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*Iowa Summit on Disability Employment*  
**BUSINESS TOOLKIT**



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The Harkin Institute for Public Policy & Citizen Engagement was established at Drake University in 2013 on the premise that good public policy requires an informed group of policymakers and an engaged public. Our mission is to inform citizens, inspire creative cooperation, and catalyze change on the issues of social justice, fairness, and opportunity. The Harkin Institute offers programming, research, and education in policy focus areas that defined Senator Tom Harkin's career: people with disabilities, labor and employment, retirement security, and wellness and nutrition.

This toolkit was created by Kathryn Hansen, Legal Research Associate at The Harkin Institute and Lila Johnson, Graphic Design Specialist at The Harkin Institute.

## 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.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup> 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 takes 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 billion<sup>3</sup>
- **Employee Morale:** Employing people with disabilities increases the morale and productivity of every employee

<sup>1</sup> Gasper, J., Muz, B., and Palan, M. (2019). Employer Practices and Attitudes toward the Employment of People with Disabilities. U.S. Department of Labor.

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. (2019).

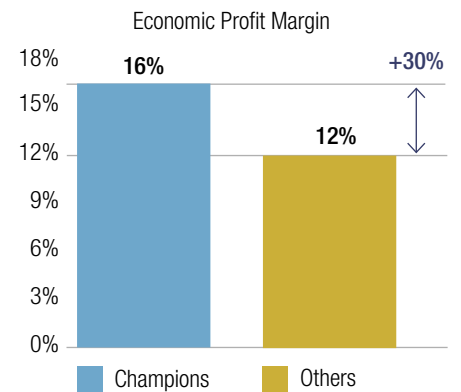
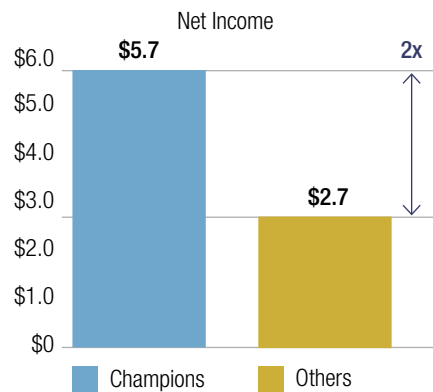
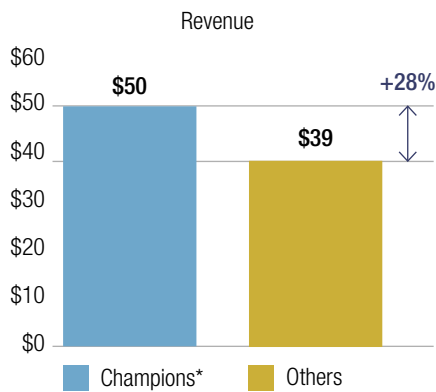
<sup>3</sup> American Institutes for Research. (2018). A Hidden Market: The Purchasing Power of Working-age Adults with Disabilities.

## 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

[Website Link](#)

### **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

[Website Link](#)

### **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

[Website Link](#)

### **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

[Website Link](#)

# 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

Disability Type	Functional Impact	Examples of Diagnoses
Physical and Mobility	Can affect a person's motor skills and may require the use of a mobility aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cerebral Palsy</li> <li>• Epilepsy</li> <li>• Narcolepsy</li> </ul>
Sensory	Can affect a person's sense: vision, hearing, smell, touch or taste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deafness</li> <li>• Blindness</li> <li>• Chemical Sensitivities</li> </ul>
Intellectual and Developmental	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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autism Spectrum Disorder</li> <li>• Down Syndrome</li> <li>• Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder</li> </ul>
Learning	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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dyslexia</li> <li>• Dysgraphia</li> <li>• Auditory Processing Disorder</li> </ul>
Mental Health	Can affect a person's mental alertness, concentration, anxiety levels and ability to organize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxiety Disorders</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Post-traumatic Stress Disorder</li> <li>• Obsessive Compulsive Disorder</li> <li>• Bipolar Disorder</li> <li>• Schizophrenia</li> </ul>

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.



***If you are unsure how to address someone, the best thing to do is to ask them. It is always better to ask the person what they prefer.***

## 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 individual's 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.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness [Website Link](#)

- **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

[Website Link](#)

[Website Link](#)

[Website Link](#)

[Website Link](#)

**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

- State of Iowa – Future Ready Iowa Initiative [www.futurereadyiowa.gov](http://www.futurereadyiowa.gov)
- U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy – Youth with Disabilities Entering the Workplace through Apprenticeship Toolkit [www.doleta.gov/OA/eo/pdf/Disabilities\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](http://www.doleta.gov/OA/eo/pdf/Disabilities_Fact_Sheet.pdf)
- U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy – Apprenticeships [www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/apprenticeship](http://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/apprenticeship)
- U.S. Department of Labor – Apprenticeship [www.apprenticeship.gov](http://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 through out Iowa including Mercy One.

[Website Link](#)



### 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](#)
- Discover Ability - Accessible Interview Questions Website Link [www.accessibleemployers.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Discover-Ability-Networks-Interview-Questions.pdf](http://www.accessibleemployers.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Discover-Ability-Networks-Interview-Questions.pdf)
- 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].

Statement from: JAN.org ([Website Link](#))



## 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 business 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*

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# Americans with Disabilities Act

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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](#)

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## 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

Agency	Location	Phone Number
Exceptional Opportunities	Algona	515-924-3251
Trivium Life Services	Cherokee	712-225-4531
Horizons Unlimited of Palo Alto County	Emmetsburg	712-852-2211
Life Skills Training Center	Le Mars	712-546-9554
Hope Haven	Rock Valley	712-476-2737
Howard Center	Sac City	712-662-7844
Village Northwest Unlimited	Sheldon	712-324-4873
Goodwill of the Great Plains	Sioux City	712-258-4511
Mid-Step Services	Sioux City	712-274-2252
New Perspectives	Sioux City	712-258-3576
Opportunities Unlimited	Sioux City	712-277-8295
Trivium Life Services	Sioux City	712-522-3346

### West Central

Agency	Location	Phone Number
Trivium Life Services	Atlantic	712-243-2668
Ida Services	Battle Creek	712-365-4339
Trivium Life Services	Battle Creek	712-365-4339
Family Resource Center	Carroll	712-792-6440
New Hope Village	Carroll	712-792-5500
Trivium Life Services	Council Bluffs	712-256-7888
Vocational Development Center	Council Bluffs	712-328-2638
Wesco Industries	Denison	712-263-6141
Concerned	Harlan	712-755-5834
Country View Estates	Guthrie Center	641-332-2129
Trivium Life Services	Onawa	712-423-1477



## Southwest

Agency	Location	Phone Number
Imagine the Possibilities Western Region	Corning – Adams, Taylor & Union Counties	563-652-5252 ext 4049
Innovative Industries	Creston	641-782-8495
Southern Iowa Resources for Families	Creston	641-782-4170
Nishna Productions	Shenandoah	712-246-1242

## North Central

Agency	Location	Phone Number
Comprehensive Systems Inc.	Charles City	641-228-4842
Mosaic in Northern Iowa	Clarion	515-532-3221
One Vision	Clear Lake	641-357-5277
Mosaic in Northern Iowa	Forest City	641-585-3050
LifeWorks Community Services	Fort Dodge	515-576-2126
One Vision	Mason City	641-420-6959
43 North Iowa	Mason City	641-423-3301

## Central

Agency	Location	Phone Number
Balance Autism	Altoona & Greater Des Moines	515-967-4369
ARC of Story Country	Ames	515-232-9330
Mainstream Living	Ames/Story City	515-232-8405
Behavioral Technologies Corp	Des Moines	515-263-9109
Best Buddies of Iowa	Des Moines	515-282-6218
Central Iowa Center for Independent Living	Des Moines	515-243-1742
Easterseals of Iowa	Des Moines	515-274-1529
HOPE Agency	Des Moines	515-331-4142
Optimae LifeServices	Des Moines	515-283-1230
Genesis Development	Jefferson	515-386-3017
Imagine the Possibilities – Northwestern Region	Jefferson – Buena Vista, Dallas, Greene, Guthrie & Pocahontas	563-652-5252 ext 4049
Candeo	Johnston	515-259-8110
Goodwill of Central Iowa	Johnston	515-265-5323
MIW	Marshalltown	641-752-3697
Progress Industries	Newton	641-792-6119
Link Associates	West Des Moines	515-262-8888
Mosaic	Windsor Heights	515-246-1840

## South Central

Agency	Location	Phone Number
Centerville Community Betterment	Centerville	641-437-1051
Southern Iowa Resources for Families	Corydon	641-872-1411
Christian Opportunity Center	Indianola	515-961-3653
Christian Opportunity Center	Knoxville	641-628-1162
Southern Iowa Resources for Families	Leon	641-446-6808
Mosaic South Central Iowa	Osceola	641-342-6015
Christian Opportunity Center	Oskaloosa	515-673-9480
Imagine the Possibilities Central Region	Oskaloosa – Boone, Madison, Mahaska, Story & Warren Counties	563-652-5252 ext 2007
Optimae LifeServices of Wapello County	Ottumwa	641-684-6441
Tenco Industries	Ottumwa	515-682-8114
Christian Opportunity Center	Pella	641-628-1162
First Resource Corporation	Sigourney	641-622-2543

## Northeast

Agency	Location	Phone Number
CHOICE Employment Services	Decorah	563-419-8278
Full Circle Services	Decorah	319-233-3813
The Spectrum Network	Decorah	563-382-8401
RISE Ltd	Elkader	563-245-1868
Imagine the Possibilities Northeastern Region	Guttenberg – Clayton & Delaware Counties	563-231-4500 ext 4013
Unlimited Services	Guttenberg	563-252-1062
Prairie View Management	Fayette	563-422-5606
Full Circle Services	Independence	319-334-4341
Exceptional Person	Waterloo	319-232-6671
Full Circle Services	Waterloo	319-233-3813
Goodwill Industries of Northeast Iowa	Waterloo	319-234-4626
Mosaic in Northern Iowa	Waukon	563-568-3992
TASC	Waukon	563-568-4060
Inclusion Connection	Waverly	319-215-8423
The Larrabee Center	Waverly	319-352-2234

## East Central

Agency	Location	Phone Number
ARC of East Central Iowa	Cedar Rapids	319-365-0487
Goodwill of the Heartland	Cedar Rapids	319-739-5016
Systems Unlimited Inc.	Cedar Rapids	319-654-9195
To The Rescue	Cedar Rapids	319-550-1890
Access 2 Independence	Iowa City	319-338-3870
ARC of Southeast Iowa	Iowa City	319-351-5017
Goodwill of the Heartland	Iowa City	319-248-4710
Reach for Your Potential	Iowa City	319-354-2983
Systems Unlimited	Iowa City	319-338-9212
Crossroads	Muscatine	563-263-3545
Goodwill of the Heartland	Muscatine	563-484-3703
Optimae LifeServices of Washington County	Washington	319-653-6571
WCDC	Washington	319-653-7248

## East

Agency	Location	Phone Number
Goodwill of the Heartland	Clinton	563-484-3770
Skyline Center	Clinton	563-243-4065
Goodwill of the Heartland	Davenport	563-327-0150
Handicapped Development Center	Davenport	563-391-4834
Imagine the Possibilities Southeastern Region	Dewitt - Clinton, Jackson & Scott Counties	563-652-5252 ext 1118
Area Residential Care	Dubuque	563-556-7560
Hills and Dales	Dubuque	563-556-7878
Imagine the Possibilities Eastern Region	Dubuque – Benton, Dubuque & Tama Counties	563-652-5252 ext 1260
Unlimited Services	Farley	563-252-1062
Imagine the Possibilities	Maquoketa	563-652-5252
Advancement Services of Jones County	Monticello	319-465-5991

## Southeast

Agency	Location	Phone Number
Goodwill of the Heartland	Burlington	319-208-0291
Hope Haven Area Development Center	Burlington	319-754-4689
Optimae LifeServices of Jefferson County	Fairfield	641-472-1684
Van Buren Job Opportunities	Keosauqua	319-293-6276

## 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 Specialist 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:

Area	Address	Phone Number
Ames Area Office	819 Wheeler Street Suite 6 Ames, IA 50010	515-233-5753
Burlington Area Office	550 S. Gear Ave Suite 35 West Burlington, IA 52655	319-753-2231
Cedar Rapids Area Office	4444 1st Avenue NE Suite 436 Cedar Rapids, IA 52402	319-294-9308
Council Bluffs Area Office	300 W. Broadway Suite 33 Council Bluffs, IA 51506	712-328-3821
Davenport Area Office	3827 W. Locust St Davenport, IA 52804	563-386-1200
Des Moines Area Office	510 East 12th St Des Moines, IA 50319	515-281-4211
Dubuque Area Office	2600 Dodge St Suite NW2 Dubuque, IA 52003	563-588-4697

## 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](mailto: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.Krefftt@iowa.gov](mailto:Michelle.Krefftt@iowa.gov)

Area	Address	Phone Number
Fort Dodge Area Office	Two Triton Circle Fort Dodge, IA 50501	515-573-8175
Iowa City Area Office	1700 South 1st Ave Suite 11-A Eastdale Plaza Iowa City, IA 52240	319-354-4766
Mason City Area Office	600 South Pierce Ave Mason City, IA 50401	641-422-1551
Ottumwa Area Office	15260 Truman St Suite 4 Ottumwa, IA 52501	641-682-7569
Sioux City Area Office	2508 East 4th St Sioux City, IA 51101	712-255-8871
Waterloo Area Office	3420 University Ave Suite D Waterloo, IA 50701	319-234-0319

## Contact Information

### 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 Workforce Development  
1000 E Grand Ave.  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
**Phone:** 515-281-5287

## 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](#)

Center for Disabilities and Development  
100 Hawkin Drive  
Iowa City, IA 52242  
**Phone:** 1-888-573-5437

### 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](#)

**E-mail:** iowaapse@gmail.com

### **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](#)

### **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](mailto: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@namiowa.org](mailto:info@namiowa.org)

## **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](#)

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## **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.

[Website Link](#)

### **Greater Plains ADA Center**

Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska Regional Center

[Website Link](#)

### **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 a toll-free technical assistance, individualized consultation, customized trainings, webinars and events, and regular updates on disability employment news.

[Website Link](#)

### **Employment Networks**

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

[Website Link](#)

### **Job Accommodation Network (JAN)**

JAN provides free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues.

[Website Link](#)

### **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.

[Website Link](#)

# 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.