

Above and Beyond:

Employment Practices

Suggestions for creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for ALL people to help make your business or service stand out

Recruiting and Hiring:

- Post job announcements on accessible Internet job boards, magazines, newsletters and other disability related publications, including job posting sites specific to veterans with disabilities
- Join employer networking groups, such as the [US Business Leadership Network](#) or one of its local affiliates, that recognize and promote best practices in hiring people with disabilities
- Regularly participate in job fairs focused on people with disabilities, sponsored by such organizations as [Workforce Solutions](#), local Mayor's Committees on People with Disabilities, etc
- Forge a partnership with Local, State, and Federal entities, such as the [Texas Department on Assistive and Rehabilitative Services](#) (DARS), the [US Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy](#) (ODEP), Texas Workforce Commission [Disability Navigator Initiative](#), [Job Accommodation Network](#) (JAN), the [Employer Assistance and Resource Network](#) (EARN), etc (See Resource Listings below)
- Display [universal access symbols](#) in all job postings to indicate the company's openness to qualified applicants with disabilities
- Use high-profile wording to advertise your company as an Equal Opportunity Employer in all print and electronic materials
- Provide application materials in various formats (braille, large print, electronic)
- Work with local high schools, community colleges and other local institutions of learning that offer programs specific to students with disabilities
- Connect with internship and recruitment programs designed exclusively for students with disabilities, such as the [Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities](#) (WRP), [Project SEARCH](#), and others (See Resource Listings below)
- Work with local, State, and Federal veterans' associations and support groups to recruit veterans with disabilities; develop specific and targeted strategies for recruiting, hiring, and integrating veterans with disabilities
- Include people with disabilities on the recruitment team

Interviews and Training:

- Make sure the interview location is fully accessible, and be familiar with directions to and within the facility (parking, restrooms, etc)
- Provide training to all who are involved in the interview process on [People First language](#) and [disability etiquette](#)
- Set up an on-site training room to simulate the actual workplace
- Work with local disability organizations to set up practice interviews, both to help the applicant learn skills and to provide a way of identifying potential candidates for open positions in the company
- Adopt a formal training program on how and why to hire people with disabilities, and distribute it to all employees responsible for recruiting and/or interviewing applicants
- Encourage managers and supervisors to approach ALL employees and job candidates with an open mind about abilities and strengths
- Provide Leadership Training courses for all employees and encourage people with disabilities to participate by having training materials available in various formats, honor accommodations requests, etc

Workplace Environment and Team Building:

- Require [disability etiquette](#) training to all staff and new hires, including information on [People First language](#), basic [ADA regulations](#), etc; include information on “invisible disabilities,” such as mental illness and chronic health conditions, as well as temporary disabilities
- Train all HR staff on basic American Sign Language and offer ASL classes during work hours to other interested managers and staff
- Schedule recreational activities in which ALL employees can participate in some capacity; make sure all activities outside of work take place in an accessible environment
- Ensure that all managers have a list of suggested resources for disability questions, accommodation requests, etc
- Sponsor and participate in activities hosted by local disability organizations, such as [Special Olympics](#), [Easter Seals](#), [Goodwill Industries](#), etc (See Resource Listings below)
- Create an advisory team in the workplace to be available to discuss and make suggestions on workplace disability issues; include employees with and without disabilities
- Focus on both physical and service accessibility to employees and customers that goes above the legal requirements

- Consider establishing a scholarship program for employees who want outside training to increase their skills
- Assign new employees with disabilities a Job Coach or a Mentor when appropriate
- Offer support services to employees, such as helping veterans with disabilities apply for their benefits, housing contacts for those who might be homeless or interested in more independent living, etc
- Sponsor a [“Sign of the Day”](#) activity to teach all employees one valuable ASL word
- Create an [Employee Resource Group \(ERG\)](#), an internal organizational structure to address specific needs of people with disabilities
- Plan occasional field trips for management teams to disability-related sites, such as [Lighthouse for the Blind](#), Goodwill training facilities, certified suppliers owned by people with disabilities, and other businesses that hire and train people with disabilities frequently
- Regularly review your company’s policies to ensure they convey a commitment to an inclusive workplace culture; be open to suggestions for improvement
- Remember to have specific plans in place for [emergency evacuation](#) for all employees with disabilities
- Offer an option of business cards in braille for all employees
- Support service dog training on-site
- Facilitate a service dog relief area for employees using a service dog
- Research suppliers for your business who regularly employ people with disabilities and contract with them for essential supplies
- Host frequent “brown-bag” lunches to talk about disability issues in the workplace, disability etiquette, etc; consider inviting a speaker from a local disability organization
- Publish articles in the company newsletter recognizing contributions of employees with disabilities
- Spotlight various events in history that focus on people with disabilities and their contributions to society; ideas for the project can be found on the [Department of Labor’s website](#), or on [ODEP’s Disability History](#) page, or on the [Disability History Museum](#) website, or on the [Texas Governor’s Committee on People with Disabilities’](#) website
- Have in place a system for all employees to identify barriers and concerns without fear of reprisal, as well as a way to provide the information anonymously

- Include photos of employees with visible disabilities in consumer or promotional advertising when employees in general are represented; also include photos of employees with visible disabilities in internal publications
- Stay in contact with employees who may be out of the office for extended periods due to a disability, keeping them in the loop and maintaining their relationship with coworkers.
- Consider offering transportation option to employees with disabilities who cannot drive, such as carpooling, a company van service, etc
- Emphasize benefits of the Buddy System for safety and efficiency when lifting, climbing ladders, etc
- Encourage all employees to maintain a Fragrance-Free environment
- Maintain a dedicated email address to receive input on accessibility issues
- Make sure that all rooms and facilities have good ventilation and indoor air quality

Innovative Accommodations:

- Provide company cell phones for text messaging between employees with hearing impairments and others in the workplace or for apps that help provide access to helpful information
- Recognize innovative accommodation ideas monthly, quarterly, or annually with an awards presentation program
- Establish a Disability Accommodation Fund to pull together budget money and donations for accommodations that may go above and beyond those required by law
- Host an on-site accommodation store to make readily available such items as low-vision aids, talking clocks, etc
- Assign a knowledgeable person or team for assessing, evaluating, and providing accommodations in the best and most efficient manner
- Inform all managers and employees that they may contact the [Job Accommodation Network](#) (JAN) to receive confidential and free advice, as well as technical assistance on accommodations
- Create an online system to track accommodations in order to document their efficiency and successful use
- Make sure all employees know who to contact for a request for accommodations
- Look into sign language software for basic communication between supervisors and employees who are deaf or hard of hearing

Technology in the Workplace:

- Establish a network of Information Technology (IT) professionals, Human Resource staff, managers across divisions, etc, to ensure fully accessible Internet and Intranet services, as well as fully accessible print and electronic documents
- Assign a Chief Accessibility Technology Officer
- Design your business's website so that it prominently features international disability symbols and promotes its disability-friendly atmosphere
- Cultivate relationships with developers of accessible technology software to test their products and to ensure continued product compatibility
- Post a link on your website during October to the main [National Disability Employment Awareness Month website](#)
- Post the company's policy statement involving inclusion practices and innovative accommodations, recruitment and hiring initiatives, and targeted internship and mentoring programs
- Evaluate the accessibility of internal information and communication technology (ICT) on a regular basis with automated accessibility testing tools and by evaluating comments from users
- Provide outsourcing guidelines to all suppliers and business partners and establish clear procurement policies to ensure that contracts and communications between the organizations will be fully accessible
- Use internal organization-wide communication to foster awareness, acceptance, and support among all levels of staff

October's National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) ideas:

- Order and display both [National](#) and [State](#) NDEAM Posters throughout the workplace, including public areas, to raise awareness
- Freshen up bulletin boards in break areas and other common spaces to post positive messages about your company's commitment to diversity; the annual NDEAM Theme can be a good starting point (ex: "What Can YOU Do?")
- Display artwork by employees and interns with disabilities in the break room and other common areas
- Include social media in your observance of NDEAM; [sample postings and tweets](#) can be found on the ODEP website
- Issue an NDEAM Press Release highlighting your focus on hiring and including people with disabilities during October

- Participate in Disability Mentoring Day, a career development opportunity for youths with disabilities, on the Third Wednesday in October; ideas and information for implementing an event are available from the [American Association of People with Disabilities](#)
- Request an NDEAM Proclamation from the Mayor or the Governor to display and to present at any NDEAM activities you are hosting; to request a Proclamation from the Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities, phone 512-463-5739 or email GCPD@governor.state.tx.us
- Sponsor a poster contest among employees (and perhaps include family members as well), using the current year's [NDEAM theme](#)
- Send out an organization-wide message from the CEO or leader of your business recognizing NDEAM and the contributions of employees with disabilities

Resources and Reference Notes:

- United States Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP): <http://www.dol.gov/odep/>
- Job Accommodation Network (JAN): <https://askjan.org/>
- Basic ADA Regulations and Technical Assistance Materials: <http://www.ada.gov/publicat.htm>
- ODEP Ideas for Employers and Employees: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam/employers.htm>
- ODEP Ideas for Federal Employees: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam/agencies.htm>
- ODEP Ideas for Disability-Related Organizations: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam/disability.htm>
- ODEP Ideas for Associations and Unions: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam/associations.htm>
- ODEP Ideas for Educators and Youth Service Professionals: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam/educators.htm>
- ODEP National Disability Employment Awareness Month: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam/>
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network (EARN): Resources to Help Employers Hire and Retain People with Disabilities: <http://www.askearn.org/index.cfm>
- People First Language, from the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities: <http://www.txddc.state.tx.us/resources/publications/pfanguage.asp>
- Disability Etiquette, from Easter Seals: http://www.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ntl_etiquette
- Disability: Dispelling the Myths: http://www.ncsu.edu/dso/general/disability_myths.pdf

- US Business Leadership Network: <http://www.usbln.org/>
- Workforce Solutions: <http://www.wrksolutions.com/jobs/individualsdisabilities.html>
- Business Strategies That Work: A Framework for Disability Inclusion: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/pdf/BusinessStrategiesThatWork.pdf>
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network: A Toolkit for Employee Resource Groups (ERG): http://askearn.org/docs/ERG_Toolkit.pdf
- To order National NDEAM Poster (FREE): <http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam/resources.htm#Poster>
- To order Texas State NDEAM Poster (FREE): http://governor.state.tx.us/disabilities/ndeam/ndeam_poster/
- ODEP: Building an Inclusive Workforce Desktop Reference: <http://promotions.usa.gov/odep/20100727.pdf>
- What Can YOU Do Outreach Toolkit: <http://www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org/blog/index.php/toolkit/>
- ODEP Sample Social Media messages: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam/resources.htm#SocialMedia>
- Sample NDEAM Participation Press Release: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam/resources.htm#PressRelease>
- Disability Mentoring Day information from AAPD: <http://www.aapd.com/what-we-do/employment/disability-mentoring-day/>
- Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS): <http://www.dars.state.tx.us/>
- US Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP): <http://www.dol.gov/odep/>
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: <http://www.eeoc.gov/>
- ADA National Network: <http://adata.org/>
- Texas Workforce Commission Disability Navigator Initiative: <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/boards/disnav.html>
- US Access Board: <http://www.access-board.gov/>
- Universal Access Symbols (Downloadable version): <https://www.graphicartistsguild.org/resources/disability-access-symbols/>

- Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/wrp/>
- Think Beyond the Label: <http://www.thinkbeyondthelabel.com/Default.aspx>
- Emergency Evacuation Plans: <https://askjan.org/media/emergency.html>
- Project SEARCH: <http://www.projectsearch.us/>
- Special Olympics Texas: <http://www.sotx.org/>
- Easter Seals: <http://www.easterseals.com/>
- Goodwill Industries: <http://www.goodwill.org/>
- Lighthouse for the Blind: <http://www.lighthouse.org/>
- “Sign of the Day” from Signing Savvy: <http://www.signingsavvy.com/signoftheday>
- US Chamber of Commerce: http://www.uschamber.com/sites/default/files/reports/Disability_final_v2.pdf

***This document is available to download in a Word or PDF format at:

http://governor.state.tx.us/disabilities/awards/employment_awards/