. I strongly encourage any business professional looking for great talent in a tight labor market to partner and innovate with ICRS. One more reason: It also happens to be the right thing to do!

Kyle Roed, VP Human Resources

Katun is very satisfied with the services of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program of Davenport, Iowa. Their staff has provided great determination to facilitate and meet our business needs, while showing great compassion regarding the needs of their individual clients. For example, we had a successful match that resulted in Katun hiring one of their clients; that person has already been promoted twice within our facility due to their outstanding performance, attitude and productivity. They started with us as a person with a disability; now, due to the program, they don’t consider themselves as having a disability at all. We are pleased to be part of such a life-changing program and emphatically support and endorse the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

Sandra Meyers, HR Manager

Your team is amazing. We are so fortunate to have found you and the job candidates.

Angie Gallus, Owner
Iowa Summit on Disability Employment
BUSINESS TOOLKIT

The Harkin Institute | Drake University
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## Glossary 32
Greetings and welcome to the 2021 Iowa Summit on Disability Employment.

As society’s attitudes on disability have changed over time, efforts to be more inclusive of people with disabilities have grown significantly. Since its creation, The Harkin Institute for Public Policy & Citizen Engagement has worked extensively to collaborate with global leaders in business, government and advocacy to foster inclusive and integrated work environments for people with disabilities.

The Iowa Summit on Disability Employment is meant to serve as a catalyst for Iowa’s leaders to rethink the workforce and consider the largely untapped labor pool of people with disabilities that are excited to work and gain a sense of independence. As I stated in my outgoing speech from the United States Senate, “The unemployment rate among adult Americans with disabilities who want to work and can work is over 60 percent.” Unfortunately, it remains largely unchanged in the nearly seven years since that speech and the more than 30 years since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). We can and must change that.

Business leaders at home and abroad have recognized the great opportunities that including people with disabilities can have in the workplace and on their bottom line. For many of the world’s largest and most successful companies, increases in labor participation of people with disabilities have directly contributed to greater productivity and increases in business from people who feel included in the company’s image. The COVID-19 pandemic has also created a rare opportunity to redefine what the workplace can and should look like, and innovative technologies have allowed places of employment to be more inclusive than ever before.

I am pleased that leaders of this state are coming together to discuss solutions to the workforce challenges that so many face. As our global economy rapidly changes, it is incumbent on us as Iowa’s leaders to face the challenges head-on and be bold in our approach. I hope that this toolkit will be helpful in your pursuits of extending employment opportunities to people with disabilities in our state. The disability community has always been one of collaboration and we are grateful our fellow organizations also working to promote competitive, integrated employment for persons with disabilities. We were able to put this toolkit together with help from our Iowa Summit planning committee and materials gathered by Accenture and the David C. Onley Initiative for Employment and Enterprise Development, among others organizations and advocates.

Together, we can work to improve the lives of thousands of Iowans and grow our economy in an inclusive, equitable way. Thank you again for participating in this summit.

Senator Tom Harkin (retired)
Business Benefits

Iowa’s Untapped Potential
In March 2019, the labor force participation of people with disabilities was 21.5% compared to 68.5% percent for people without disabilities. Additionally, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities was 7.9%, which is about twice the unemployment rate (3.8%) of those without disabilities.¹ This untapped labor pool provides a solution to Iowa’s growing labor shortage problem. In Iowa, an estimated 100,000 individuals with disabilities are not currently employed but have the potential and interest to work.² There are 15.1 million people of working age living with disabilities in the U.S., so if companies embrace disability inclusion, they will gain access to more than 10.7 million possible employees.

Reasons to Employ People with Disabilities

- **Job Retention:** Turnover rate for people with developmental disabilities is 8% compared with an overall rate of 45% in the general population
- **Improved Productivity:** Employees with disabilities have had equal to or greater productivity compared to non-disabled coworkers
- **Positive Company Brand Image:** Consumers are more likely to purchase goods and services from businesses that take steps to hire people with disabilities
- **Expand Market Share:** Employees with disabilities can relate better to customers with disabilities. The discretionary income for working-age persons with disabilities is $490 billion³
- **Employee Morale:** Employing people with disabilities increases the morale and productivity of every employee

Return on Investment

Workplaces that hire individuals with disabilities have the competitive advantage. Inclusive hiring isn’t only the right thing to do, it is also good for business.

Companies that exceed in providing disability employment and initiatives reported

- 28% Higher revenue
- 30% Higher economic profit margins
- 2X Net income

*Disability Inclusion Champions refer to a group of 45 companies in this study who excelled in their leadership in areas specific to disability employment and inclusion.

All results are significant at 1 percent. Test was based on panel data regression model to account for temporal and industry variation.

Source: Getting to Equal 2018: The Disability Inclusion Advantage, Accenture (see their Appendix for more detail on methodology)
Tax Incentives & Credits
Employers that hire individuals with disabilities can lessen their labor costs through several workforce and economic development programs. Employment-based tax credits can save money by cutting federal or state tax liability.

Iowa Income Tax Benefit for Small Business
Benefit for hiring persons with disabilities
• Iowa income tax deduction for 65% of the wages paid in the first 12 months of employment
• Maximum deduction of $20,000 per employee

Work Opportunity Tax Credits
Federal tax credit that benefits businesses that hire and retain workers with various barriers to employment
• Businesses that hire workers who have received Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits or are referred by Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services
• Reimburses a percentage of a worker’s wages for up to two years between $2,400 and $9,600

Architectural/Transportation Tax Deduction
Federal tax deduction available for expenses incurred to remove physical, structural and transportation barriers for people with disabilities
• Available to all businesses
• Max deduction of $15,000

Small Business Tax Credit
Federal tax credit available to small businesses for making their businesses accessible to people with disabilities
• Covers various expenses like sign language interpreters, adaptive equipment, printed material in alternative formats and other similar services
Understanding Disability

One in five Americans has some form of disability, and 23% of Iowans live with some type of disability.

**Americans with Disability Act (ADA) defines an individual with a disability as:**

1. A person who has a physical or mental health impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. These major life activities may include:
   - Seeing
   - Hearing
   - Walking
   - Caring for Oneself
   - Learning/Thinking
   - Communicating
2. A person who has a history or record of such impairment; or
3. A person who is perceived by as having such an impairment

Disabilities are often thought of as only visible but many people also have disabilities that you can’t see. Disabilities that aren’t visible include things like multiple sclerosis, post-traumatic stress disorder, cancer, diabetes, depression, and many others.

**Disability is not a static or linear concept. It can be:**

- Mild, moderate or severe
- Permanent, long term, short term or episodic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability Type</th>
<th>Functional Impact</th>
<th>Examples of Diagnoses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical and Mobility</td>
<td>Can affect a person's motor skills and may require the use of a mobility aid</td>
<td>• Cerebral Palsy</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Epilepsy</td>
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<td>• Narcolepsy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sensory</td>
<td>Can affect a person's sense: vision, hearing, smell, touch or taste</td>
<td>• Deafness</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Blindness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Chemical Sensitivities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual and Developmental</td>
<td>Can affect a person's ability to learn and use information, creating limitations in reasoning, learning and problem-solving, as well as social and practical skill-building abilities known as adaptive behaviors</td>
<td>• Autism Spectrum Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Down Syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Can affect the way a person takes in, stores or uses information, and can affect a person's oral and written language skills, reading skills, mathematics skills, organization and social skills</td>
<td>• Dyslexia</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Dysgraphia</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Auditory Processing Disorder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>Can affect a person's mental alertness, concentration, anxiety levels and ability to organize</td>
<td>• Anxiety Disorders</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Depression</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Post-traumatic Stress Disorder</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Obsessive Compulsive Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Bipolar Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Schizophrenia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Source: David C. Onley Initiative for Employment & Enterprise Development Employers Guide to Hiring and Working with Professionals with Disabilities
Myths and Facts About Disabilities

Myth: Individuals with disabilities do not have the right skills for businesses
Facts: Employees with disabilities have strengths, traits and qualities that make them valuable additions to the workforce, including perseverance, problem solving, goal setting and determination. Over 15% of young adults with a disability have a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Myth: Supports in the workplace would be too costly
Facts: According to the national center on workforce and disability, most employees – at least 73% - do not require any type of accommodation. Of the ones that do, 51% cost less than $500, additionally many accommodations have been found to benefit other employees without disabilities.

Myth: Hiring people who have disabilities increases workers’ compensation insurance rates
Facts: Insurance rates are based solely on the relative hazards of the business and the organization’s accident experience, not on whether workers have disabilities.

Myth: There is nothing I can do if an individual with disabilities is not the right fit or doesn’t work out in my organization
Facts: Employers are not expected or encouraged to go easy on workers with disabilities. They should meet the same performance expectation and be subject to the same disciplinary actions as any other employee. If they are not doing the job or are falling short of the workplace’s criteria, they should be coached, counseled, disciplined and, if necessary, terminated based upon established policies.
Language

You can help build a strong, more inclusive team by learning how to interact knowledgeably and respectfully with employees with disabilities. It is important to dispel the negative attitudes and stereotypes by using appropriate language when speaking with and writing about people with disabilities.

- Identify the person first not the disabilities by using “Person First” language such as a person with a disability and a person who is blind
- If a person’s disability isn’t relevant to the conversation, there is no need to mention the disability at all
- Do not use outdated or offensive language like crippled, psycho, afflicted
- Avoid language that implies negative stereotypes
- Do not portray people with disabilities as inspirational only because of their disability

Person first language respects the individuality and independence of people with disabilities. It reaffirms that people with disabilities are not defined by their disability and that they are first and foremost people by putting their personhood before their disability.

Employers should always use person first language in communications and avoid any language that implies people with disabilities have limitations, deserve pity or that disability is bad or negative.

Don’t say:
1. Disabled person or handicapped person
2. Wheelchair-bound or confined to a wheelchair
3. A person suffering from blindness
4. A normal or healthy person

Say:
1. A person with a disability or people with disabilities
2. A person who uses a wheelchair
3. A person with vision impairment
4. A person without disabilities or an able-bodied person

Everyone has their own preference on how they prefer to identify, and an individual should never be corrected if they choose to use identity-first language to talk about their own disability. Person first language is always best practice if you don’t know the person’s preference. When specifically writing about an individual, you should ask their preference.
Etiquette

Disability etiquette refers to respectful communication and interaction with people who have disabilities.

1. **Show respect** – treat people with disabilities as you would anyone else
2. **Be courteous** – respect people’s personal space and assistive devices
3. **Don’t assume** – every person, and every disability, is different
4. **Ask first** – if a person appears to need assistance, ask before helping

We must be mindful and respectful in our actions when interacting with people with disabilities. Here are some general suggestions you can follow:

- People with disabilities are human, do not talk down to them literally or figuratively
- Speak directly to a person with a disability, even when an interpreter or support person accompanies them
- Adults with disabilities are adults and deserve to be treated and spoken to as adults
- Listen attentively when talking with someone who has difficulty speaking
- Remember that not all disabilities are apparent
- Your interactions will not always go as planned. If you make a mistake, apologize and take the opportunity to learn about that person’s preferences or needs

**Resources for Disability Etiquette**

- Job Accommodation Network - Disability Etiquette [Website Link](#)
- Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy - Communicating with and About People with Disabilities [Website Link](#)
- Job Accommodation Network - Disability Awareness Training [Website Link](#)
- National Center on Disability and Journalism – Disability Language Style Guide [Website Link](#)
- Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services – Business Services [Website Link](#)

Local community organizations can provide disability etiquette training and guidance for your company. Refer to the resources section for contact information.
**Mental Health**

Approximately one in four adults experience a mental health condition. The National Alliance on Mental Illness defines a mental health condition as: A mental condition is one that disrupts a person’s thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning.

- **Bipolar Disorder**: Causes extreme shifts in mood, energy, and functioning. It is a chronic and life-long condition with recurring episodes of mania and depression that can last from days to months.

- **Major Depression**: Persistent and significant interference with an individuals’ thoughts, behavior, mood, activity and physical health.

- **Borderline Personality Disorder**: Mental illness characterized by pervasive instability in moods, interpersonal relationships, self image and behavior. It is a disorder of emotional dysregulation

- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**: Anxiety disorder that can occur after someone experiences a traumatic event that caused intense fear, helplessness or horror. People with PTSD continually re-experience the traumatic event.

- **Schizophrenia**: Interferes with a person’s ability to think clearly, to distinguish reality from fantasy and to manage emotions, makes decisions and relate to others

Many mental health conditions are misunderstood by the public and employers. The stigma and negative stereotypes of mental health conditions make it difficult for individuals with those conditions to feel comfortable enough at work to seek accommodations. It is important for businesses to develop mental health-friendly workplaces that are welcoming and supportive to its employees who may be facing mental health issues.

Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN) provides an easy-to-follow framework for a fostering mental health-friendly workplace through the ‘4 A’s’: Awareness, Accommodations, Assistance and Access.

- **Awareness- Build Awareness and a Supportive Culture**
  Build awareness and a supportive culture by conducting mental health training, anti-stigma campaigns, and informing all employees of available resources.

- **Accommodations- Provide Accommodations to Employees**
  Make it simple for employees to request and use reasonable accommodations and other workplace supports, such as adjustments or modifications that enable people with disabilities to perform the essential functions of a job efficiently and productively.

- **Assistance- Offer Employee Assistance**
  Advertise the services available to assist employees, such as an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), stress-management training, or other supports. In addition to increased employee productivity, the benefits of EAPs include reduced medical costs, turnovers, and absences.
• **Access- Ensure Access to Treatment**
  Ensure access to mental health services by assessing the specific mental-health benefits covered by your health insurance programs, including treatment for substance use disorders.

Not all people with mental health conditions will need accommodations to perform their jobs and many others may only need a few accommodations.

• **Flexible Workplace:** Telecommuting and/or working from home

• **Scheduling:** Part-time work hours, job sharing, adjustments in the start or end of work hours, compensation time and/or “make up” of missed time

• **Leave:** Sick leave for reasons related to mental health, flexible use of vacation time, additional unpaid or administrative leave for treatment or recovery, leaves of absence for therapy or other related appointments

### Resources about Mental Health in the Workplace

- Job Accommodation Network - Mental Health Conditions [Website Link](#)
- ADA National Network - Mental Health in the Workplace and the ADA [Website Link](#)
- U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy - Accommodations for Employees with Psychiatric Disabilities [Website Link](#)
- Boston University’s Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation - Collection of Resources for Employers [Website Link](#)

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### Disability Awareness Trainings and Resources

- Job Accommodation Network training module on how to increase your comfort, confidence, and competence through disability awareness. [Website Link](#)

- Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion video that explores common misconceptions about people with disabilities and teaching effective communications techniques to ensure that the focus is on what people with disabilities CAN do, rather than their disability. [Website Link](#)

- List of organizations that provide disability awareness and disability etiquette trainings. [Website Link](#)

- SHRM Foundation’s Employing Abilities @ Work initiative that provides education and resources for HR professionals to build inclusive workplace. [Website Link](#)
Inclusive Workplace Practices

Becoming an inclusive workplace does not have to mean implementing big changes. Moving towards a more inclusive and accessible workplace is beneficial for all employees. The following sections outline different strategies for recruiting, interviewing, onboarding, promoting, retaining, and providing reasonable accommodations to individuals with disabilities.

Competitive integrated employment is when a person with a disability is:
- Paid the same wage as employees without disabilities
- Receives the same benefits
- Works along side employees without disabilities
- Has the same advancement opportunities as employees without disabilities doing the same or similar work

Supported employment assists individuals with disabilities in both obtaining and maintaining competitive integrated employment
- Job Developers (Job Placement Specialist, Employment Consultant, Employment Specialist) work with local business to find and develop potential employment opportunities
- Job Coaches support the business and the new employee which may include providing one-on-one training to individuals with disabilities while on the job which can remain or phase out over time
Recruiting

Community Connections and Partnerships
Successful recruitment efforts can be built through collaboration with community partners that have connections to qualified candidates. Community providers and state agencies can help businesses fill job vacancies with qualified individuals and ensure individuals are successful with on going supports.

- **Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services**: State agency that facilitate a wide range of services for youth and adults with disabilities that help prepare them with skills to meet the workplace needs of business.
- **Iowa Department of the Blind**: State agency that helps educate, train and empower blind of low vision individuals, including providing integrated employment services.
- **Community Providers**: Local organizations funded by both Medicaid and private pay that provide employment services like job development and job coaching to all Iowans with disabilities.
- **Employment Networks**: Public and private organizations that are authorized by the Social Security Administration’s Ticket to Work Program to provide free employment support services to Social Security disability beneficiaries ages 18 to 64.
- **Iowa Works**: State and Federally funded American Job Center that provides free employment assistance services to job seekers.

See page 24 for a list of Community Providers

Apprenticeships

Registered Apprenticeships allow business to recruit, train and retain workers to build a workforce that meets the need of that business. The Future Ready Iowa initiative, through Earn and Learn Iowa provides grants, resources and technical assistance to Iowa companies developing a Registered Apprenticeship program.

Registered Apprenticeship for High School Students
The Future Ready Iowa initiative is encouraging business to partner with local school districts to create Registered Apprenticeship programs for high school students. From manufacturing to health care, high school pre-apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeships can work for various industries.

- Vermeer Corporation partnered with Pella High School and the Career Academy of Pella to develop a welding Registered Apprenticeship for students and created the High School Registered Apprenticeship Playbook.
Resources for Registered Apprenticeship Programs and Diversity Inclusion

- U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy – Apprenticeships www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/apprenticeship
- U.S. Department of Labor – Apprenticeship www.apprenticeship.gov

Internships

Internship programs specifically for people with disabilities are an effective and cost efficient recruitment strategy. Businesses that have internship programs for people with disabilities were 4.5 times more likely to hire a person with a disability than those who do not. Internships provide individuals with opportunities to get their foot in the door, explore various industries, gain new skills, apply knowledge to real-world situations and learn about their own strengths and weaknesses and build a network.

Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH Transition-to-Work Program is a unique, business-led, one-year employment preparation program that takes place entirely at the workplace. Unity Point began the first Project SEARCH site in Iowa in 2011 at Methodist Hospital and has grown throughout Iowa including Mercy One.

Resources for Disability Inclusive Internship Programs

- U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy - Inclusive Internship Programs Website Link
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network - Internships Website Link
Interviewing

Job interviews play a critical role in the hiring process, allowing employers the opportunity to find the individual who possess the best mix of knowledge, skills and abilities for the position.

Four Simple Steps for Accessible Interviews with Candidates with Disabilities:

1. Focus on the candidate’s ability to perform the job, not the disability
2. Follow the ADA by not asking any questions about the disability
3. Train interviewers on disability awareness
4. Provide reasonable accommodations

Resources for Accessible and Inclusive Interviews

- U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy - Focus on the Ability: Interviewing Applicants with Disabilities [Website Link](#)
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network - Accessible and Authentic Interviews for Candidates with Disabilities [Website Link](#)
- Work Without Limits - Quick Tips: Interviewing People with Disabilities [Website Link](#)

Onboarding

Employee on-boarding programs are designed to ensure that new employees have the resources necessary to succeed in their new workplace. Ensure every aspect of onboarding is accessible. This is the first and foremost best practice for creating an onboarding program that’s inclusive and positive for everyone.

- If you worked with a community organization to find the new employee, contact them to work through the onboarding process together
- Provide all orientation information in a suitable format. This may mean written, audio, large text or Braille materials or simpler language with images for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities
- Consider identifying a support person, mentor or go-to person that will be the first point of contact for any work-related questions
- Ensure any accommodations that were previous discussed and agreed upon are implemented in a timely manner
- Include an accessibility statement with the job offer
Sample Reasonable Accommodation and EO Statement
[Employer] is an affirmative action and equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, veteran status, or genetic information. [Employer] is committed to providing access, equal opportunity and reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities in employment, its services, programs, and activities. To request reasonable accommodation, contact [include name and/or department, telephone, and e-mail address].

Resources for Employee Onboarding
- Job Accommodation Network - Onboarding [Document Link]
- Accessible Employers - Orientation and Onboarding Checklist [Website Link]

Retention & Promotion
After successfully recruiting, interviewing and onboarding an employee, businesses should have strategies in place to retain them and provide them equal opportunity to advance. Reducing the risk of staff turnover benefits the whole business. Workplace culture that embraces diversity and fosters inclusion can boost employee productivity and generate revenue. Some suggestions for increasing retention include:

- Ensure each employee understands the requirements of their job
- Make performance standards clear and hold employees to these standards
- Provide regular feedback about their performance
- Arrange regular meeting times for ongoing evaluation
- Adjust workplace accommodations and communication style when required
- Provide training to all employees on disability awareness

Career Development
Career development programs – such as conferences, trainings, tuition assistance, and rotational assignments - are proven employee retention strategies. Below are some best practices to ensure employees with disabilities have equal access to such programs:

- Hold supervisors accountable for implementing management practices that support diversity
- Ensure all online professional development classes and materials are fully accessible
- Reserve a portion of employee training funds to provide disability related accommodations for training opportunities
- Offer specialized leadership programs for employees with disabilities similar to existing leadership programs for other traditionally underrepresented groups
- Ensure workplace events are accessible to employees with disabilities
- Adopting a promotion policy that includes disability among the positive selection factors
Workplace Mentoring

Workplace mentoring programs are tools businesses can use to address the needs of their increasingly diverse workforce. These programs help increase recruitment and retention while also improving organizational culture. Mentoring traditionally pairs employees with a more established coworker to help advise and train them and share knowledge and skills.

Organizational benefits of mentoring include:
- Creation of a welcoming and inclusive workplace culture
- Reduced turnover
- Transfer of organizational knowledge
- Enhanced collaboration to drive innovation and problem solving

Employee Resource Groups

Employee Networks, Affinity Groups or Employee Resource Groups are internal organizational structures that are found in 90% of Fortune 500 companies and are gaining support throughout the business community. These groups offer employees an opportunity to network, address common issues and concerns and receive support from those who share similar backgrounds, interests, or experiences – including disabilities.

Employee Resource Groups are beneficial for a variety of reasons, including the following:
- Promote self-disclosure by people with disabilities
- Assist in recruitment and retention of employees with disabilities
- Boosts productivity by increasing job satisfaction and commitment
- Promotes and educates staff on disability-related issues
- Help companies improve their products and reach new customers
- Support important projects and initiatives

Resources for Employee Resource Groups

- Employee Assistance and Resource Network – Employee Resource Groups Toolkit Website Link
- Employee Assistance and Resource Network and the Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology - Employee Resource Groups Fact Sheet Website Link
- Disability: IN - Employee Resource Group/Business Resource Group Resources Website Link
Reasonable Accommodations

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires an employer with 15 or more employees to provide reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities, unless it would cause undue hardship.

A reasonable accommodation is any change in the work environment or in the way things are usually done that enables an individual with a disability to enjoy equal employment opportunities. Reasonable accommodations include:

- Changes to the job application process
- Changes to the work environment or the way the job is done
- Any changes that enable the employee to enjoy equal access to the benefits and privileges of the job

Accommodations vary depending upon the job and the needs of the employee. Not all individuals with disabilities will require the same accommodation or any accommodation.

Common Reasonable Accommodations

- Adjusting or modifying tests and training materials
- Job coaches
- Modifying or acquiring equipment or devices
- Modifying work schedules
- Reorganization of job duties or reassignment

Resources and Information on Reasonable Accommodations

- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission - Small Employers and Reasonable Accommodation [Website Link]
- Job Accommodation Network - Employers’ Practical Guide to Reasonable Accommodation Under the Americans With Disabilities Act [Website Link]
- Job Accommodation Network – Workplace Accommodation Toolkit [Website Link]
- ADA National Network - Reasonable Accommodations in the Workplace [Website Link]
- Great Plains ADA Center – Reasonable Accommodations [Website Link]

For more information on appropriate accommodation for specific disabilities or work settings:

- Job Accommodation Network’s Searchable Online Accommodation Resource to explore accommodation options by work settings or limitation [Website Link]
- Job Accommodation Network’s A to Z of Disabilities & Accommodations to find accommodation ideas by disability [Website Link]
Policies and Procedures
The Job Accommodation Network’s No. 1 suggestion for businesses is to develop written policies and procedures around reasonable accommodations. Written policies and procedures can help make sure all employees are aware of the policies and procedures, help ensure consistency when processing accommodation requests and help document employer’s effects to provide effective accommodations.

Job Accommodation Network’s tips for developing written policies and procedures
1. Try to keep them flexible and simple
2. Be sure to appoint a responsible person or persons for implementing and overseeing accommodation policies and procedures
3. Inform everyone and provide training for executives, managers and other staff about reasonable accommodation resources like the Job Accommodation Network’s confidential and free advice and assistance

Resources and Examples of Reasonable Accommodation Policies and Procedures
- Job Accommodation Network - Sample Example Accommodation Policies, Processes, Forms, and Training [Website Link](#)
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission - Practical Advice Drafting and Implementing Reasonable Accommodation Procedures [Website Link](#)
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission – Establishing Procedures to Facilitate the Provision of Reasonable Accommodation [Website Link](#)

Centralized Accommodation Programs
While companies are required by law to provide reasonable accommodations, easy access to accommodations for both employees and employers can demonstrate a companies’ commitment to inclusion.

A centralized accommodation program can:
- **Streamline a company's accommodation process** by consolidating subject matter expertise necessary to assess, evaluate, and implement effective and meaningful accommodations
- **Ensure funding streams for some or all accommodations** by consolidate funding streams into one single office or department

Resources for Centralized Accommodation Programs
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion - Checklist Centralized Accommodation Programs [Website Link](#)
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion - Increasing Disability Inclusion: Centralized Accommodation Programs as a Best Practice [Website Link](#)
Accommodation Requests
According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, an employee may use “plain English” and need not mention the ADA or use the phrase “reasonable accommodation” when requesting an accommodation. Therefore, any time an employee indicates that they are having a problem and the problem is related to a medical condition or disability, the employer should consider whether the employee is making a request for accommodation under the ADA.

• Example A: An employee tells her supervisor, “I’m having trouble getting to work at my scheduled starting time because of medical treatments I’m undergoing.” This IS a request for a reasonable accommodation.
• Example B: A new employee, who uses a wheelchair, informs the employer that her wheelchair cannot fit under the desk in her office. This IS a request for a reasonable accommodation.

Interactive Accommodation Process
When a specific accommodation is not obvious, it is best to determine the appropriate accommodation through a flexible, interactive process.

Step 1. Recognizing an Accommodation Request
Any time an employee indicates that they are having a problem and the problem is related to a medical condition, the employer should consider whether the employee is making a request for accommodation under the ADA.

• Act quickly – Once an accommodation request is identified, the employer should respond immediately
• Assign responsibility – Assign at least one person who is responsible for making sure an accommodation request is processed

Step 2. Gathering Information and Exploring Accommodation Options
The employer needs to know what limitations are interfering with job performance and what specific work tasks are at issue. The employer should ask the employee for suggestions and if needed, the employee can get ideas from their medical provider.

Step 3. Choosing and Implementing an Accommodation
If there is more than one option, the employer should consider the preference of the employee. Once an accommodation has been chosen, it is time to implement the accommodation which is a very important step to the success of the accommodation.

• Consider a trial period
• Communicate – When necessary inform essential personnel about the accommodation

Step 4. Monitoring the Accommodation
Because changes occur, employers may need to periodically check on the effectiveness of the accommodation. Employees receiving accommodations should let employers know if there are changes or problems.

• Maintain the accommodation – Employers need to make sure the equipment is properly maintained
• Encourage ongoing communication
Americans with Disabilities Act

Since 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has sought to promote the rights of people with disabilities to participate equally in all areas of community life.

Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act - Employment

- Helps people with disabilities access the same employment opportunities and benefits available to people without disabilities
- Applies to employers with 15 or more employees
- Requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified applicants and employees
- Regulated and enforced by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Resources and Additional Information about the ADA

- U.S. Department of Justice – A Guide to Disability Rights Law Website Link
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission – ADA Primer for Small Business Website Link
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission – Disability Discrimination Website Link
- Job Accommodation Network – ADA Library Website Link

Employers’ Responsibilities

Employers with 15 or more employees are covered by the ADA and have the following requirements:

- Employers must not deny qualified employers with disabilities equal opportunities in the hiring process, compensation, benefits, terms and privileges of employment, training, and advancement.
- Employers must provide reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities during both the hiring process and employment.
- Employers must keep applicants and employee’s medical information confidential and stored in a separate secured file.
- Employers cannot retaliate against an applicant or employee for asserting their rights under nondiscrimination laws.
The ADA: Myths and Facts

**Myth:** The ADA requires small business to spend money on accommodations that they cannot afford.

**Fact:** An employer does not have to provide a reasonable accommodation that would cause an “undue hardship” like a significant expense when considered in light of factors such as a business’s size and financial resources. Additionally, two-thirds of accommodations cost less than $500 with many costing nothing at all.

**Myth:** The ADA forces employers to hire unqualified individuals with disabilities.

**Fact:** Applicants who are unqualified for a job cannot claim discrimination under the ADA. Under the ADA, to be protected from discrimination in hiring, an individual with a disability must be qualified, which means he or she must meet all requirements for a job and be able to perform its essential functions with or without reasonable accommodations.

**Myth:** When there are several qualified applicants for a job and one has a disability, the ADA requires the employer to hire that person.

**Fact:** An employer is always free to hire the applicant of its choosing as long as the decisions is not based on disability.

**Myth:** The ADA gives job applicants with disabilities advantages over job applicants without disabilities.

**Fact:** The ADA does not give hiring preference to persons with disabilities.

**Myth:** The ADA is frequently misused by people with vague complaints or diagnoses.

**Fact:** If an individual files a complaint of discriminatory treatment, denial of accommodation or harassment under the ADA and does not have a condition that meets its definition of disability, the complaint is dismissed.

**Myth:** Under the ADA, an employer cannot fire an employee who has a disability.

**Fact:** Employers can fire workers with disabilities under three conditions:

1. The termination is unrelated to the disability or
2. The employee does not meet legitimate requirements for the job, such as performance or production standards, with or without a reasonable accommodation or
3. Because of the employee’s disability, he or she poses a direct threat to health or safety in the workplace
## Resources

### Disability-Employment Community Agencies

#### Northwest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
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<tr>
<td>Exceptional Opportunities</td>
<td>Algona</td>
<td>515-924-3251</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trivium Life Services</td>
<td>Cherokee</td>
<td>712-225-4531</td>
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<tr>
<td>Horizons Unlimited of Palo Alto County</td>
<td>Emmetsburg</td>
<td>712-852-2211</td>
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<td>Life Skills Training Center</td>
<td>Le Mars</td>
<td>712-546-9554</td>
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<td>Hope Haven</td>
<td>Rock Valley</td>
<td>712-476-2737</td>
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<td>Howard Center</td>
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<td>Village Northwest Unlimited</td>
<td>Sheldon</td>
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<td>Concerned</td>
<td>Harlan</td>
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<td>Country View Estates</td>
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<td>563-652-5252 ext 4049</td>
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<tr>
<td>Innovative Industries</td>
<td>Creston</td>
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<td>Oskaloosa – Boone, Madison, Mahaska, Story &amp; Warren Counties</td>
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<td>Optimae LifeServices of Wapello County</td>
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<td>The Spectrum Network</td>
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<td>Imagine the Possibilities Northeastern Region</td>
<td>Guttenberg – Clayton &amp; Delaware Counties</td>
<td>563-231-4500 ext 4013</td>
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<td>Fayette</td>
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<td>Independence</td>
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<td>To The Rescue</td>
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<td>319-550-1890</td>
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<td>Access 2 Independence</td>
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<td>Reach for Your Potential</td>
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<td>Area Residential Care</td>
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<td>Van Buren Job Opportunities</td>
<td>Keosauqua</td>
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State Agencies

Iowa Department for the Blind
Iowa Department for the Blind helps educate, train, and empower blind and low vision individuals to pursue lifelong goals and assists them in making the right choices for their unique circumstances including vocational skills development.
Website Link

Iowa Office of Deaf Services
The Office of Deaf Services is a part of the Iowa Department of Human Rights (DHR). DHR’s mission is to ensure basic rights, freedoms, and opportunities for all by empowering underrepresented Iowans and eliminating economic, social, and cultural barriers. The Office of Deaf Services provides a key link to services that help deaf and hard of hearing individuals succeed, including health, education, employment and justice.
Website Link

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services
The mission of Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services is to work for and with individuals who have disabilities to achieve their employment, independence and economic goals. Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Service also provides services to businesses. These no-cost services include employee retention, consultation services, ADA guidance and other customized services. An Iowa VR Business Specialists can review a business’s needs, offer qualified candidates and develop a training plan before the new employee begins employment.
Website Link

Area Office Contact List:

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<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Address</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ames Area Office</td>
<td>819 Wheeler Street</td>
<td>515-233-5753</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suite 6</td>
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<td>Burlington Area Office</td>
<td>550 S. Gear Ave</td>
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<td>West Burlington, IA 52655</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cedar Rapids Area Office</td>
<td>4444 1st Avenue NE</td>
<td>319-294-9308</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Council Bluffs Area Office</td>
<td>300 W. Broadway</td>
<td>712-328-3821</td>
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<td>Davenport Area Office</td>
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<td>Des Moines, IA 50319</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dubuque Area Office</td>
<td>2600 Dodge St</td>
<td>563-588-4697</td>
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<td>Suite NW2</td>
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<td>Dubuque, IA 52003</td>
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Contact Information

Iowa Department for the Blind
524 Fourth Street
Des Moines, IA 50309-2364
Local Phone: 515-281-1333
Toll free (in Iowa): 800-362-2587
Fax: 515-281-1263
E-mail: contact@blind.state.ia.us

Iowa Department of Human Rights
321 East 12th Street
Des Moines, IA 50319
Phone: 515-242-5655
(Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.)
Toll free): 1-888-221-3724

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services
510 East 12th Street
Des Moines, IA 50319
Phone: 1-800-532-1486
(Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.)

Michelle Krefft
Director of Business Services
Phone: 515-664-7854
E-mail: Michelle.Krefft@iowa.gov
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
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<th>Phone Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fort Dodge Area Office</td>
<td>Two Triton Circle</td>
<td>515-573-8175</td>
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<td>Fort Dodge, IA 50501</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iowa City Area Office</td>
<td>1700 South 1st Ave</td>
<td>319-354-4766</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suite 11-A Eastdale Plaza</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Iowa City, IA 52240</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mason City Area Office</td>
<td>600 South Pierce Ave</td>
<td>641-422-1551</td>
</tr>
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<td>Mason City, IA 50401</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ottumwa Area Office</td>
<td>15260 Truman St</td>
<td>641-682-7569</td>
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<td>Suite 4</td>
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<td>Ottumwa, IA 52501</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sioux City Area Office</td>
<td>2508 East 4th St</td>
<td>712-255-8871</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waterloo Area Office</td>
<td>3420 University Ave</td>
<td>319-234-0319</td>
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<td>Suite D</td>
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### Iowa Workforce Development

Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) has a goal to provide high quality employment services to all individuals. IWD has IowaWorks Center throughout the state to provide services for individuals and businesses such as career exploration, labor market information, and job fairs. Each IowaWorks Center also offers accommodations and assistive technology to increase or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

[Websites Link](#)

### Iowa Disability Organizations

#### University of Iowa Center for Disabilities and Development

The Center for Disabilities and Development at University of Iowa Stead Family Children’s Hospital is dedicated to improving the health and independence of people with disabilities and creating a life with opportunities for everyone. The center strives to be the state’s most trusted resource for health care, training, research, and information for people with disabilities.

[Website Link](#)

#### Iowa Association of People Supporting Employment First (Iowa APSE)

Iowa APSE is a chapter of a national membership organization that was formed to improve and expand integrated employment services and outcomes through supported employment. Iowa APSE provides technical assistance and education to people involved with supported employment, builds a network for those supporting supported employment and is actively involved in legislative and policy change for supported employment.

[Website Link](#)
Iowa Association of Community Providers (IACP)
The Iowa Association of Community Providers is a state-wide advocacy organization that supports Iowa community providers so they can fully support Iowans in need of mental health and disability services. More than 130 providers across the state look to IACP as a trusted resource in their work to help those they serve lead more productive and fulfilling lives.
Website Link

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) of Iowa
NAMI Iowa works to provide the tools needed by friends, families, and persons with mental illness of all ages. Resources include information, support groups, education, outreach, and advocacy.
Website Link

Federal Agencies

Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)
Rehabilitation Services Administration oversees grant programs that help individuals with disabilities obtain employment and live more independently. RSA's major formula grant program provides funds to state vocational rehabilitation agencies.
Website Link

Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)
ODEP promotes the adoption and implementation of policy strategies and effective practices that will impact the employment of people with disabilities.
Website Link

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
The EEOC enforces the employment provisions (Title I) of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
Website Link

National Council on Disability (NCD)
NCD is an independent federal agency charged with advising the President, Congress, and other federal agencies regarding policies, programs, practices, and procedures that affect people with disabilities.
Website Link

Social Security Administration (SSA)
SSA administers the Ticket to Work program, a free and voluntary Social Security program that helps people who receive disabilities benefits return to work or work for the first time.
Website Link

Contact Information
Iowa Association of Community Providers
7025 Hickman Road, Suite 5
Urbandale, IA 50322
Phone: 515-270-9495
Fax: 515-270-1035
E-mail: websiteinquiry@iowaproviders.org

NAMI Iowa
3839 Merle Hay Road, Suite 229
Des Moines, IA 50310
Phone: 515-254-0417
(Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)
NAMI Helpline: 800-273-8255
E-mail: info@namiiowa.org
Federally-Funded Agency Partners

**ADA National Network**
The ADA National Network provides information, guidance, and training services on the ADA through ten regional centers located across the United States.

**Greater Plains ADA Center**
Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska Regional Center

**Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN)**
EARN is a resource for employers seeking to recruit, hire, retain, and advance qualified employees with disabilities. EARN supports employers through toll-free technical assistance, individualized consultation, customized trainings, webinars and events, and regular updates on disability employment news.

**Employment Networks**
Employment Networks are public or private organizations that provide free employment support services to Social Security disability beneficiaries ages 18 to 64.

**Job Accommodation Network (JAN)**
JAN provides free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues.

**Workforce Recruitment Program**
The Workforce Recruitment Program connects employers nationwide with highly motivated, qualified and pre-screened, postsecondary students and recent graduates with disabilities looking for summer or permanent jobs.
**Glossary**

**accessibility:** The quality of being easily used, entered, or reached by people with disabilities; refers to the design of products, devices, services, curricula, or environments.

**accessible technology:** A technology that’s been designed with the needs of a lot of different users in mind and with built-in customization features so that users can individualize their experience to meet their needs.

**adaptive technology:** Adjusted versions of existing technologies or tools so people with disabilities can more easily use them; helps individuals with disabilities accomplish a specific task.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** A 1990 law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in several areas, including employment, transportation, public accommodations, communications, and access to state and local government programs and services.

**Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA):** A 2008 law that made a significant number of changes to the definition of “disability” under the ADA and made it easier for individuals seeking protection under the ADA to establish that they have a disability within the meaning of the statute.

**assistive technology:** Any item, piece of equipment, or product system used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capacities of individuals with disabilities.

**business resource group (BRG):** Internal organizations at companies where groups of employees with common needs, interests, backgrounds, demographic factors, or life experiences can receive professional development and support as part of the company’s business plan.

**captioning:** Process of narrating all significant audio content in presentations, video, and other visual formats by using words or symbols to transcribe spoken dialogue, identify speakers, and describe music and sound effects.

**disability:** Defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, a record of such an impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment. A disability can be visible or invisible.

**disability inclusion:** The process of creating a workplace where all individuals, including people with disabilities, are not only employed but are full members of the work community.

**disclosure:** When an employee with a disability shares information about their disability with others, often their employer, supervisor, prospective employer, or co-worker.
**discrimination:** Treating people differently, or less favorably, on the basis of identity, such as disability, race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

**employee resource group (ERG):** Voluntary, internal, employee-led groups at companies where groups of employees with common needs, interests, backgrounds, demographic factors, or life experiences can connect for purposes of professional development and support.

**Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC):** The government agency responsible for enforcing federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or an employee because of the person’s race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), national origin, age (40 or older), disability, or genetic information.

**job coach:** An individual who supports a person with a disability throughout their professional journey, with the ultimate goal of helping them work independently. They provide one-on-one training, tailored to a particular person’s needs, for a particular job.

**natural supports:** Social supports that already exist in the workplace, including people and personal relationships; often provided by professional colleagues, such as mentoring, feedback on job performance, friendship, or socializing outside of work.

**person-first language:** A term that describes how individuals with disabilities prefer to refer to themselves. It’s best practice to put people first, not their disability. Unless a person specifically prefers identity-first language, always use person-first language, such as “a person who is blind.”

**physical accessibility:** A form of accessibility that focuses on making physical spaces, such as elevators, reserved parking spots, and restroom stalls, accessible to people who use wheelchairs or who have other physical impairments.

**reasonable accommodation:** An adjustment or modification to a job or work environment that allows an individual with a disability to apply for a job, perform the essential functions of the job, or enjoy benefits equal to those offered to employees who do not have a disability.

**Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehab Act):** Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs conducted by federal agencies, in programs receiving federal financial assistance, in federal employment, and in the employment practices of federal contractors and subcontractors.

**Section 503:** Section of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that prohibits federal contractors and subcontractors from discriminating in employment against people with disabilities and requires these employers to take affirmative action to recruit, hire, promote, and retain people with disabilities.
Section 504: Section of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities by any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance or by any program or activity conducted by a federal executive agency or the U.S. Postal Service.

Section 508: Section of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that requires federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities.

self-identification: An employee telling their employer or potential employer, as part of an affirmative action initiative or goals set as part of a disability inclusion initiative, that they have or ever had a disability.

universal design: The process of creating objects or environments such as workplaces that can be used by the widest possible range of people.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR): A state-supported division of services that assists individuals with disabilities in preparing for, securing, regaining, or retaining meaningful employment.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC): A federal tax credit that is available to employers for hiring individuals from certain target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment.

workplace flexibility: Adjustments to where, when, and how an employee works to better accommodate their personal needs. Examples include part-time or flexible hours and the ability to work remotely.