



INCLUSION
WORKS

A Hiring and Training Manual **for the Inclusive Employer**

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Introduction

What does it mean to be an Intentionally Inclusive employer?

An **Intentionally Inclusive** employer desires to hire employees from all walks of life regardless of religion, sex, gender, ethnicity, or disability.

Intentionally Inclusive employers understand the importance of having employees from all backgrounds represent their organization or business because typically the surrounding community is filled with people from all walks of life who desire a sense of belonging.

“Everywhere you go, you belong.”

Employers who embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion understand the importance of creating spaces where everyone belongs, and no one feels out of place. These employers are aware of the issues employees from diverse backgrounds face, especially those with disabilities, and are committed to carving out space for them, even if it requires additional time and resources.

“Accessibility allows us to tap into everyone’s potential.” -Debra Ruh

Diversity is the ability to see the value of all humanity so much that you embrace having a range of people with various racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds. **Equity** permits employers to tailor accessibility and accommodations to employees, understanding that two people may have identical presenting disabilities but may require different forms of accessible accommodations. In other words, equity understands that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities to reach an equal outcome.

Inclusion is the belief that everyone should be included within a group structure regardless of their background or disability. However, employers must go a step further to be *intentionally inclusive*, which is the deliberate practice of bringing underrepresented groups into an organization or business.

Regardless of your business or service” and the majority of that sentence be taken out to lead into “the question should always be who is not at the table, or it is an organization that is responsible for implementing programs, policies, or advocating for underserved populations; the question should always be, “Who is NOT at the table that needs to be?” As an employer, you want to ensure that every voice that exists feels as if it belongs, matters, and serves a purpose.

Belonging is the emotions people feel when they are accepted and included within larger groups in society. Everyone has an inherent desire to belong and be a part of something greater than themselves; they want to feel purposeful and use their unique gifts and talents to contribute to the world.

"I don't need easy. I just need possible." -Bethany Hamilton



Employers should strive for **cultural humility** which is different from cultural competence. Cultural competence seeks to build an understanding of minority cultures and focuses on gaining knowledge--within this you are required to memorize stereotypes and traits within those cultures or groups. Whereas cultural humility is an alternative approach and does not require you to memorize stereotypes or traits within a culture or group.

Instead, it encourages you to develop a set of skills to approach employees from diverse cultures at any time. Cultural humility empowers you to be a lifelong learner and to be reflective of every experience. Furthermore, it disarms both parties and diminishes the power dynamics between people.

Why is Cultural Humility Important?

Intentionally Inclusive employers emphasize the importance of understanding their employees and realize that religion, sex, gender, color, or disability shape the way employees think and approach the work they do. Intentionally Inclusive employers are lifelong learners and are continuously reflecting on those experiences, utilizing them as tools to better serve their employees.



Here are things you can do to exhibit Cultural Humility:

- 1.** Be aware that everyone makes assumptions about others based on their background and culture.
- 2.** Ask open questions and practice active and reflective listening. Individual employees are experts in their own lives- be content with being the student.
- 3.** Understand that the practice of cultural humility is ongoing and should be utilized in everyday life, not just work. Take the time to humanize every experience!
- 4.** Be okay with not knowing- but committed to taking every opportunity to understand! This requires you to be humble and respectful towards others and requires you to challenge your own beliefs and biases- with the understanding you do not know everything about other cultures and groups.

As you strive to be an ***Intentionally Inclusive*** Employer, we encourage you to take advantage of the below resources:

- Carter’s Play Place: cpp@cartersplayplace.com
- Howdy Homemade: howdy@howdyindy.com
- Smoke Show Catering and Crew: llholding@gmail.com

● The Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services Home and Community-Based Services [Manual: Page 155](#) of the manual explains what a Job Coach is, what they do, and why they are an asset to people with disabilities. You must understand their role because they are excellent resources to ensure success while employed.

● [Vocational Rehabilitation](#), which helps people with disabilities achieve employment.

● [Work to Include](#) is an organization that seeks to eliminate barriers and design a statewide system that works for all, develop local initiatives to dispel myths about community employment and document the employment success of people with disabilities.

● [The Employment First Act](#) requires agencies to effectively implement the Employment First policy to advance competitive, integrated employment outcomes, including self-employment, for people with disabilities of working age, regardless of the nature or severity of the individual disability. Additionally, The Department of Labor’s website includes additional information on [Employment First and Competitive Integrated Employment](#).



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Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The ADA prohibits discrimination based on disability in employment in the following areas: State and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, telecommunications, and U.S. Congress.

With universal design principles in hiring and work processes everyone benefits and lowers need for special accommodations for individuals with disabilities. It is also a way for employers to actively cultivate a work environment that goes beyond simple ADA compliance.

ADA Title I requires employers with fifteen or more employees are required to provide qualified individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from the full range of employment-related opportunities available to others. An applicant may elect to disclose they have a disability on a questionnaire, but this is optional. However, it restricts questions that can be asked about an applicant's disability before a job offer is made and requires employers to make reasonable accommodations to the known physical or mental limitations of qualified individuals with disabilities, unless it results in an undue hardship.

Accommodation and accessibility for individuals with disabilities should begin before them being hired. What do we mean? Individuals with disabilities who have visual impairment often struggle with employers' websites that are not 508 compliant. An example of this is the lack of alternative text for pictures, colors that are difficult to see, and small font. **Section 508** is not a requirement for entities outside of government, however, many individuals with disabilities advocate for its mass implementation.



Why? It allows individuals seeking employment to easily access a business or organization's website and fill out an application without assistance from friends or family. If an organization or business only has a visual format it creates a barrier for individuals with visual impairments or if it only has an audio format it is inaccessible to those who are deaf or hard at hearing.

We understand that many small businesses or organizations may not be able to update their websites to this standard, so we encourage alternative text for photos and a brief overview of what the audio or video is stating or utilizing captions. The ADA creates a bare minimum standard for inclusive hiring; however, Intentionally Inclusive Employers understand the importance of equitable hiring practices and opportunities as well as the benefits of employing individuals with disabilities.

Individuals with disabilities are currently the largest minority group in the United States. According to the US Census Bureau, and American Community Survey (2014), there are 463,000 working-age Hoosiers with disabilities with less than 40% being employed. Currently, Indiana ranks 26th in the country for employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.



<40%

WORKING-AGE
HOOSIERS WITH
DISABILITIES ARE
EMPLOYED

We encourage businesses or organizations to familiarize themselves with the ADA which can be found at [Guide to Disability Rights Laws](#) | [ADA.gov](#).



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Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment

People with disabilities encounter many barriers when attempting to obtain gainful employment. Vocational Rehabilitation is one resource an individual may utilize during their job search.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services has twenty-five area offices throughout Indiana with counselors providing services in those counties. Individuals are not required to provide financial or income verification to receive services.

How can Vocational Rehabilitation help?

- Explore employment interests and skills.
- Help individuals find their first job.
- Provide assistive technology and other services to help individuals with disabilities keep/maintain employment.
- Re-enter the workforce after a period of not working.
- Training for a new career due to disability-related factors
- Provide services for career advancement.

Vocational Rehabilitation offers services such as Supported Employment to individuals with severe disabilities who are placed in competitive job markets. These individuals will receive a qualified job coach/trainer to provide individualized and ongoing support services needed for them to maintain employment.

Individuals are encouraged to contact their local Vocational Rehabilitation office for employment services, supported employment, assistive technology, transition services, or the Independent Living Program.



Indiana Assistive Technology Act (INDATA) is a project at **Easterseals Crossroads** that provides information and access to assistive technology at no charge to Indiana residents with disabilities. INDATA Statewide Services are funded through state and federal grants and include device demonstrations, device loans, recycled computers, reutilized assistive technology equipment, alternative financing resources, educational training, and conferences.



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Writing Inclusive Job Descriptions

Job descriptions are not always written in an inclusive manner causing individuals seeking employment to shy away from applying to positions, even if they are qualified candidates.

An example of this is writing requirements such as “heavy lifting” or “excellent communication skills” as it discourages those with mobility and cognitive disabilities from applying. Customized employment or job carving for employers are considerations to alter job descriptions or reallocate duties between positions to increase accessibility.

Job descriptions should be written in a manner that focuses on **essential functions** and not specific abilities. Essential functions should focus on or should be about methods and not results. Another example provided by the World Institute on Disabilities (WID) is not saying talk or hear in a job description and instead saying express oneself or exchange information. Additionally, WID states employers should refrain from using the word walk and choose to use the word move to be inclusive of people with mobility disabilities.



When addressing **minimum qualifications**, employers should focus on the attributes that an individual seeking employment must already possess at the time of hire or to be qualified for the position. The focus should be on what needs to be accomplished versus how it is done. All statements should be specific, defensible, and realistic. Preferred qualifications are measurable and job-related experience the ideal candidate will possess. Preferred qualifications should be applied fairly to all candidates.

When discussing working conditions, they should be related to the essential functions of the job. Any disclaimer should express the employee must be able to perform the essential functions of the position and if requested, reasonable accommodation will be made to ensure employees with disabilities can perform job duties without undue hardship.

Reasonable accommodation should be offered if a candidate with disabilities informs the employer, they cannot perform the essential functions as written. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regulations provide **information** to help employers determine if job function may be considered essential.

Alternatively, the application of job carving, or role customization could be utilized to address any challenges individuals may have in performing all essential functions. It may not be necessary that all defined duties and responsibilities of this position are assigned to this specific position or may not need be accomplished in precisely the fashion someone fully able would be able to. Instead, reasonable accommodations should be made, or duties should be redefined or redistributed depending on role and ability.





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Disability Etiquette

Language Matters: How to Address and Communicate with Individuals with Disabilities.

When addressing individuals with disabilities, focus on them being a person not on their perceived limitations. We encourage you to use **People First Language**: address them by their name not by their disability. An example of this is “The new hire in the wheelchair or the blind man that sits near the front desk.”

Always practice mindfulness:

- 1.** If an individual is deaf or hard of hearing, approach them in their line of sight and slightly wave to get their attention. If an interpreter is present, respectfully ask if the individual is in a good space with work to answer a quick question (do not stand between them and their interpreter). If no interpreter is present, ask the person for their preferred method of communication (notes, mobile device, or email).
- 2.** If an individual is blind or visually impaired, communicate with them based on their preferred method, and if you are uncertain ask. Do not ever touch their service dogs, shake their hands without permission (startling them), and be natural when approaching them with conversation.
- 3.** If an individual has an Intellectual or Developmental Disability always be direct, clear, and concise when communicating or asking questions. Be patient, they may ask you to repeat yourself- so try asking a question a unique way. Do not be offended if someone is blunt or frank with their response due to a lack of inhibition or awareness of political correctness. Take the time to explain why you are offended and utilize this as an opportunity to share examples of appropriate responses. Lastly, speak to them as you would anyone else and avoid condescending or childlike language.
- 4.** If an individual is in a wheelchair, do not stand and speak to them. Always sit down so that you are at eye level.

Language Do's	Language Don'ts
A person with a Disability	Handicapped, wheelchair bounded, amputee, victim,
Accessible Parking	Handicapped Parking
A person without a disability	Normal or Healthy

 **Disability Language Guide.**



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Inclusive Interviewing

Employers must be mindful that the word disability encompasses visual, mental, physical, and intellectual impairments.

The needs of an individual with a disability(s) will vary, therefore it is best practice for an employer to be properly prepared to ensure the comfortability of the individual interviewing and themselves.

Employers should both encourage and be aware of the following:

- 1** An employee's natural support or guardian may accompany them to the interview. This is beneficial because:
 - Their natural support or guardian may provide insight into additional accommodation that is needed. Examples include breaks to take insulin, an individual with a spinal injury requiring additional breaks, or sitting at the register.
 - The natural support or guardian may share information about that individual's strengths and weaknesses that they may forget to share due to anxiety or nervousness.
 - Their natural support or guardian may provide information on schedule availability, transportation requirements, or arrangements.

Strong family and community support can help shape their success as an employee!

- 2** Encourage the presence of their service dog, which is utilized by some visually impaired and those with health issues that require alerts.
 - An example of this is an individual with epilepsy, who is alerted by their service dog to get somewhere safe and lay down before seizure activity.

- 3** Inform interviewees in advance of any tests that will be administered in the hiring process including accessibility/accommodation statements and encourage them to request any necessary accommodations.

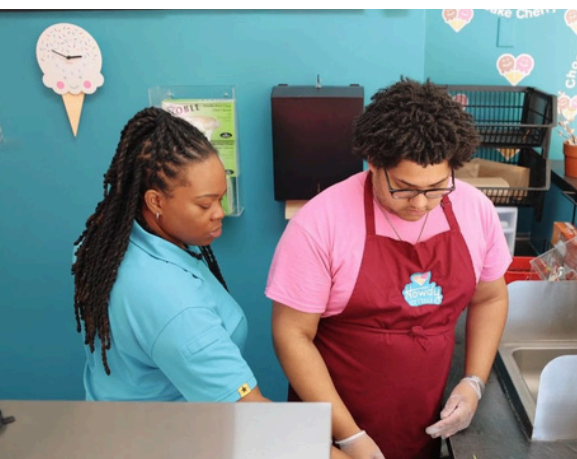
 - Allow test answers to be recorded.
 - Allow additional time for testing.
 - Accessible location for interviewing, tests, and exams.
 - Offer any written material in large print and ensure that it is clear and concise.
 - Language interpreter, or any other accommodation that is necessary to assist with the interview process.
- 4** Allow extra time for the interview. The interviewee may require extra time to process the question and answer. It is best practice to allow six seconds of processing time before prompting or rephrasing.
- 5** Be Clear, Specific, and Concise. What does it mean?

 - Avoid abstract questions. An example of a non-abstract question is, “At [x] job, how did you manage difficult conversations?”
 - Asked open-ended. An example of an open question is, “Could you tell me about your job at [x]?”
- 6** Motion activity during the interview may be a coping response and not an indicator of noninterest.
- 7** Be aware of how the interview area may affect a potential employee and seek to diminish distracting activity or lighting that is overstimulating.

What if they have disclosed their disability before or during the interview process?

As a potential employer, you can show your support by doing the following:

- Ensure that accessible parking is available, and entryways are wide enough for larger size wheelchairs. Furthermore, the interview room should have enough space for the employee to independently turn their wheelchair when exiting or to simply adjust and be comfortable.
- Ensure the space is quiet and calm and remember to ask the interviewee if they have a lighting preference.
- Or ask if they require any additional environmental accommodation before or during their interview. It is preferable to ask before the interview so that you are prepared to meet the needs of the job employee.



Inclusive employers should encourage employees to be themselves during the interview process.

Lastly, *Inclusive* employers should encourage employees to be themselves during the interview process. This allows the interviewer to better get to know whom they are hiring and the interviewee to feel supported and certain that this will be a healthy work environment for them as an individual with a disability.

[The Office of Disability Employment Policy](#) includes additional information and resources to assist employers in understanding their responsibilities relative to interviewing job applicants with disabilities. Resources include employer assistance, training, and fact sheets that will ensure the hiring process is inclusive of people with disabilities.



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Inclusive Training

What does it mean to have Intentionally Inclusive Training Practices? It means that employers must realize there is no single practice for training employees with disabilities. Employers must be willing to train based on the individual's needs, like how they would alter their training to meet the learning style of someone without a disability.

We want employers to realize that whenever they have an amazing new hire, they should provide them with the tools and resources needed to be successful in their position; that is how talent is retained. This practice applies no matter what an individual's diagnosis is, and successful training means providing all the necessary tools and resources for individuals to thrive within the workplace.

Next Level Communication

“Be specific and remember repetition is necessary.”

We interviewed Sataria Carter, General Manager for Howdy Homemade Ice Cream, and she shared that successful training requires employers to be specific and remember that repetition is necessary. Repetition is how we all learn; therefore, we must extend that same opportunity to employees with disabilities. Language barriers can be an issue when employers do not understand that communication may need to be altered to meet the needs of all new hires. Employers cannot assume when communicating, they must know what they want before they communicate with the employee. Please see the below examples:

Communication Do's	Communication Don'ts
I have provided you with a checklist of everything that needs to be done so that we can close and leave on time. Please take your time to complete each task and check them off as you go.	Please have the store cleaned before we close so that we can leave on time.
I need you to be here at 8 am tomorrow so that we can prepare food before the store opens. I know that your schedule says open to close, but those who open the store come in an hour early to prepare for the workday.	I need you here when we open tomorrow morning. We have a lot to do before customers pour in.
When you are on the floor, please wipe the table after each customer leaves so that it is clean for the next customer.	Wipe the tables throughout the day.

Communication Do's	Communication Don'ts
<p>Please organize or sort the mail by office/floor that it needs to go to before you start delivery. This makes you more efficient at your job.</p>	<p>Make sure you deliver all the mail by the end of the workday.</p>

Many employees are task-driven, which allows them to go above and beyond in their work. When there are clear, detailed, and specific instructions the workday goes smoothly for everyone.

Be Mindful of Diverse Needs, Behaviors, and Personalities

Employers should always try to assist employees without physically touching them. However, this is extremely important when working with employees with disabilities who may not want to be touched, including a simple pat on the back. An employee who utilizes a wheelchair may consider it an extension of them, so ask permission before you attempt to assist them, because they may not require your help. If an employee is blind do not grab their arm to assist them, always announce your presence and ask permission to assist them. Do not attempt to walk or move someone's service dog without their permission. If someone is deaf or hard of hearing do not tap them to get their attention, remember, to stand within their line of sight and communicate what you need.

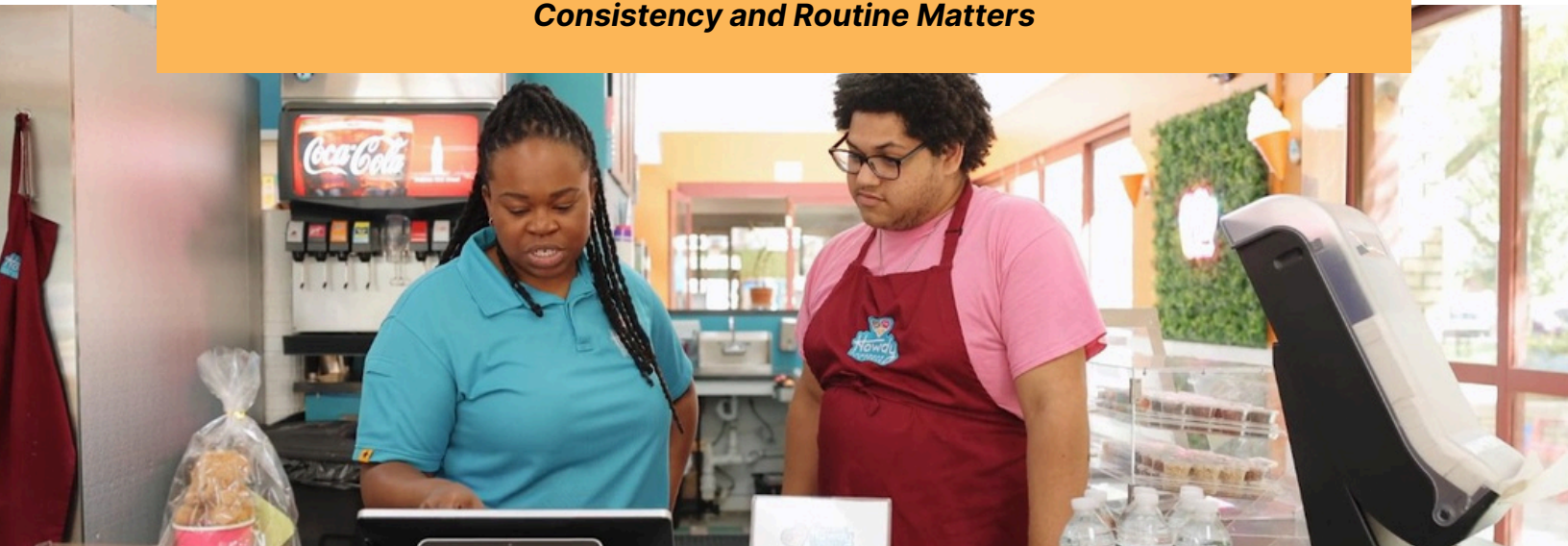


Employers should always try to assist employees without physically touching them.

What if the employee I hired does not respect personal space?

Always redirect personal touch, if they are constantly hugging or touching you, explain work-appropriate behavior. Inform them that employees may shake hands, fist bump, or high-five, but they must always ask permission before hugging their peers. Lastly, if other employees complain about unwanted touch, encourage them to say no and encourage a fist bump, high-five, handshake, or even an elbow tap.

Consistency and Routine Matters



Communication with Middle Management and Team Leaders

Ensure that middle management and team leaders are present during on-the-job training or familiar with the new hire's communication preferences and needs. However, intentional training encourages employers to go a step further and drop in during the first few shifts to see how both the new hire is adapting to work and if any additional needs should be addressed. Everyone should be clear and consistent with job function and role. Middle management or team leaders should receive detailed and specific training on disability etiquette, training, and effective communication.

Upfront effort matters! As a manager your presence is necessary. This allows you to observe how new hires respond to training and where they are best placed. This is especially important if this is their first job, because previous work history may highlight strengths or specific areas of service they thrived in or enjoyed. However, if it is not their first job, always ask where they see themselves within the business or organization. Many employers place employees in positions that require little to no effort or training. Examples of this are greeters, gathering carts, and sweeping or wiping tables. Challenge your bias as an employer to limit expectations and career ladders based on an employee's disability.



While you are training or observing their first day on the job, take notes on whether they show interest in other service areas and allow them to shadow to see if it is a good fit. Remember training takes time, so their first shift should always be scheduled during the least busy time of day. If for some reason they cannot train during that time, be intentional and schedule 1:1 training for their first shift.

Communicate with Respect

Communicating with respect means giving an employee with a disability the same respect you would any other employee. Do not speak in a condescending tone or a high-pitched voice as a form of support or encouragement. Examples of this:

Communication Do's	Communication Don'ts
Hey Chris, I like how you saw there was a line and jumped in to help the team get customers out of the door. Keep up the good work!	Way to go friend! Look at how you helped, we are so proud of you!
John, I appreciate the work you put in so that we close and leave on time. I found no issues when going through the checklist to ensure everything was complete for the morning shift.	Wow, you finally wiped down every table, pushed in all the chairs, and emptied all the trash. What a terrific shift you had last night.

Regardless of intellectual level or disability address employees in an age-appropriate manner. What you believe may be harmless can perpetuate harmful behaviors in society as it pertains to individuals with disabilities. Remember, this is an opportunity for increased independence and to contribute their unique gifts and talents to society. Helpful things to keep in mind:

- Adults with disabilities are adjusting to societal norms, and work not only allows increased independence, but world experience.
- Never announce their disability!
- Be patient with reminders of daily tasks and retrain, as necessary.
- Always observe how employees engage, to ensure both stability and a harmonious environment. Furthermore, provide positive and constructive feedback for all employees.



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Professional Development and Advancement

Professional development and advancement are both inherent rights. Individuals with disabilities deserve the same opportunities as those without disabilities. Employers must understand that individuals with disabilities are filled with purpose and desire to professionally progress within their careers.

There are multiple ways to support professional development and advancement such as:

Goal setting

Team building

Networking

Performance evaluations

Mentoring

Supervisory and management development

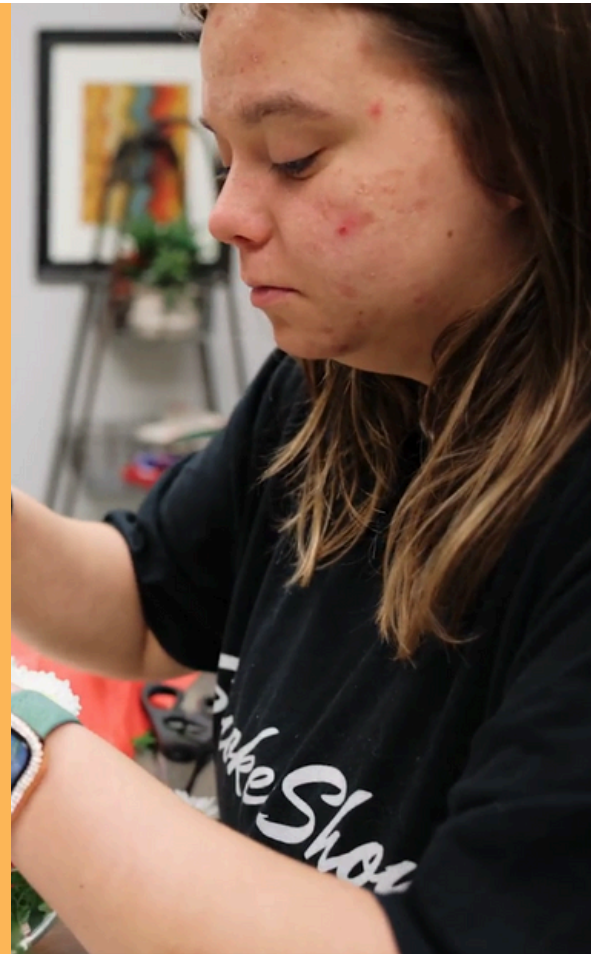
Leadership opportunities

Professional skill development

There are wonderful resources like Vocational Rehabilitation, which exist to help support an individual's career advancement outside of initial achievement of employment. Employers are encouraged to keep this in mind and utilize these tools to help individuals progress as far as they wish.

How can I help with their career planning process?

Employers can support employee growth by discussing career expectations and offering development programs and lattice opportunities. The ability to move laterally or be cross trained allows employees to obtain new skills and increase competency which allows them to have a competitive edge in the job market. Furthermore, lattice opportunities allow the employer to see where the employee best fits as well as evaluate their unique gifts, talents, and skills and determine how they can be best utilized within the organization or business.



Additionally, it allows the employee to better understand how the organization or business operates while also offering job enrichment opportunities, such as increased responsibilities and mastering new tasks and assignments. Do not assume employees with disabilities are incapable of learning new skills or that their disability is a barrier. Employers should take the time to thoroughly train and develop employees, while continuously evaluating their performance and offering constructive feedback.



Team Building Matters

Team building allows employees to strengthen peer relationships through group projects, acquire conflict resolution experience, and solve difficult problems. Furthermore, they should be included in planning sessions, stakeholder engagement, travel assignments, and time-sensitive projects.

Networking is a Form of Integration

Gainful employment not only increases independence but the opportunity to be inclusively integrated into society. Most employers have employee appreciation dinners, happy hours, and formal and informal gatherings, which encourage employees to network with peers from different areas within the business or organization. At these events, employees typically discuss what is occurring in their line of work, and their job functions, and share pertinent information. This not only encourages the development of interpersonal relationships but fosters a positive work culture for all employees. Lastly, it offers genuine opportunities for employees with disabilities to strengthen their interpersonal communication skills.

Mentorship

No one should have to climb alone! Employees with disabilities should be paired with peers who are experienced in their area of operations. Mentorship introduces employees to coaching from seasoned employees who may share management and organization tips, constructive feedback, and empowerment to take risks that may lead to increased responsibilities or a new role. Most importantly, allow employees with disabilities to be mentors, because they have a lot to offer, especially once they are experienced or tenured.



Training

Employees with disabilities should not only be introduced to lateral opportunities, but also leadership, management, and skills training. If formal training is conducted the location or room should be accessible including materials for the visually impaired such as large print, interpreters for those who are deaf or hard of hearing as well as any other accommodation that induces an equitable environment.

Accountability and Self-development

Employers should encourage employees with disabilities to take accountability for their professional growth and career development. They should be provided with resources that inform them of pertinent developments in their field of work and held accountable to keep up with new developments.

Performance Appraisals

Employees with disabilities should not be exempt from timely feedback, 90-day or annual reviews, this transparency allows individuals to know their strengths, weaknesses, and areas that need to be developed. If a role has been restructured to accommodate the employee, the completion of goals and evaluation should be measured by the specific tasks they perform. However, the tool for measuring success within the role should be identical for all employees. The appraisal process should be explained to the employee, including their right to comment on areas they disagree or agree on, as well as their refusal to sign and add an addendum.

Once all parties agree on the finalized version it should be signed. Remember that areas of development including solutions should be discussed so that the employee can be successful over the next year. Lastly, be sure to have a career discussion that includes new goals and is meaningful to the work the employee would love to do.

What if their desired career path is unachievable?

Employers should discuss any goals that are unachievable only after they have evaluated the employee's performance within the role and/or discussed an unrealistic goal. An example is if an employee whose diagnosis prohibits them from operating a motor vehicle states they would love to be a delivery driver the employer could allow them to ride with a delivery driver and take the items to the customer's door or utilize a bike to transport orders within a reasonable distance.

Employers should always attempt to alter the goal to ensure the employee can pursue their desired career path. An employer should only discuss an employee not being a good fit for a new role when every resource or accommodation has been exhausted. However, encouraging individuals within their current roles, offering leadership experience, work travel as available, and training can retain talent and show employees you care.



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Creating a Positive and Inclusive Work Culture

A positive work culture understands that for employees to perform well there must be policies in place that encourage and enforce respect, trust, and empathy. Employers must understand that employee well-being is quintessential to the success of any business or organization. A great salary or brand name may attract employees, but a positive and inclusive work culture is critical to retention. What is in your tool belt?

Clear and Effective Communication

All employees desire clear and concise job expectations, as ambiguity causes frustration and dissension. Employees should know what is expected of them, and this happens through clearly communicated expectations. Furthermore, employees should be encouraged to communicate with one another, resolve conflicts with peers, and share ideas and concerns.

Leadership should be easily accessible and provide timely feedback. This is especially important when employing individuals with disabilities. Literal communication is vital when employing neurodivergent individuals. A neurodivergent person refers to someone who is on the spectrum or someone whose brain processes information in a way that is not typical of most individuals. Furthermore, literal communication prevents missed deadlines on time-sensitive projects or tasks and ensures employees with disabilities have clear job expectations.



***Say what you mean and mean what you say.
No idioms, few acronyms, be explicit and prescriptive.
– Tyla Grant, Creative Strategist***

Tyla Gant provided some excellent examples of literal communication in the workplace:

Instead of This...	Say This....	Why?
When will this be done?	I need this by 6 pm, will it be done by then?	Probing questions with no context on your expectations are hard to answer.
Let us reconnect at EOD	Put a meeting in for 5:30 pm or send me an email update before you log off.	We all end our day at various times, throw in time zones and there is even less clarity.
How is it going?	How are you? Or where are you at with [x] task?	What is it? Am I it? Is work it? Make it clear.



Employers must understand there is a difference between clear communication and literal communication

Literal communication is a form of accommodation, and employers must understand there is a difference between clear communication and literal communication. An example of the difference is being at a work event and asking the group do they want a drink, and they respond yes, bring a couple.

A peer with autism may bring back exactly two drinks because a couple means exactly that. However, someone without autism may bring enough for the entire group. Literal communication requires you to say exactly what you mean, and it would require you to reply, yes, we would love drinks for everyone.

Cultivate a Learning Culture

Harmonious work environments are those that encourage both individual and organizational learning by providing access to both external and internal resources. This can be in the form of internal training opportunities, guest speakers, LinkedIn premium subscriptions, conferences, and more. Employers should welcome questions, even those that tactfully challenge current processes or that could lead to organization or business improvement.

To successfully cultivate a learning culture organizations or businesses must equip employees with the skills to master effective communication and feedback. Conversations that include regular feedback allow employees to correct areas that need improvement, thus allowing mastery-level development. Employees with disabilities thrive with timely and tactful feedback coupled with solutions. If necessary, always be prepared to provide examples of current behavior and suggestions on how they can improve.

The Center for Creative Leadership offers the following suggestions:

- **Lunch-and-Learns:** senior leaders are storytellers who share their experiences and what they have learned recently and throughout their career journey.
- **After-Action Reviews:** where teams regularly take a few minutes to share what they learned from a project or experience.
- **Learning Communities:** where employees can share what they have learned with similarly situated peers, and they can discuss together how they are applying this learning in their everyday work.
- **Designated Development Days:** where teams or company-wide sharing of lessons learned is expected and honored.

Each of these must be inclusive and accessible across the organization or business. There should be a variety of delivery formats to meet the needs of learners and their abilities. Encouraged learning includes creating time and space for this to occur, not simply offering tools and resources. Leadership should set aside time to coach, work alongside, and develop employees.

Invitation to the Table

All employees should be offered a seat at the table when developing new initiatives, taking on challenging projects, or brainstorming on how to continue growing and strengthening the company; especially if their area of expertise will add value to the conversation. An example of this is discussing inclusion without having marginalized groups at the table. We cannot serve well without listening well, and that comes with hearing from experts in areas of concern or need for development. Furthermore, it says I both hear and see you. As an employer says, I understand that your perspective is important and will increase the likelihood of inclusive practices



Resources

<p>Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services</p>	<p>Phone: 800-545-7763 Address: 402 W. Washington St., #W453 P.O. Box 7083, MS26 Indianapolis, IN 46207 Website: https://www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs/</p>
<p>Bureau of Disabilities Services</p>	<p>Email: BDS.Help@fssa.in.gov Address: 402 W. Washington Street, Rm W453, MS46 Indianapolis, IN 46207 Website: https://www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs/developmental-disability-services/</p>
<p>Vocational Rehabilitation</p>	<p>Website: https://www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs/rehabilitation-employment/vocational-rehabilitation-employment/</p>
<p>Indiana Assistive Technology Act</p>	<p>Phone: 317-466-2013 Address: 4740 Kingsway Drive Indianapolis, IN 46205 Website: https://www.eastersealstech.com/about/the-indiana-assistive-technology-indata-project/</p>
<p>Indiana Disability Rights</p>	<p>Phone: 317-722-5555 Address: 4755 Kingsway Drive Suite 100 Indianapolis, IN 46205 Website: https://www.in.gov/idr/</p>
<p>The Arc of Indiana</p>	<p>Phone: 317-977-2375 Address: 143 W. Market St#200 Indianapolis, IN 46204 Website: www.arcind.org</p>

Resources

Americans Disabilities Act	Website: https://www.ada.gov/
Civil Rights Section 508	Website: https://www.justice.gov/crt/section-508-home-page-0
Disability Etiquette Resources	https://disabilityin.org/resource/disability-etiquette/ https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/disability_etiquette_guide.pdf https://www.easterseals.com/support-and-education/facts-about-disability/disability-etiquette.html
Interviewing Tips	https://ncdj.org/resources/interviewing-tips/ https://www.understood.org/en/articles/8-inclusive-ways-to-rethink-your-interview-strategy-for-people-with-disabilities https://adminfinance.umw.edu/hr/employment-opportunities/best-practices/diversity-and-inclusiveness/interviewing-persons-with-disabilities/ https://askearn.org/page/interviews
Carter's Play Place	cpp@cartersplayplace.com
Howdy Homemade	howdy@howdyindy.com
Smoke Show Catering & Crew	llholding@gmail.com