

Employment and Individuals With Disabilities

TIPS AND RESOURCES



Why Employment Matters

Having a job can provide a person with a path toward independence and financial self-sufficiency. It can create a sense of purpose and be a means by which to connect with the community. Employment is associated with fewer behavior problems and better mental health outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities are motivated to work for these reasons just like everyone else. However, statistics show that 80% of individuals with disabilities currently are not in the labor force.

Employer Perspectives

Findings from an Office of Disability Employment Policy survey show that 53.1% of large companies (>250 employees) employ people with disabilities. Larger companies are more likely to actively recruit people with disabilities than are smaller companies. Businesses that do hire people with disabilities do so for compelling reasons.

- Overall satisfaction with job performance
- To increase a company's productivity
- To improve bottom line

Employers report that their employees with disabilities model characteristics they want in all of their employees. Loyalty, gratefulness, dependability, and dedication are among the terms used to describe their employees with disabilities.

Supported and Customized Employment

Supported employment is a term that refers to competitive employment in community businesses made more successful by individualized assistance from a skilled job coach. The coach may help a person find a job, learn how to do the job, and provide follow-along support to help solve problems that may arise.

Customized employment refers to a job that is created for an individual based on their unique skills and the company's needs. Carving a job to incorporate the individual's strengths may involve a redistribution of job duties from one position to another within the business. Employers have been very creative in carving jobs within their businesses.

Job Success

To be successful, employees with disabilities must have their individualized support needs taken into consideration. Often, an incorporation of natural supports is all that is necessary. This may mean asking an interested co-worker to provide basic information and guidance to the individual. Employees may need ongoing job support in team work skills, time keeping, work routines, organizing and planning, or conflict resolution. Other areas of support may include assistive technology, job modification, or behavioral training techniques.

A successful employee also possesses an ability to understand his or her own needs and an ability to communicate those needs. To enter the workplace, he or she should be ready to ask for help, ask for clarification, and ask for a break.

Recruiting Employees With Disabilities

Recruit college students and recent graduates with disabilities through the Workforce Recruitment Program for internship opportunities. Contact :

- State Vocational Rehabilitation Office.
- One Stop Career Centers.
- Employment Networks

Please see reverse for resources.



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Who We Are and Who We Serve

The **Vanderbilt Kennedy Center (VKC)** works with and for people with disabilities and their family members, service providers and advocates, researchers and policy makers. It is among only a few centers nationwide to be a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, a *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Center, and a Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities Training Program. The following are some of the ways the Center's programs and staff can assist families, educators, and other service providers.

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder is a free statewide phone, web, and print referral service in English and Spanish. It connects the Tennessee disability community with service providers and resources. Its website database has over 3,000 agencies searchable by Tennessee county and service. Pathfinder is a project of the VKC, TN Council on Developmental Disabilities, TN Department of Health, and the TN Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Contact www.familypathfinder.org, (615) 322-8529, toll-free (800) 640-4636.

TennesseeWorks

Tennessee's web hub for information related to employment of people with disabilities. See TennesseeWorks.org.

Resources

- **Vocational Rehabilitation Services** is a federal and state-funded program providing services to help individuals with disabilities enter or return to employment. In Tennessee, contact (800) 270-1349, www.tn.gov/humanserv/rehab/vrs.html
- **The Workforce Recruitment Program** is a recruitment and referral program under the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor. www.wrp.gov

- **The Employer Assistance and Resource Network** is a resource for employers seeking to recruit, hire, and retain qualified employees with disabilities. www.askearn.org/
- **One Stop Career Centers** share job postings with anyone looking for a job, including people with disabilities and veterans. To search for Career Centers by county, city, or town. www.tn.gov/labor-wfd/cc/cccounty.htm
- **The Job Accommodation Network** is a source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues. (800) 526-7234, <http://askjan.org/index.html>
- **The Office of Disability Employment** develops and influences disability employment-related policies and practices affecting an increase in the employment of people with disabilities. www.dol.gov/odep/
- **The Ticket to Work Program** increases opportunities and choices for people who receive Social Security disability beneficiaries to obtain employment, vocational rehabilitation (VR), and other support services from public and private providers, employers, and other organizations. (866) 968-7842, www.yourtickettowork.com/index
- **My Next Move** provides job seekers with information on many occupations, as well as local job openings and training opportunities. Each listing has a one-page profile with information about what knowledge, skills, and abilities are needed, the occupation's outlook, level of education required, and more. www.mynextmove.org/
- **JobTIPS** presents text, audio, and video information that is related to seeking and applying for jobs, managing work responsibilities, and interacting with co-workers. www.do2learn.com/JobTIPS/index.html

Contact the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center
Nashville (615) 322-8240
Toll-Free (866) 936-VUKC [8852]
vkc.vumc.org
kc@vumc.org

