



# Committed to Business SUCCESS

Business is about productivity and maintaining a competitive advantage. To do this, businesses need qualified workers.

Hiring people with disabilities adds value to your business and will attract new customers.

Make a sound business decision, gain a competitive advantage and use this guide to increase your potential to hire people with disabilities.

## DISABILITY IS NOT INABILITY.

**The Medina County Board of Developmental Disabilities is committed to preparing skilled employees with disabilities to successfully become contributing members of the workforce. Success depends on working closely with employers to understand and meet their recruiting, hiring and retention needs.**

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# Business ADVANTAGES

Employers now can meet their workforce shortages by tapping into non-traditional sources of labor.

Imagine finding workers who are self-motivated, have solid critical thinking skills and solve problems every day. Now, imagine that these workers have a 72% higher retention rate and fewer absences than their coworkers. As an employer, you need to know that people with disabilities are eager and ready to join your workforce.

## Filling the Worker Shortage

Greater demand for skilled labor has increased awareness that there are many people seeking jobs who traditionally have not been considered as potential sources of skilled labor. People with disabilities are the single largest minority group seeking employment in today's market. Both large and small companies have benefited by recruiting people with disabilities. Many leading companies attribute much of their success to employing a diverse workforce that includes people with disabilities.

## Business Incentives

There are compelling reasons to hire people with disabilities.

- Employees with disabilities have proved to be dependable, dedicated, hardworking and productive employees.
- Businesses report that the experience of working with people with disabilities increases every employee's morale and productivity.
- Employees with disabilities reflect the customer base and can help craft effective marketing strategies to reach this lucrative market for companies that hire them.
- By raising awareness that your company is a disability-friendly business, you will attract job candidates and new customers.

***92% of consumers surveyed felt more favorable toward companies that hire individuals with disabilities, and 87% said they would prefer to give their business to such companies.***

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**A survey of employers and individuals with disabilities found that the average one-time cost of accommodations was only \$500.**

**59% percent of individuals with disabilities reported that their accommodation was made at no cost.**

**Employers who had made accommodations for employees with disabilities reported multiple benefits as a result, including that the accommodation allowed the company to retain a qualified employee, eliminated the costs of training a new employee, and increased the worker's productivity.**



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# Disability Friendly WORKPLACE

Employers who hire people with disabilities diversify, enrich and enhance the culture of the workplace. Outlined below are strategies to include people with disabilities in the workplace.

## **Make a corporate commitment to include people with disabilities among your stakeholders.**

Is the CEO committed to a disability-friendly workplace?

Do corporate policies, procedures and practices specifically mention the word “disability?”

Are workers with disabilities employed at all skill levels, including senior management positions?

Are your products and services marketed to customers with disabilities?

Do people with disabilities purchase your goods and services?

## **Educate all staff on disability issues.**

Does new staff orientation include disability awareness training?

Are training materials available in alternate formats such as large print, Braille and captioned?

Do employees with disabilities serve as mentors for new hires who do not have disabilities?

Are people with disabilities integrated into your workforce?

Is disability information provided routinely in the company newsletter or on an intranet site?

Are all staff aware employees with disabilities and the contributions they make to corporate success?

Is staff encouraged to build relationships with community organizations for people with disabilities?

Have coworkers been trained to know how to welcome workers with disabilities?

Do coworkers know who to contact for questions about working with employees with disabilities?

## **Provide accessible facilities and services.**

Are buildings, parking, work spaces and communication accessible to people with disabilities?

Are applicants and employees informed that accommodations are available if needed?

Does staff routinely stay abreast of new developments in universal and assistive technology?

## **Hire applicants with disabilities.**

Do recruiters regularly attend employment fairs for candidates with disabilities?

Are policies in place to train and advance workers with disabilities?

Do employees with disabilities routinely participate in employer-sponsored training opportunities?

Are procedures in place to promote qualified employees with disabilities?

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# Recommended Disability -Friendly CHECKLIST

## Evaluating Accessibility

- Is the entrance to the business accessible to people with mobility limitations?
- Is the entrance to the building on an even, hard surface without steps?
- If the accessible entrance is not immediately apparent, are there directional signs?
- Are there handicapped parking signs and spaces with necessary access space for vans with lifts?
- Does the building have accessible restrooms, phones and water fountains?

## Other Considerations to Include Depending on the Type of Business and Its Services to the Public

- Post a notice on the front door that assistance will be provided for people with disabilities.
- Install sensors or automatic doors.
- Install a lift or elevator.
- Have Braille on elevator panels and on signs for public restrooms.
- Have Braille or large print available on menus and business cards.
- Have a TTY and volume controls on a public telephone or assistive technology device.
- Have movable seating and accessible tables that accommodate wheelchair users.
- Have wide aisles or appropriately spaced displays so wheelchair users can maneuver through.
- Make the company's website user-friendly to visitors with disabilities (e.g., including "text-only" versions for persons with visual impairments or text for audio clips for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing).

## Evaluating Customer Friendliness

- Is staff alert and helpful to customers who have visible disabilities?
- Does someone on staff know sign language or is a sign language interpreter available?
- Has the business offered disability awareness training to its staff?
- If removal of a barrier is not achievable, are the goods, services, etc., available through alternative methods?

## Evaluating Employment Friendliness

- Are people with disabilities included in the job applicant pool?
- When interviewing people with disabilities, is the focus on the candidates' skills and abilities rather than on their disabilities?
- Have management/HR personnel been educated on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?
- Are policies, practices and procedures flexible enough so that necessary modifications can be made to ensure that the skills and abilities of applicants with disabilities are equally represented?

Content adapted from "Disability-Friendly Business Checklist,"  
taken from the Disability-Friendly Business Awards Nomination



# Business and the ADA

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires most public and private employers to provide reasonable accommodations that enable qualified people with disabilities to perform the essential functions of their jobs. As the term “reasonable accommodation” implies, the accommodation must not constitute an undue hardship to the employer. This fact sheet provides definitions of key terms and procedures related to job accommodations under the employment provisions (Title I) of the ADA.

## **Who Is Covered?**

**Employers:** Public and private employers with 15 or more employees for 20 or more calendar weeks in a year are required to comply with the provisions of Title I of the ADA. The executive agencies of the federal government, Native American tribes and certain tax-exempt private membership clubs that are not labor organizations are not covered, but other federal, state or local disability-related non-discrimination laws may apply.

**Applicants:** Individuals with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities are covered by Title I of the ADA when applying for employment. Major life activities may include walking, learning, seeing, working, hearing, speaking and caring for oneself.

## **Who Is a Qualified Applicant?**

Under Title I of the ADA, a qualified person with a disability is one who satisfies the skill, experience, education and other job-related requirements of the position and who can perform essential functions of the job with or without reasonable accommodations. To be eligible for reasonable accommodations, the person must have a disability and be qualified for the position that he or she seeks or holds.

## **What Are Essential Functions?**

Essential job functions are those job duties that the person must be capable of performing with reasonable accommodations, if needed. The following are some of the reasons a function may be considered essential:

- The position exists so that the function can be performed.

- There are a limited number of other employees available to perform the function or among whom the function can be distributed.

- The function is highly specialized, and the person in the position is hired for his or her special expertise or ability to perform it.

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## **What Are Reasonable Accommodations?**

Reasonable accommodations are modifications or adjustments to the job, work environment or to the way things are usually done that enable qualified people with disabilities to enjoy an equal employment opportunity. Broad categories of accommodations include changes to the job application process to ensure an equal opportunity to apply for employment, changes that enable an employee with a disability to perform the essential functions of a job and changes that enable an employee with a disability to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment (e.g., access to training).

### ***Reasonable Accommodations May Include:***

- Making existing facilities accessible to and usable by an individual with a disability
- Restructuring the job
- Modifying the work schedule
- Modifying the equipment or devices
- Installing new equipment or devices
- Providing qualified readers and interpreters
- Appropriate modification of the application and examination procedures and training materials

### ***Reasonable Accommodations Do Not Include:***

- Eliminating a primary job responsibility
- Lowering production standards that are applied to all employees
- Providing personal use items, such as prosthetic limbs, wheelchairs, eyeglasses or hearing aids
- Those accommodations that would be considered to be an undue hardship to the employer
- Excusing a violation of a uniformly applied conduct rule that is job-related and consistent with business necessity (e.g., an employer never has to tolerate or excuse violence, threats of violence, stealing or destruction of property)

## **What Constitutes an Undue Hardship?**

An accommodation may be considered an undue hardship if it creates significant difficulty or expense to the employer. That is, an employer would not be required to provide an accommodation if it costs more than alternatives that are equally effective, requires extensive and disruptive renovations or negatively affects other employees or customers. Undue hardships are determined on a case-by-case basis. Factors to take into consideration when determining whether an accommodation constitutes an undue hardship are:

- The cost and nature of the accommodation;
- The overall financial resources of the facility;
- The overall financial resources of the employer;
- The type of operation of the covered employer; and
- The impact of the accommodation upon the operation of the facility.

## **What Should an Employee Do to Request an Accommodation?**

The employee must let the employer know that he or she needs an adjustment or change at work because of a disability. Requests for accommodations can be made orally or in writing.

## **What Should an Employer Do Following a Request for an Accommodation?**

The following are the steps an employer should take in response to an accommodation request:

1. Verify the employee's disability.
2. Identify the essential job functions that require accommodations.
3. Consult with the individual to identify a variety of accommodations to reduce or remove barriers and to increase productivity.
4. Implement the most appropriate accommodations, taking into account the preferences of the individual with disabilities.