

Guidance on Interviewing and Hiring People with Disabilities

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In this day and age, companies see commentary in a variety of journalistic or social media settings saying that businesses need to be more inclusive. However, many companies do not truly know what being inclusive means. For a business to be truly inclusive, it must incorporate a tone from the top - if the CEO and other upper management members do not believe in true inclusiveness, the companies' employees will never be trained on how to incorporate the philosophies necessary to make a business diverse.

Many companies feel that there are too many issues surrounding the recruitment and hiring of individuals with disabilities. However, these companies fail to realize that there can be issues surrounding the recruitment and hiring of ANY individuals, even those without disabilities.

Ensure that you are following the typical guidelines with regard to interviewing and hiring:

- **Always have detailed job descriptions** for the positions within your organization. These job descriptions should include the essential functions of the position, as well as physical and cognitive requirements.
- **Train your interviewers** and have them establish an initial set of questions that they can ask each candidate applying for a position. The interview questions don't have to be different for candidates with disabilities but they should be neutral enough that they are not excluding those with disabilities.
- **Keep the interview on point.** Use the different experiences that a candidate may have to discuss how those experiences will help him or her perform the functions of the position. Know how to avoid questions that you should not ask during an interview.



NOTE: Remember to use only true essential functions. If "making eye contact" is not really required for the position, don't use it to exclude a potentially qualified candidate with a disability!

Interviewing Guidance

Here are some things to consider when interviewing candidates with disabilities:

- Discuss with the candidate the essential functions of the position.
- Discuss with the candidate his or her experiences that will allow the candidate to perform those essential functions.
- Make sure to utilize interview questions that do not focus on factors that are not relevant to the position. For example, do not ask about a candidate's writing skills if writing is not a part of the position for which the candidate is interviewing.
- Have a clear understanding of the different ways in which people may express themselves, including their different communication styles. Do not always be swayed by the person with the most outgoing or "bubbly" personality if it's not relevant to the position at hand.
- Be aware of people's different learning styles. Do not offer a paper copy of the job description for the candidate to review if you know he or she has a visual or learning impairment. Have access to materials in different formats.
- Use Person First Language, always.
- Ensure that candidates understand the questions you are asking. Ask all candidates the same questions.
- Give people plenty of time to respond. Look and speak directly to people. Speak clearly. Allow plenty of time for the interview so that no one feels rushed.
- Think about accessibility of your interview space. For example, if you have a candidate with a visual disability, make sure to introduce yourself. Ensure that the candidate can safely navigate the space. For a candidate with a hearing impairment, ensure that they can see you speaking and can understand you clearly.

Remember this!

Always avoid asking disability-related questions.

Even if a candidate reveals a disability or has a visible disability, **do not ask questions about the disability.**

Ask only about the ability, knowledge, skills, and experiences that allow the individual to perform the **essential functions of the position.**

Many people with disabilities are capable of performing the same functions as those without disabilities.

Assuming that they cannot leads to overlooking extremely qualified candidates **and is discriminatory.**

Interviewing Guidance (continued)

- Talk about what the candidate feels is their greatest strength. You can learn a lot about people by asking them what they do best. Always focus on ability.
- Do not be judgmental. Candidates should be assessed on experience and skill sets and not just on external qualities. Your most attractive or outgoing candidate may not always be the best candidate. Remember that many candidates have learned how to master answering interview questions without having the experience or the skill set to back up those answers.
- Give positive feedback whenever it is possible and appropriate to do so. This is helpful for all candidates.