

Employer Tips for Hiring a Person with a Disability

During the hiring process as an employer, you need to be effective and efficient. To achieve optimal results in your organization, you want to reach as wide a pool of qualified candidates as possible. Traditional methods of recruiting, hiring and promotion will often limit your access to a diverse pool of skilled potential employees. Specifically, qualified employees with disabilities may be hesitant to apply for many positions if the posting does not give the impression that the employer would be willing to accommodate the disability. Potential employees may also have a different strategy for job search than an able-bodied person.

An employer's duty to accommodate is not limited to on-the-job performance, but extends from the initial job advertising on one end, to the exit interviews on the other. Here are some suggestions:

- **Make your job competitions inclusive and accessible.** Use your existing recruitment channels, but post your employment opportunities in alternate formats. Also, circulate employment advertisements with disability organizations.
- **Job descriptions** should be detailed, accurate and up to date, with essential and non-essential duties differentiated. Job redesign may be necessary; most job descriptions can be modified by looking at the expected outcomes of the job, and considering the needs of the applicant. Ensure that the postings are written in language that is easy to understand, are highly visible and easy to read, physically accessible and available in alternate formats.
- **During a formal job interview**, conduct the same interview with someone with a disability as you would with anyone else. Unless the individual raises it him/herself, the job interview is not the appropriate time to discuss his/her disability. After a person has been given a conditional offer of employment, you can inquire about the accommodation necessary to achieve the expected outcomes of the job.
- **It's all in the language.** When discussing accommodation with the applicant/employee, take care to use language that focuses not on the person's disability, but on the person's abilities. A simple example is to ask "*Will you need accommodation to do this task?*", rather than "*Can you do this task?*". Remember to address the same questions to all applicants, regardless of whether or not they have a disability.
- **Orientation.** An individual with a disability does not require preferential treatment when starting a new job. There is no need to prepare your staff for his/her arrival any differently than you would for any other new employee.

- **Technical aids and workspace accommodation.** In order to enhance an employee's abilities and to ensure that the workplace is barrier free, some assistive devices and/or workplace accommodation may be appropriate.
- **Open communication.** Take a proactive approach to accommodation. Effective management involves accommodation, whether this means providing technical devices, flexible work hours, or job sharing. Let your staff know that you are available at all times to discuss accommodation issues.
- **Exit interviews.** When an employee with a disability leaves your workplace, it should not be because of his/her disability, nor should it be for lack of accommodation, or provision of inappropriate accommodation. Similar to the recruitment interview, discussions at the end of an employment term should be employment-focused.