

# Employer Practices and Attitudes that Facilitate Employment of People with Disabilities

The government has historically implemented social policies such as diversity and inclusion, employment first, and integrated employment initiatives, to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. More recently, policies have targeted employers and their organizations to reduce unemployment rates among people with disabilities. To improve the employment of individuals with disabilities, it is important to identify disability-inclusive practices used by employers and their impact on the recruitment and hiring process.

## What are Employer Practices and Attitudes?

“Employer practices” is a term that broadly refers to how businesses are organized and structured. In essence, employer practices are the policies and guidelines employers create to operate their business. Practices related to recruitment, hiring decisions, retention strategies, job assignments, work schedules, and employee benefits (as well as other practices) may affect the ability of individuals with disabilities to successfully obtain and maintain employment. Furthermore, employer attitudes (i.e., beliefs, perspectives, opinions) about individuals with disabilities may influence the practices employers adopt and, in turn, their relative success with including individuals with disabilities in the workplace.

## What the Research Says

There are several employer practices that increase the likelihood that a business will hire people with disabilities. These practices include having strong commitment from senior management, internships for individuals with disabilities, an accessible online application system, a diversity plan that includes disability as a form of diversity, and explicit organizational goals for hiring people

with disabilities (Erikson et al., 2014; Henry et al., 2014). Employer attitudes and beliefs also have an impact on hiring practices. Employers who are motivated to hire people with disabilities believe that people with disabilities bring unique perspectives into the work environment that foster innovation within the organization (Henry et al., 2014; Nagtaegaal et al., 2023). They also believe hiring people with disabilities is associated with reduced turnover rates, improved retention, and acquisition of productive loyal employees (Lindsay et al., 2018).

## Guidelines for Practice

Understanding employer practices and attitudes that are associated with businesses that hire individuals with disabilities can be extremely helpful during job development. Regardless of whether the goal is paid employment or the development of job sampling sites, it is important to identify businesses that are committed to including people with disabilities in the workforce. Transition professionals may find the following ideas for gathering information about employer practices and attitudes helpful during job development.

- *Examine the learning experiences offered within businesses* – Do they have internships or have they created specific job positions for other employees/students? These employers may be willing to customize positions to meet the needs of the student or allow students to intern on the job before they pursue a paid position.
- *Ask questions about hiring initiatives* – Does the business have a significant commitment to recruiting and hiring people with disabilities? Arrange a meeting with the supervisor to gain insights into the business and offer your help in their recruitment efforts.

- *Assess the extent to which the business values and promotes inclusion* – Look for evidence on their website (e.g., mission statement, diversity plan, application materials) and ask about the priorities of senior management with regards to hiring, training, and retaining employees.

## Additional Resources

### Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology (PEAT)

<https://www.peatworks.org>

*PEAT promotes workplace digital accessibility and offers guidance on creating accessible emerging technologies.*

### National Organization on Disability (NOD)

<https://www.nod.org/>

*NOD promotes employment opportunities for people with disabilities. By utilizing their programs and services, companies can gain a competitive edge by hiring individuals with disabilities.*

## References

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