



Employing People with Disabilities in Retail Foodservice Establishments

What's inside BENEFITS & TRAINING TIPS



People with disabilities often are challenged to find employment. About 54 million Americans have one or more physical and/or mental disabilities. This represents about 19 percent of the U.S. population. ►

The hospitality industry's flexible work schedules and low-skill, entry-level jobs provide work opportunities for those with disabilities. This can be a win-win situation for employees and employers.

Adding people with disabilities to the workplace can present unique situations for any organization. Many complexities exist related to defining, accommodating, and understanding different physical and mental disabilities. There are also many benefits for both the organization and the individuals. Research supports this (Páez, 2010).

This publication contains information to help hospitality managers learn more about hiring people with disabilities and accommodations that might be required in the workplace.

Organization responsibility

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed in 1990. This landmark legislation required employers to provide reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with disabilities who are employees or applicants for employment. The Act was broadened in 2009. As a result, employers have the responsibility to make sure employees with disabilities have the same tools and opportunities as other employees in addition to reasonable accommodations to complete job tasks. Through training and reasonable accommodations, employees with disabilities can learn the necessary skills to perform their jobs and contribute to the success of the organization.

Reasonable accommodations

Reasonable accommodations may mean modifications of workplace facilities (such as lowering work counters for someone in a wheelchair) or reconfiguring job descriptions to streamline tasks for an employee with a mental disability. The ADA describes a reasonable accommodation as any change or adjustment to a job, the work environment, or the way things usually are done that would allow a person to apply for a job, perform job functions, or enjoy equal access to benefits available to other individuals in the workplace.

Accommodation examples

- Installation of ramps
- Modification of restrooms
- Sign language interpreters
- Quiet workspaces
- Training and written materials in alternate formats such as audio tapes
- Modification of work or break schedules
- Special equipment such as voice-activated recorders

Training

Human resources training is an important part of management in a work organization. Effective training can increase worker productivity and motivation and decrease employee turnover. Everyone in the workplace benefits from employees having the right knowledge and skills to complete their jobs. For those with disabilities, training is even more important to ensure they are prepared for the job. Generally, training will focus on communication, technical, and social skills needed for the work environment.

Research shows different training methods are successful in different situations and with different types of learners (Páez, Arendt, and Strohbehn, 2011; Páez and Arendt, in press). Finding training methods effective for people with a particular disability is important to increase involvement and development in the organization and to ensure continuity and productivity in the workforce.

Definitions

COMMUNICATION SKILLS refer to the skills needed to use language to interact with others. Training for communication skills will affect the way employees with disabilities interact with coworkers and customers.

TECHNICAL SKILLS are those required to complete tasks using certain equipment or following a specific procedure. Training for technical skills is critical for employees to learn the correct way to do the job. This will impact quality and quantity of work.

SOCIAL SKILLS are needed to interact well with others in the workplace. These include the ability to be pleasant, cooperate, respond politely, and follow directions. Workers with fundamental social skills enhance the overall work environment and quality of guest services.

TIPS FOR TRAINING

- Be specific with directions about what you want done. For example, if working as a salad helper, explain how to wash the produce. (Soap is not necessary!)
- Use one-on-one training. For example, a coworker could show an employee with a mental disability working in the dish room how to handle dirty and clean dishes and the importance of washing hands in between.
- Consider training methods and topics appropriate for the job tasks and the type of worker disability. For example, an employee with physical disabilities might not need as much training time on job content as an employee with a mental disability, but more time on how to complete the tasks with physical limitations.
- Accommodate people with disabilities to their specific needs. For example, an employee with hearing problems might need special seating or audio equipment for a training session.
- Address workplace basics of communication and social skills. Each workplace has its own culture and identity.
- Involve workers without disabilities in discussions about issues that will affect them. For example, if a worker's job duties will change as a result of an employee with a disability, explain why and how the proposed changes will affect them.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR HIRING

- Be specific when developing the job position announcement and the qualifications needed for the job. Be open to modifications to skills required for the job. The job description can serve as a guide.
- Focus the job interview on job-related questions. Do not ask medical questions; questions related to the disability are not legal. Instead, ask whether defined job tasks can be completed.
- Review your organization's mission and purpose. Consider training your current workforce to accept disabled coworkers. Research has found that employees without disabilities change their attitudes toward people with disabilities when there is increased familiarity and contact (Geng-qing & Ou, 2003).
- Contact organizations that work with people with disabilities to find potential employees. (See back cover.)

HIRING CHECKLIST

- Understand the specific disability presented and the accommodations needed
- Identify extra costs for training or modifications in work environment
- Consider additional supervision needed
- Identify changes in work routine
- Reconfigure job responsibilities if needed and update job descriptions and performance review forms
- Communicate with other workers
- Consider potential changes in organizational culture

BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYERS

- Better retention
- Low absenteeism
- High loyalty to the organization
- Dedication to the job
- State and/or federal assistance to operations
- Tax credits and/or funds for training programs

BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYEES

- Increased skill development
- Increased income
- Increased social interaction
- Increased civic skills
- Increased development of strong, supportive relationships between colleagues
- Increased productivity through improved job satisfaction
- Increased life satisfaction and motivation



Conclusion

This information provides useful suggestions on how to incorporate people with disabilities into the workforce. Through appropriate training they can learn the necessary skills to perform the job.

Important Resources

DisABLED Workers
<http://passplanhelp.com/>

Disability.gov is the federal government website for comprehensive information on disability programs and services in communities nationwide. You can find answers to questions about everything from Social Security benefits to employment to affordable and accessible housing.
<https://www.disability.gov/>

Iowa COMPASS
<http://www.referweb.net/compass/Search.aspx>

Iowa Division of Persons with Disabilities
<http://www.humanrights.iowa.gov/pd/index.html>

Job Accommodation Network
<http://askjan.org/>

National Council on Disability
<http://www.ncd.gov/>

National Network: Information, Guidance, and Training on the Americans with Disabilities Act
<http://adata.org/Static/Home.html>

Social Security Administration:
Benefits for People with Disabilities
<http://www.ssa.gov/disability/>

The United States Access Board
<http://www.access-board.gov/>

U.S. Department of Education:
Office for Civil Rights
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/aboutocr.html>

U.S. Department of Justice: ADA Home Page
<http://www.ada.gov/>

U.S. Department of Labor:
Office of Disability Employment Policy
<http://www.dol.gov/odep/>

U.S. Department of Transportation:
Federal Transit Administration
<http://www.fta.dot.gov/civilrights/12325.html>
U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
<http://www.eeoc.gov/index.cfm>

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