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5 Tips For NJ Employers Who Want To Hire People With Disabilities

"This country is facing the worst labor shortage since the end of WWII," an advocate said. "Instead of complaining, let's take action."



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Reply



Far too many people with disabilities continue to be “unemployed and under-employed” – even though the nation continues to struggle with a hiring crisis, according to Easterseals New Jersey, the largest disability services nonprofit in the state. (Edwin Tan/Getty Images)

NEW JERSEY — Finding a job can be a challenge for everyone. But for many New Jerseyans living with a disability, it can seem nearly impossible, advocates say.

Far too many people with disabilities continue to be “unemployed and under-employed” – even though the nation continues to struggle with a hiring crisis, according to Easterseals New Jersey, the largest disability services nonprofit in the state.

The proof is in the pudding, advocates say. According to the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), not even one in five people with a disability was employed in 2021, while nearly two-thirds of people without a disability had jobs.

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But there are many ways to help turn this discouraging number around, they add.

In solidarity with [National Disability Employment Awareness Month](#), which takes place in October, Easterseals released an updated “Inclusive Hiring Guide,” which can be [downloaded for free here](#).

According to Easterseals, the document was developed with input from people with disabilities and the companies who have hired them. It offers guidance for recruiting, interviewing, accommodating and training workers.

Some of their advice includes:

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.”

SEARCH FOR BENEFIT 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.”

SHOWCASE 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?”

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 ... Scan your job descriptions for ableist language ... When creating job postings, make sure they are accessible ... Post ads where people with disabilities will see them.”

Article continues below

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Employees with disabilities all over the state deserve our respect, proper training and real jobs — and No Limits Cafe provides just that. Let's keep stepping up for this community.

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It isn't just the employees who will benefit from a paradigm shift – the company that hires them stands to reap a variety of benefits too, advocates said. According to Easterseals:

“[Studies](#) show that companies that champion people with disabilities outperform others, driving profitability and shareholder returns. In some instances, revenues were 28% higher, net income 200% higher, and profit margins 30% higher. In addition to improved profitability, [research](#) shows organizations that employ people with disabilities have greater retention, reliability and punctuality, employee loyalty, inclusive work culture, and enhanced company image.”

“This country is facing the worst labor shortage since the end of World War II,” Easterseals NJ CEO and President Brian Fitzgerald said.

“Instead of complaining, let's take action by recruiting and hiring the thousands of available people with disabilities,” Fitzgerald urged. “We understand that it can be intimidating and confusing, but with the right resources, businesses can – and must – learn how to open the door for talent that might otherwise not be considered.”

“We know that New Jersey employers have good intentions to hire people with disabilities but too many still aren't doing it,” Fitzgerald added. “We want to help turn their good intentions into action.”

New Jersey Assemblyman Daniel Benson voiced support for Easterseals' efforts.

"We want every New Jersey workplace to be more inclusive of people with disabilities and provide a broad range of opportunities for residents to grow and earn a living, enabling them to take care of themselves and their families," said

the assemblyman, who chairs the Transportation and Independent Authorities committee.

"The important work Easterseals NJ contributes toward its inclusive hiring guide tremendously helps break down barriers and eliminates certain obstacles those with disabilities face when looking for employment," Benson said.

- See related article: [NJ Women Help Other Deaf Employees Find Equality In The Workplace](#)
- See related article: [Disabled NJ Residents Rely On These Workers – Don't Forget Them](#)

CHANGE IN THE WORKPLACE

Easterseals isn't the only organization advocating for more inclusive hiring in the Garden State.

On Monday, the New Jersey Business & Industry Association (NJBIA) [offered written testimony](#) to a state Assembly committee about current employment

opportunities for people with disabilities and how to improve hiring outcomes.

“While many individuals with disabilities have unique skills and the desire to work, they face challenges navigating the job market,” NJBIA Deputy Chief Government Affairs Officer Ray Cantor said.

“Employing disabled people benefits employers as well,” Cantor pointed out. “Hiring individuals with disabilities increases an organization’s diversity and introduces employees with different perspectives and skills into the workforce. Employees with disabilities have high retention rates – 85% – according to the Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities.”

Cantor said there are many public and private resources available to connect employers to people with disabilities who are seeking employment, and some groups even provide job coaches to assist with training and on-boarding.

Some nonprofit groups include the [Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities](#), [Easterseals New Jersey](#), the [New Jersey Association for Community Providers](#), [Spectrum Works](#), and [The Arc of New Jersey](#). The state [Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services](#) and the [Office of Apprenticeships](#) are also useful resources, Cantor said.

But there is much more that can be done to improve workforce participation among the disability community, Cantor said.

Current challenges include uneven transitional services in some school districts, inadequate public transportation networks in some parts of the state, and the need to help employers defray the cost of adaptive equipment and workplace modifications required for disabled employees.

Cantor said the NJBIA supports several bills now pending in the Legislature that would assist employers in their efforts to make workplaces more inclusive and

help disabled people obtain greater financial independence. The list includes:

- A-479 (Murphy/Moen) – Allows corporation business tax and gross income tax credits to businesses employing certain persons with developmental disabilities
- A-681 (Verrelli/Benson/Mukherji) – Allows credit against corporation business tax and gross income tax liability for employing persons with a developmental disability; or A-904 (Peterson/Wimberly) – Provides employers with various tax incentives for hiring persons with disabilities under insurance premiums tax, corporation business tax and gross income tax
- A-787 (Simonsen/McClellan) – Directs Secretary of Higher Education to develop career and education guide for postsecondary students with disabilities
- A-1112 (Chaparro/Benson/Haider) – Requires DHS and other appropriate state agencies to disseminate information on transportation options for persons with developmental disabilities
- A-1313 (Greenwald/Benson/McKnight) – Establishes program in NJDOLWD to connect persons with disabilities with job training and employment
- A-1693 (Quijano/Giblin/Chaparro) – Creates résumé bank for certain persons with disabilities
- A-2242 (Lopez/Benson/Jaffer) – Requires DOT, NJT, and DHS to study and implement transportation mobility and accessibility improvements for persons with autism and developmental disabilities
- A-3779 (Reynolds-Jackson/Verrelli/Wimberly) – Requires Office of Information Technology to establish centralized, one-stop website resource guide to assist persons in navigating the State's developmental disability service system

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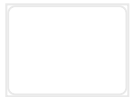
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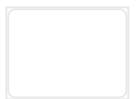
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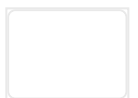
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