

STEPS FOR EMPLOYING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Steps for Recruitment, Interviewing and Retaining People with Disabilities

AZERBAIJAN SOCIAL WORK PUBLIC UNION



Promoting and Supporting Labor Rights of People with Disabilities with Holistic Approach in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova Project



1. Recruitment

Currently people with disabilities (PWDs) are a growing and highly qualified candidate pool for jobs. They can almost work in all levels of employment in public sector agencies, private companies, small businesses, and nonprofit organizations, and in all industries.

These are practical strategies to ensure that a company's/agency's recruitment efforts are successful:

These recommendations are for hiring PWDs to your teams or increasing their numbers. Some or may be all of these recommendations are applicable for your organization:

- Establishing internal policies that prioritize hiring people with disabilities.
- Ensuring that the hiring of people with disabilities is part of a company's/agency's overall hiring plan.
- Conducting targeted outreach to attract qualified candidates with disabilities.
- Developing community linkages.
- Retaining and reviewing applications from applicants with disabilities when future openings occur; and
- Ensuring fully accessible online job applications and electronic and social media recruitment materials.

1.1 Below are specific steps employers may wish to implement:

1. Carry out Targeted Outreach: To succeed, the recruitment efforts can be built through collaboration with community-based partners that have connections to qualified candidates. These partners include nonprofit organizations, national and local disability organizations, and government funded state and local employment programs for people with disabilities such as.
2. Form Community Linkages or Partnerships: Community linkages are on-going relationships that facilitate an employer's ability to diversify its workforce.
3. Have Job Announcements posted in Targeted Spaces: Posting vacancies on job boards designed for people with disabilities, in disability-related publications, and with disability organizations will increase the diversity of the applicant pool.
4. Start an Internship Program. Internship programs specifically for people with disabilities are an effective and cost-efficient recruitment strategy.

1.2 What are some strategies to recruit young people with disabilities?

Hiring young people with disabilities is no different than hiring young people without disabilities. A number of government, national, local/rayon level and private initiatives focus on ensuring that young people with disabilities can enter and succeed in the workforce.

To build a talent pipeline of young people with disabilities, businesses should consider:

1. Starting an internship program that targets youth with disabilities.
2. Developing registered apprenticeship programs for young people that target youth with disabilities.
3. Conducting outreach to high school transition initiatives, in colleges and universities, and vocational schools that have programs designed for students with disabilities.

1.3 What are some best practices employers can implement to provide equal access to employment opportunities for applicants with disabilities?

To ensure a level playing field for applicants with disabilities, employers should:

1. Make sure that job announcements posted on job boards and social/professional networking sites are in formats that are accessible to jobseekers with disabilities.
2. On job announcements show that qualified individuals with disabilities are encouraged to apply and that reasonable accommodations will be provided.
3. Make sure that online application systems, including online pre-employment tests, are accessible to candidates with disabilities (especially for PWDs with vision problems).
4. Make sure that interview locations are physically accessible for PWDs.
5. Inform all applicants ahead of time what the interview process may include and provide them with the opportunity to request a reasonable accommodation, if needed.
6. Be prepared to provide reasonable accommodations for applications, interviews, preemployment tests, and other aspects of the hiring process when needed, including assigning staff to arrange and approve requested accommodations in a timely fashion.

1.4 Recruiting, Hiring, Retaining, and Promoting People with Disabilities

What can be asked about a person's disability during the hiring process? What questions may not be asked?

Generally, employers may do a wide variety of things to evaluate whether an applicant is qualified for the job, including the following:

- Employers can ask about an PWD applicant's ability to perform specific job functions or tasks.
- Employers can request that an PWD applicant describe or demonstrate how they would perform job tasks or achieve job outcomes.
- Employers can ask about an PWD applicant's qualifications and skills, such as the applicant's education, work history, and required certifications and licenses.

What are some best practices for interviewing applicants with disabilities?

These guidelines below identify best practices for interviewing and hiring candidates with disabilities:

1.4.1 Interview guidelines

Focus on Ability: Interviewing Applicants with Disabilities

As employers well know, the job interview plays a critical role in the hiring process, allowing them the opportunity to identify the individual who possesses the best mix of knowledge, skills and abilities for the position available. Below is information that may assist employers in ensuring maximum benefit from an interview when the person being interviewed happens to have a disability.

Preparing for the Interview

- Ensure that your company's application and interviewing procedures comply with the law of Azerbaijan Republic on employment of people with disabilities.
- Consider variety of disabilities and make sure that your application forms, employment offices and interviewing locations are accessible to all PWDs.
- Make appropriate and relevant accommodations to help an PWD applicant to participate in the interview, explaining ahead of time what is involved in the process. One example can be- if an applicant is blind, provide assistance in completing forms and communicate to them that his help is available. If deaf applicant asks for interpreter provide it. In case of applicants with cognitive disabilities with provide details or specific instructions to applicants.
- If you plan to conduct any test inform applicants ahead of time if they will be required to take a test to demonstrate their ability to perform actual or simulated tasks so that they can request a reasonable accommodation, such as a different format for a written test, if necessary (If such tests are permitted under the law of Azerbaijan Republic on employment of people with disabilities.)

1.4.2 Conducting the Interview

- During the interview relax and make the applicant feel relaxed. In case the applicant has a visible disability or reveals a disability during the interview, concentrate on the individual, not the disability.
- Despite their disabilities treat the individual with the same respect you would treat any candidate whose skills you are seeking. Likewise, hold individuals with disabilities to the same standards as all applicants.
- Do not skip any pre-planned questions just because the candidate has disability. But ask only job-related questions that speak to the functions of the job for which the applicant is applying.
- Concentrate on the applicant's technical and professional knowledge, skills, abilities, experiences and interests.

Do not try to imagine how you would perform a specific job if you had the applicant's disability. He or she has mastered alternate ways of living and working. If the applicant has a known disability, either because it is obvious or was revealed by the applicant, you may ask him or her to describe how he or she would perform the job.

A job offer may be conditional based on the results of a medical examination if all employees entering similar jobs are also required to take an examination. If, after the medical examination, the employer decides not to hire an individual because of a disability, the employer must demonstrate that the reason for the rejection is job-related and consistent with business necessity.

2. Respecting, retaining and promoting people with disabilities after hiring

Hiring PWDs diversify, enrich and enhance the culture of the workplace. But it is also important to maintain them in the office and provide them required support to stay. These are some suggested strategies to include and maintain PWDs in the workplace.

- **To maintain PWDs at your workplace, make an organization commitment to include PWDs among your stakeholders.** Find out if the head of an organization is committed to a disability-friendly workplace? Do work policies, procedures and practices specifically mention cover section about PWDs and mention the word "disability?" Do PWDs serve on the boards, top management teams and other senior structures of your organization? Are PWDs employed at all levels in the workforce, including senior management positions? Are your products and services marketed to customers with disabilities? Do people with disabilities purchase your goods and services?
- **Most importantly educate all staff on disability issues.** Do you have section on disability awareness in your new staff orientation training? Are training materials available in alternate formats such as large print, Braille and captioned? Do you have mentorship/coaching programs for PWD staff members? Do PWD employees serve as mentors for new hires who do not have disabilities? What are your strategies to integrate PWDs into your workforce?
- **Provide continuing information on disability issues.** Is staff familiar with legislation and conventions talking about disability issues? Is disability information provided routinely in the company newsletter or on an intranet site?
- **Create a disability support group.** Do PWD employees in your company meet to discuss disability employment issues? Have you given authority to make recommendations to management? Is all staff aware of this group and their authority and the contributions it makes to corporate success?
- **Provide accessible facilities and services.** Are buildings, parking areas, workspaces and communication systems of your company or building in your company accessible to people with disabilities?
- **Have resources to accommodate applicants and workers with disabilities.** Do you budget for accommodations? Are PWD applicants and employees informed that accommodations are available if needed? Does staff routinely stay abreast of new developments in universal and assistive technology?
- **Work with stakeholders to project a disability-friendly image to attract candidates and customers with disabilities.** Do higher education institutions target students with disabilities? Do recruiters search for resumes on disability-related Web sites? Are recruiters and other personnel responsible for establishing working relationships with community agencies-municipalities, non-profits- serving applicants with disabilities?

- **Make efforts to hire applicants with disabilities.** Attend employment fairs for candidates with disabilities or target students at colleges with known populations of students with disabilities.
- **Train and advance workers with disabilities.** Make sure that PWD employees routinely participate in employer-sponsored training opportunities. If it is not happening bring this issue to the attention of the senior management. Have procedures in place to promote qualified PWD employees to management and supervisory positions.
- **Encourage staff to volunteer in the community.** Is staff encouraged to build relationships with community service organizations for people with disabilities?

3. How can employers provide employees with disabilities equal access to career development programs?

Career development programs – such as conferences, trainings, tuition assistance, and rotational assignments – are proven employee retention strategies. Below are some best practices to ensure PWD employees 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 for variety of disabilities.
- Budget a portion of employee training funds to provide disability related accommodations for professional development 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.

4. These are common reasonable accommodation requests:

- Adjust or modify tests and training materials – such as providing materials in alternate formats (e.g., Braille or large print or reading instructions out loud to a person with a vision or cognitive impairment).
- Develop a mode of a job coach – permitting a job coach to accompany an PWD employee at a job site in order to assist the employee in learning and accurately carrying out job duties.
- Modify or acquire equipment or devices – such as raising the height of a desk to accommodate an employee who uses a wheelchair, purchasing amplified stethoscopes for use by nurses and physicians with hearing impairments, or providing assistive technology, such as computer screen readers, for employees with vision impairments.
- Modify policies or workplace rules – such as allowing an employee with diabetes to eat at her desk or allowing a retail store cashier with a back impairment to use a stool.
- Modify work schedules – such as adjusting arrival or departure times, providing periodic breaks, or altering the times when certain job tasks are performed.

- Provide qualified readers or interpreters – such as a reader to read written materials to an employee with a vision impairment or a sign language interpreter for a person who is deaf.
- Restructure the job by making changes to when and/or how a task is performed or shifting responsibility to other employees for minor tasks that an employee is unable to perform because of a disability.
- Allow an PWD employee to use accrued paid leave and providing additional unpaid leave once an employee has exhausted all available leave, for disability related reasons such as receiving or recovering from treatment or when a condition “flares up.”
- Reassignment to a vacant position – moving a current employee to an existing vacant position for which he or she is qualified when the employee can no longer perform his or her current job because of a disability.
- Telework – allowing an employee to work from home or a remote location.

Resources

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