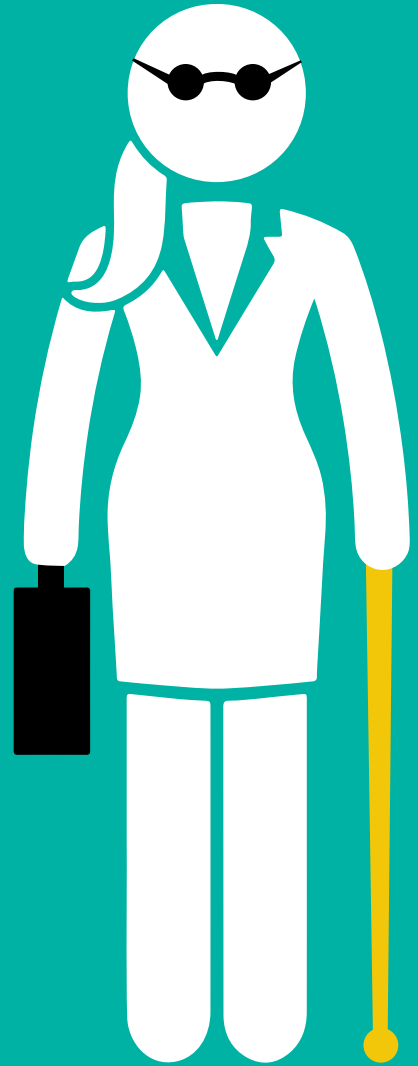


# Inclusive Hiring

Guide to hiring more people with disabilities



# Ready to Recruit?

Before we explore how you can use this guide to start expanding your hiring pool, let's take a look at 7 reasons you should start hiring workers with disabilities:

- 1. Less turnover** - Workers with disabilities had, on average, an 80% LOWER turnover rate than other workers.
- 2. Increased revenues** - studies show businesses hiring workers with disabilities see a 24% rise in revenues.
- 3. Improved brand perception** - families supporting disability-related issues invest 54% more of their disposable income into companies hiring workers with disabilities.
- 4. Expanded talent pool** - the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is 12.6%, meaning there are many more applicants seeking jobs from this community than you might have previously thought.
- 5. Reduced absenteeism** - workers with disabilities are more likely to have higher rates of work attendance than other workers.
- 6. Diversity is opportunity** - hiring diverse populations can lend new perspectives and experiences to your team. Sometimes the best way to get your employees to think “outside of the box” is to hire outside the box.
- 7. It's the right thing to do** - Hiring diverse employees is not just part of corporate responsibility, it's the right thing to do. Discriminatory hiring practices should be eliminated so all applicants have an equal opportunity to pursue gainful employment.

So now that you are FULLY convinced, we encourage you to continue with this guide to see how you can start today!

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29392591/>

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## How to Use This Guide

Our organization has developed this inclusive hiring guide for employers who are looking to improve their hiring and support practices for workers with disabilities. It is intended to be both an educational tool and a reference guide for managers to diversify, expand, and strengthen their workforce. This guide will also provide you with practical tools you can use to attract and work with employees with disabilities. It is NOT a replacement for direct experience and working directly with a disability service organization.

# Disability Defined

## A Quick Review

Let us take a look at the types of disabilities you may encounter in your search for new employees.

### Physical Disabilities



Examples: Spinal Injury, Muscular Dystrophy, Short Stature

### Deaf & Hard of Hearing



Examples: Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deaf-blind

### Learning Disabilities



Examples: ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia

### Brain Injury



Examples: Traumatic Brain Injury, Post Traumatic Stress Injury

### Medical and Neurological



Examples: Cancer, Diabetes, HIV/AIDS, Multiple Sclerosis, Epilepsy

### Mental Health Conditions



Examples: Anxiety Disorder, Bipolar, Depression, Schizophrenia

### Vision Loss



Examples: Low Vision, Visual Impairment, Blindness, DeafBlind

### Speech and Language



Examples: Apraxia, Dysarthria, Stuttering

### Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities



Examples: Autism Spectrum, Spina Bifida, Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome



# Attracting Diverse Applicants

## Benefits

We all know, offering employees a competitive benefits package will draw in employees of all kinds to apply for your open positions. However, there are a few of these offerings that really stand out to candidates with disabilities. Let's take a moment and explore what you might want to consider adding to your benefits portfolio and why it would be important to employees with disabilities.

## Remote Work

Offering ways for employees to work remotely gives flexibility to employees with disabilities. This trend is already becoming the norm in many organizations, but has always been something sought by the disability community.

Accessible, reliable travel can be a major barrier for workers with disabilities.



There are few places more accessible than an individual's own home. Many of the specialized tools or personal assistance an employee may need to execute their job duties, are already in-place and working. Why complicate things by forcing an individual to come into the office, where things are foreign and must be adapted? Sometimes simple solutions such as these can help bridge the gap between you and the ever expanding talent pool of individuals with disabilities.



## Where are the Gaps?

Take a look at the benefits you offer staff and see where there may be gaps between what you currently provide and what employees with disabilities may be looking for.

- Someone with a mental illness will be looking for a robust insurance package covering services for psychiatric care or prescription medications. Others may be looking for the option of taking extended medical leave for addiction rehab or to handle a mental health crisis.
- Are you able to offer flexible scheduling? Some of your employees may need to rely on public transit or caregivers for transport. This method can be unreliable or is only available during certain times of the day. Allowing for flexible scheduling eliminates this barrier.

These items can be quite attractive to a job seeker with disabilities, so take a look and see where the “gaps” are in your benefits package.

## Work With Experts

There are many specialized organizations providing direct support to individuals with disabilities. When recruiting new talent it is always a good idea to develop relationships with these groups.

Many of these organizations are preparing individuals to either enter the workforce for the first time or to develop their already existing employable skills.

If they know you are open and interested in hiring the individuals they represent, they will often reach out with opportunities or recommend candidates.



# Government Agencies, Schools, and Service Organizations



Whether it is a new graduate or an experienced worker looking for a new opportunity, these three groups can help you find candidates for your next opening.

## **Government**

Agencies like the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS), the Department of Labor (DOL), and the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHA) can point you toward valuable resources in your state.

## **Schools**

Schools with special needs programs or schools that work exclusively with people with disabilities often have transition programs to help get graduates ready for adult life, including employment.

## **Service Organizations**

Service Organizations, like Easterseals New Hampshire, provide a wide range of services for workers with disabilities. Their program participants are always on the lookout for promising job prospects. This is the best way to find trained, enthusiastic workers with disabilities.

These organizations can help you navigate to additional resources and navigate any rules and regulations.



# Showcasing Disability Content

Inclusion is about more than putting a disclaimer on the bottom of your job posting that says “we are an equal opportunity employer.” Take a moment and do an audit of your company’s public-facing content to see if you are featuring people with disabilities on your website, social media, or advertisements.

If a potential applicant with disabilities does not see themselves represented in your company’s visual or written content, why would they assume they are welcome in your ranks?

If you don’t currently employ anyone with a disability, there are still plenty of stock photos you can use to showcase disability as an accepted part of your company culture.

Companies have acknowledged the importance of featuring diversity in their web and print content when it comes to race, gender, and ethnicity; but we still have a ways to go when it comes to showcasing disability. Share a social post in acknowledgment of Mental Health Awareness month or hold a job fair in honor of Disability Employment Month. There are plenty of ways to show your commitment to inclusion.

You should not present this content in any way that is exploitative. Instead, you should feature the images in the same way you would any other content. Normalizing disability visibility is the goal here, not only within your company, but everywhere. This empowers workers with disabilities and helps everyone.





# Accessible Spaces

It may be necessary to look over your office space and take stock of what may or may not be accessible. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has set out some solid guidelines and requirements, but it does not cover everything. Please consider the following before your employee comes into the office for their first day:

- Does your building have proper ramp access?
- Are the cubicles and meeting rooms wide enough for a wheelchair to navigate and access?
- Are your bathrooms accessible?
- Do your emergency evacuation plans take into account having someone with an intellectual or physical disability?

**Please review accessible building standards with your architect or building manager to ensure everything is up to code.**

## Make Your Content Accessible

Web accessibility has grown exponentially over the years. Developers have created a wide range of digital tools to help people with disabilities to access and benefit from the world's greatest tool: the Internet.



*HOT TIP: When you show your commitment to accessibility, you are sending a “signal” to people with disabilities that they can and should apply for a job*

## Make Your Content Accessible (Cont.)



These tools do not all automatically work however, and require contribution from you, the content creator. If you are publishing items on your website or social media, you want to make sure everyone is able to access, read, and interact with your content.

Not only does this send a signal that your company is disability friendly, it even helps your Search Engine Optimization (SEO), giving you a leg up on your competition.

We have put together a web and social media content accessibility checklist to help you make sure you are keeping everything accessible. It includes items such as including alt-text on images, captions on videos, and limited emoji use and reliance. You can find them on page 18. More detailed web parameters can be found at:

[www.levelaccess.com/](http://www.levelaccess.com/)



# Inclusive Recruitment

Employers are always looking to draw in top talent to apply for open positions in their company. However, if you are not adapting your advertising practices to be more inclusive, job seekers may not even attempt to apply. In this section, we will explain the small details you may be missing when attempting to attract applicants with disabilities.

## Job Descriptions



Scan your job descriptions for ableist language. Focus your descriptions on only what is core to fulfilling the position's requirements. Also, see if there is flexibility in those requirements - you might be surprised how much of a difference a small change can make.

We have provided a sample job posting below to help get you in the mindset of creating inclusive job descriptions and postings.

Take a look and think about how it would appear to a person with a disability. See if you can spot the \*ableist language and check on the next page to see how many you got correct.

### Job Description

This position requires being in the office five days a week and be able to arrive at the office on short notice. To succeed in this position, a candidate must be able to sit for extended periods of time. Candidate must have a valid driver's license and access to their own vehicle.

### Required skills

- Clear verbal communicator
- Proficient in Microsoft Word
- College degree
- Can lift at least 20lbs
- Strategic thinker

*\*Ableist: discriminatory or prejudice against individuals with disabilities.*

## Job Description

This position requires **being in the office five days a week** and be able to arrive at the office **on short notice**. To succeed in this position, a candidate must be able to **sit for extended periods of time**. Candidate **must have a valid driver's license and access to their own vehicle**.

## Required skills

- **Clear verbal communicator**
- Proficient in Microsoft Word
- College degree
- **Can lift at least 20lbs**
- Strategic thinker

The potentially ableist language is written in **red** above. How did you do?

Now, not all of this language is entirely problematic. For example, if the position truly does require the individual to be on-call and come in on short notice, then by all means, include that language. However, if this is something you include on all your job descriptions regardless of the position's duties, it could be excluding perfectly capable candidates for no good reason.

A good example of that is "can lift at least 20lbs." You can find some version of this on just about any job posting. It is stock language, often included without thinking. If you were to hire a person with a disability who lacks this ability, these small lifting tasks can be fielded by one of the many other employees in the office when the need arises. Meanwhile, the employee with a disability can continue to focus on the other job responsibilities core to their position.

The same can be said for needing to have "access to their own vehicle" or "have a valid driver's license." As long as the individual can get to work and is able to do their work well, why would you care how they get there?

These changes require a shift in thinking on behalf of the employer. Don't let yourself get caught in the trap of "but this is the way we've always done it." Instead, find a way to adapt to the changing landscape of our modern workforce. This kind of forward thinking will serve you well, not just when hiring, but throughout your entire operation.

## Accessible Job Postings

When creating job postings, make sure they are accessible.

This is particularly true when posting a job ad, as many are images or even video.

If an image, ensure to fill in “alt text” so screen readers can describe what’s there for those with vision impairment. If a video, be sure to use closed captions and that they are accurate and clear for someone who is deaf or hard of hearing.

You should also ensure your website and online application portal follows all web accessibility guidelines. (see checklist in the Resources chapter)



## Location Location Location

Another way of signaling to people with disabilities that you would like them to apply to your jobs, is to post ads where people with disabilities will see them.

Diversify your placements to include disability centric websites such as [disabilityscoop.com](http://disabilityscoop.com) or even a local service organization’s website.

As we mentioned before, developing relationships with these organizations will also signal to them to send prospective candidates your way.

Some places also have physical locations you can leave behind brochures as well. Don’t be afraid to ask if you can leave some materials behind.

# Interview Etiquette

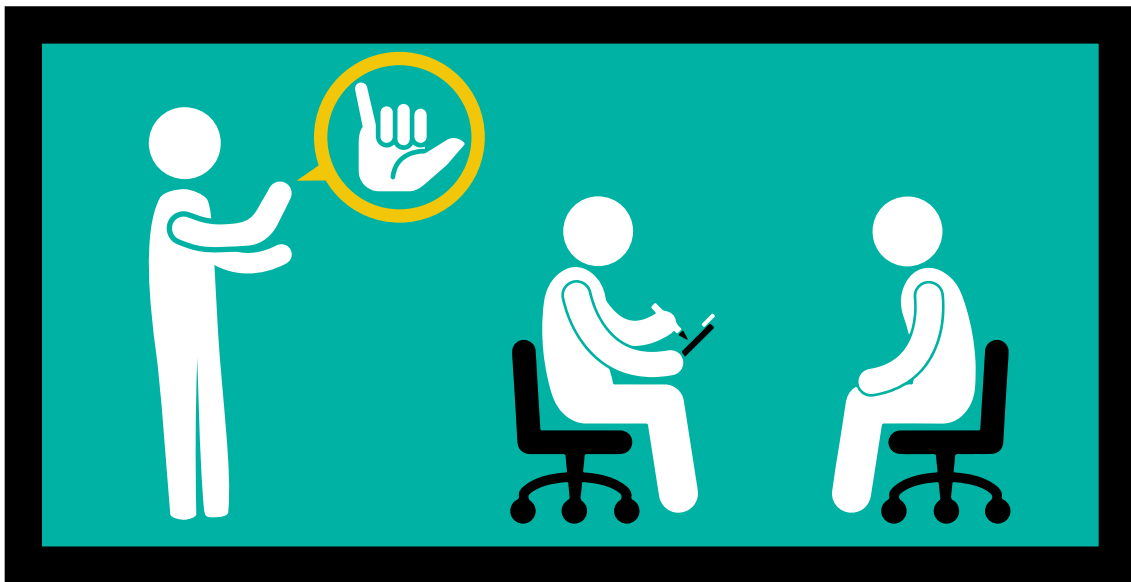
## Offer and Provide Accommodations

When interviewing a candidate, it is not only acceptable to ask if they require any accommodations for the interview, it is necessary.

This includes having an accessible interview space for large wheelchairs, hiring interpreters for ASL users, allowing service animals in the building and providing paperwork in large print or Braille, if needed.

Nothing will turn a prospective candidate away faster than refusing to provide the necessary accommodations to conduct an interview.

This applies for remote interviews as well. Be sure to set up your virtual interviews accordingly. You can use Zoom's live transcription service or hire an interpreter for on-camera interviews or take advantage of a Video Relay Service (VRS) for phone calls.



*HOT TIP: When working with an interpreter, be sure to look at the person you are interviewing when speaking as the interpreters role is just to facilitate the conversation. The candidate should always have the interviewer's attention.*

## Watch Your Language!

No one likes the taste of shoe leather, so don't end up with your foot in your mouth. Be mindful of your words during the interview.

There are certain words, such as "Hearing-Impaired" or "wheel-chair bound" which are considered offensive.

In addition, be sure you are not using language which would signal to the candidate that they might not be able to do the job because of their disability. Such as, "you can't bring your service animal to work" or "if you can't hear the loudspeaker, then I don't know what you'll do."

If you do have a slip-up, there is an easy solution: apologize!

There is no shame in acknowledging a mistake. Many people with disabilities are quite understanding of how complicated this can be to navigate. Good intentions go a long way toward building goodwill.

## Accessible Testing

We realize that some positions require companies to do skills tests before committing to hiring a candidate. This is perfectly fine, as long as you ensure proper accommodations are made to make the test accessible for the individual being tested. For example, you might need to convert a paper test into Braille or provide a computer compatible with an adaptive switch to control the mouse cursor.

Be sure to set aside some time to update your materials.





## Onboarding and Training



“You’re hired!” can sometimes feel like the end of a long journey. But for those of us who know better, we know it is only the beginning of one.

When it comes to onboarding and training your new employee, you usually have everything worked down to a finely tuned routine. Unfortunately, that routine often does not translate for many people with disabilities. Some of your training videos may not be captioned or someone may have trouble reading small print policy documents.

We recommend working with an expert to review your processes and see how they can be adapted for the new employee. Supported employment specialists are trained in the process and will provide you with the assistance you require.

## Employee Accommodations

### What to Expect with Accommodations

If you hire an employee with a disability, you are going to want to make sure they have all the tools they need to thrive in their new position. For people with disabilities, some of these tools are considered “accommodations,” which assist the individual in carrying out their job responsibilities.

Some individuals may have on-site assistance as part of their accommodations, for example: an employment specialist or worksite instructor. It is still the employee’s responsibility to complete his or her work, but these small supports can go a long way. As the employee becomes more comfortable, these supports may fade away entirely or only serve to assist in personal care or non-job related tasks.

## Most Common

We all rely on tools and work styles that best suit our personalities and preferences. You cannot predict what needs everyone will have until they are hired. Still, there are some common devices and services you can expect to see when working with people with disabilities - many of which you may or may not be familiar with. An employment specialist can provide a free job site analysis and provide recommendations for new hires that are unique to your environment. Below is a listing of these common supports you can expect to see and become familiar with so you're not surprised when they are requested:

- American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters
- Large print or Braille
- Screen reader friendly memos & images
- Adjusted shelf or desk heights
- Job duty reference sheets
- Accessible/Automatic doors
- High-contrast text
- Closed Captions (CC)
- Uncluttered hallways
- Flexible scheduling
- Extended task time
- Adaptive computer equipment
- Accessible Software

These accommodations may feel different and even “out of place” at first, but will eventually become just another part of the workplace.

For example, when someone asks for flexible scheduling, it might mean one employee arrives slightly early or leaves later. This may feel like a minor shift to you, but for someone with a disability, it may mean the difference between unemployment and happily employed. Do not turn away the perfect job candidate for a position over such a small alteration to their schedule.



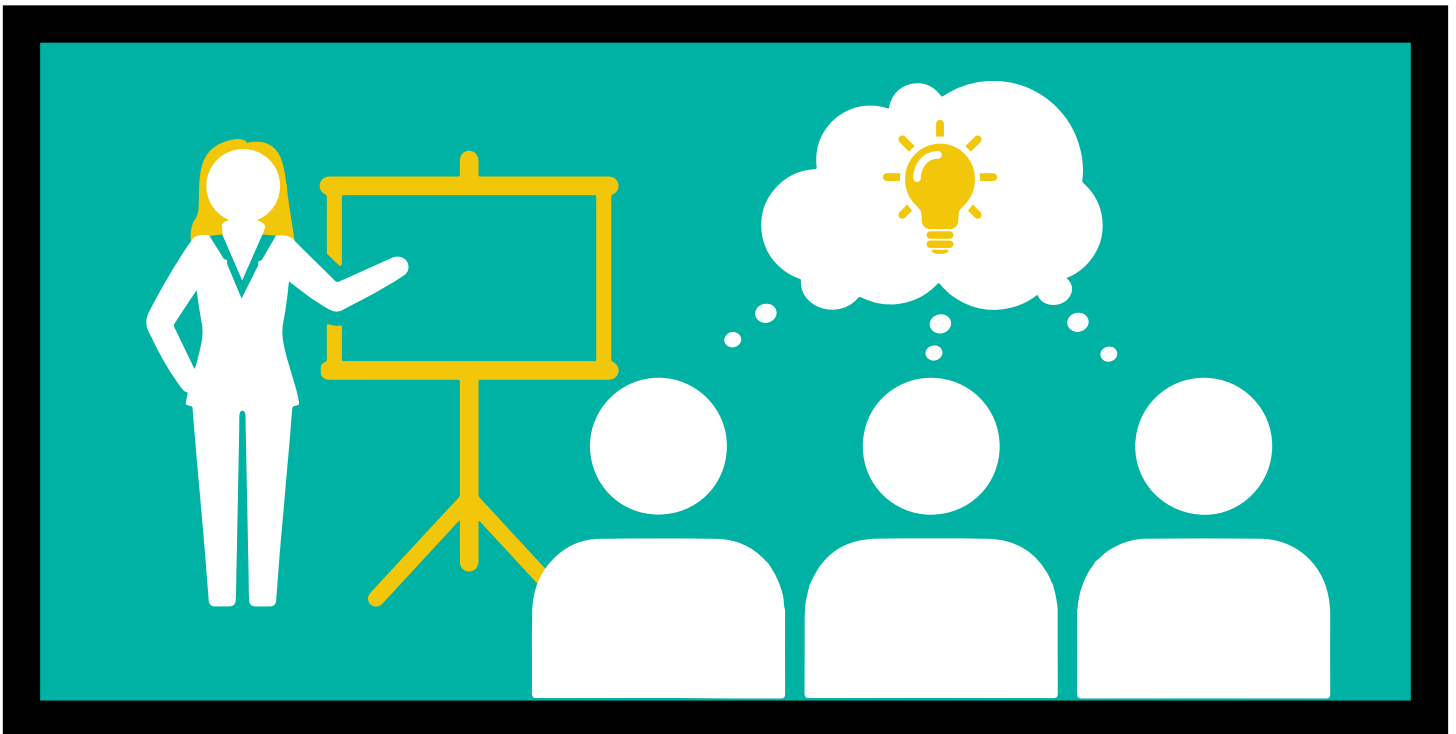
# Workplace Culture

## An Education in Empathy

Hiring an employee with a disability should feel almost identical to hiring anyone else into your company. The unfortunate truth of the matter is that many of your employees have probably not had the opportunity to work with someone with a disability before.

This is why we recommend investing in sensitivity training for staff. Having an expert come in to show staff how disability may manifest and what types of accommodations they may require. Additionally, you can share some of what type of language and actions are and are not appropriate.

These workshops help increase employee empathy and will save you unneeded awkwardness between coworkers.



**Make sure your staff is prepared for the next evolution of the modern workforce. Avoid the awkwardness and give everyone the tools they need to succeed.**

# Outreach, Acceptance, and Respect

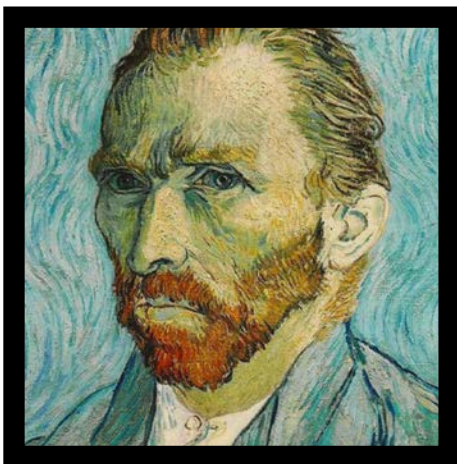
Human Resources (HR) departments are often charged with influencing a company's culture. This makes their activities crucial to setting the tone of the workplace. HR can implement many solutions to ensure your workplace is fully inclusive.

Also, when holding company gatherings or meetings, make sure everyone is able to participate and that any presentations are accessible. If hosting a corporate outing, take the time to ensure the venue and activities are accessible.

These are all considerations HR departments should be thinking about when planning company-wide policies. This will not only make an employee with disabilities feel welcome, it will educate the entirety of your staff as well.

Consider shining a light on disability as well, not just as something that requires accommodation, but as a part of our history. There are many successful CEOs, artists, and historical figures who have had disabilities such as mental illness, physical disability, or intellectual disabilities.

Show your staff that disability does not mean *inability*. Point to the accomplishments of persons with disabilities and show respect for their contributions to society.



Vincent van Gogh



Franklin D. Roosevelt



Temple Grandin



# How can Employers Partner with Easterseals New Hampshire?

**Informational Interviews:** Individuals have the opportunity to speak with someone to learn more about a specific job. Employees share their knowledge and our students learn if a specific career is a good fit for them. Interviews are not lengthy, and are scheduled at the employer's convenience.

**Job Shadowing:** Individuals have the opportunity to observe a job being performed. This is a great way to learn about the skills necessary to perform a specific job. Individuals are exposed to the work environment and see an employee's daily responsibilities. Job Shadows are not lengthy, and are scheduled at the employer's convenience.

**Volunteering:** Individuals have the opportunity to perform tasks at a non-profit organization. Our clients gain experience and a better idea of their skills / interests.

**Work Based Learning:** Students have the opportunity to perform a job at a for-profit business. The employer does not pay our students for the work they perform. Our students gain experience and a better idea whether the job is a good fit for them.

**Customized Employment:** Easterseals Workforce Development staff can collaborate with employers to conduct task analysis and break job descriptions / processes into specific tasks. Individuals who may not be a good fit for a traditional job description may excel at certain tasks and create efficiencies for employers.

**Supported Employment:** Post hire, individuals may be accompanied by a Worksite Instructor who supports them in ensuring they know the job and are performing well. Easterseals provides a Certificate of Insurance which covers liability and workman's compensation insurance for Worksite Instructor.

## **What Are the Benefits to Employers?**

Easterseals Workforce Development staff can provide employers with applicants who are well-suited for open positions or specific tasks. Connecting with us prior to posting a position can save the time and costs of advertising, as well as the time that it takes to screen and interview multiple applicants. Our staff can provide on the job training and follow-up communication to ensure your new hire meets your standards and produces the quality and quantity of work you expect. The services that our staff provide are of no cost to the employer.

Many of the individuals served by Easterseals are eligible for state and federal tax credits granted to the employer such as the **Work Opportunity Tax Credit**. Employers can also benefit from the positive PR of partnering with a reputable nonprofit with an extensive state and national network.

# Thank you for reading!

Scan the code below to learn more about Easterseals Workforce Development



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all abilities. limitless possibilities.