



# Employment First Commission

# EmployAbility

A Toolkit for Employers



Employ Ability and put *EVERYONE* in New York State to work!



## Introduction

As more people with disabilities enter the workforce and begin looking for employment, it is important that as a business owner or operator you understand the incredible benefits that you could be enjoying by hiring employees of all abilities.

This handbook is meant to provide you with the information you need to begin employing people of all abilities, including financial and tax incentives, how and why hiring people of all abilities is good for your business and where to find qualified employees.

Everyone has the right to work. New York's employers deserve a reliable, effective and efficient workforce.

The EmployAbility Toolkit is just one of the ways in which New York State is working to make it easier for you to expand your workforce to be inclusive and to improve your bottom line.

The Employability Toolkit was compiled by a consortium of New York State agencies and disability organizations to assist you. We are joined by the New York State Business Leadership Network, New York's chapter of the US Business Leadership Network® (USBLN®), a national non-profit that helps business drive performance by leveraging disability inclusion in the workplace, supply chain, and marketplace. (New York State Business Leadership Network is managed by Our Ability, Inc.) The Resource section of this toolkit contains contact information for the participating agencies, so if you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact us.







## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Top 10 Reasons to Employ Ability .....	4
The Business Case .....	4
What Do We Mean By Disability? .....	5
Dispelling Myths .....	7
Financial Incentives and Tax Credits .....	9
Improve Your EmployAbility .....	11
Overview of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) .....	11
Success Stories .....	12
How Do I Find Qualified Workers? .....	13
Resources .....	14
Organizations and Agencies .....	15





## Top 10 Reasons to Employ Ability:

1. Job Retention: employees are known for being loyal to their employers and often remain at their jobs for years, thereby reducing turnover.
2. Dependability: employees with disabilities have lower rates of absenteeism; reports of perfect attendance are not uncommon.
3. Flexibility: when asked, employees will often fill in for co-workers who have missed their shifts.
4. Attitude: employee pride is demonstrated by coming to work with a positive, can-do attitude.
5. Motivation: employees report to work every day ready, willing and able to perform.
6. Pre-screened: every effort is made to pre-screen candidates for employment to ensure that the applicant meets the minimum qualifications of the job.
7. Training: if needed or desired by the employer, the person can be assisted to learn the requirements of the job by skilled job coaches thereby reducing employer training time.
8. Pre-insured: workers are often (but not always) pre-insured with health benefits.
9. Expand Market Share: employees with disabilities can relate better to customers with disabilities, who represent \$1 trillion in annual aggregate consumer spending.
10. Employee Morale: many businesses report that employing people with disabilities increases the morale and productivity of every employee.

**Hiring qualified workers of all abilities just makes good business sense!**



## The Business Case

Hiring a qualified person with a disability brings greater benefits beyond filling an open job. There's a solid business case, too. Here are just a few of the benefits of hiring people with disabilities:

### Reason #1: Return on Investment

Businesses that employ people with disabilities turn social issues into business opportunities. These opportunities translate into lower costs, higher revenues and increased profits. Capitalize on the ROI of employing people with disabilities:

#### INCREASE REVENUES

- Access new markets
- Improve productivity through innovative and effective ways of doing business

#### REDUCE COSTS

- Reduce hiring and training costs
- Increase retention

#### ENHANCE SHAREHOLDER VALUE

- Capitalize on opportunities to meet business goals

### Reason #2: Marketing

Customers with disabilities and their families, friends and associates represent a trillion dollar (that's \$1,000,000,000,000. TWELVE ZEROS) market segment, [according to the U.S Dept. Of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy's AskEarn.org](#). They, like other market segments, purchase products and services from companies that best meet their needs. A large number of Americans also say they prefer to patronize businesses that hire people with disabilities. Another benefit of

employing people with disabilities is increasing your opportunity to gain a lasting customer base. Very often these are employees who will stick with you through thick and thin, as long as you stick with them.

## **CAPITALIZE ON NEW MARKET OPPORTUNITIES**

- Mirror the market to attract a wider customer base
- Increase your market share

## **DEVELOP NEW PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

- Respond to marketplace needs
- Lead your market
- Increase profitability

### **Reason #3: Innovation**

Innovation is key to the success of your business. Employees with disabilities bring unique experiences and understanding that transform a workplace and enhance products and services. As part of your team, these employees can bring these experiences to bear, helping to build your business and lead your company into the future, together.

## **WORKPLACE INNOVATION**

- Create more efficient and effective business processes
- Develop and implement management strategies to attract and retain qualified talent
- Use technology in new ways to increase productivity

## **PRODUCT AND SERVICE INNOVATION**

- Stimulate new product and service development through disability-inclusive diverse teams
- Customize products and services to increase profitability

## **DEFINE THE FUTURE**

- Foster the development of next-generation products and services

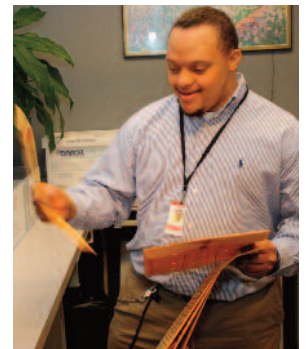
(Sources: [ThinkBeyondtheLabel.com](http://ThinkBeyondtheLabel.com), [U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy](http://U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy))

---

## **What Do We Mean by the Term "Disability"?**

**Disability includes a wide range of conditions. A few examples:**

- paralysis
- blindness or visual impairment
- deafness or hard of hearing
- intellectual or developmental disabilities
- learning disabilities
- psychiatric disabilities and mental health conditions
- epilepsy
- chemical sensitivity
- head injuries
- cerebral palsy
- HIV/AIDS
- and many others





**Disability impacts people's lives in a wide variety of ways, and the level of impact can range from minimal to extensive.**

In some cases, a person's disability is a minor inconvenience, something that is controlled through medication, or requires some simple adaptations. In other cases, a person's disability plays a major role in their lives, impacting their ability to earn a living, to participate in activities in the community, and to do many of the things that many non-disabled people take for granted in their daily lives.

**Disabilities are often not apparent.**

Learning disabilities, psychiatric disabilities, epilepsy, and multiple sclerosis are just a few of the many disabilities that are often hidden. Never presume that someone doesn't have a disability just because you can't see it.

**Disability is a natural part of the human existence.**

Plain and simply: disability is only one part of a person's identity. It is not something to be fixed or looked down upon. People with disabilities have the same right as anyone else to full participation in society.

**Legal definitions vary considerably.**

A person may be considered disabled under the Americans with Disabilities Act but not by their state's vocational rehabilitation agency. Also, particular conditions specify the criteria that a person must meet in order to have that condition. For example, not all people who wear glasses have a visual impairment. The following are some important legal definitions of disability:

#### [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)

- A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual;
- A record of such an impairment; or
- Being regarded as having such an impairment.

#### [Social Security](#)

- The inability to engage in any substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment(s) which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months.

#### [Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#)

The term individual with a disability means any individual who

- Has a physical or mental impairment which for such individual constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment and
- Can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from vocational rehabilitation services.

*Source: This information was developed by the National Center on Workforce and Disability (NCWD), based at [Institute for Community Inclusion](#) at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Some of the material used was funded through the [U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy](#) (grant number E-9-4-1-0071). The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Labor, nor does mention of tradenames, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Labor.*



## Dispelling Myths

Have you heard some of the common misconceptions about hiring individuals with disabilities? Industry reports consistently rate workers with disabilities as average or above average in performance, attendance, and safety (DuPont report). When it comes to employee retention and reduced turnover costs, research has found that workers with disabilities are not “job hoppers.” On the contrary, they are inclined to remain in their jobs longer than the general workforce.

**The following dispels some of the common myths.**

### **Myth: Individuals with disabilities do not have the right skills for business.**

Employees with disabilities have strengths, traits and qualities that make them valuable to the workforce, including perseverance, problem solving, goal setting and determination. Often their unique characteristics and skills are well-suited to a particular business. For example, while some employees may find repetitive work boring, others thrive on routine and predictability. Often, too, there are many untapped educated minds in the pool of candidates with disabilities.

Employees with disabilities can take advantage of many training opportunities to help them acquire the skills needed. In addition, some people with disabilities can benefit from job developers and job coaches who assist them while they are learning.

Additionally, a Harris poll discovered that 82 percent of managers said it isn't any harder to supervise employees with disabilities than it is employees without.

There are extensive benefits to a company that employs people with disabilities, such as having reliable and loyal workers, diversifying the talent pool and even saving money.

### **Myth: Supports in the workplace would be too costly.**

According to the National Center on Workforce and Disability (NCWD) the majority of employees—at least 73 percent—don't require any type of accommodation. Of the ones that do, 51 percent cost less than \$500. For some excellent examples of accommodations, [visit the National Center on Workforce and Disability \(NCWD\)](#). And as an added bonus, these accommodations have been found to benefit other employees without disabilities.

The most requested accommodation is a flexible work schedule, which costs nothing.

According to Bradley Bellacicco of the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce, “Any operation that has more than a handful of workers is going to have to make accommodations. This might include not asking an employee with a bad back to lift a heavy box or not requiring an employee with poor eyesight to read fine print. You're not doing something unusual. You're accommodating the people you work with without even thinking about it.”

Finally, the federal government offers tax incentives to help employers pay for any accommodations or modifications that will make their businesses accessible to persons with disabilities. (Studies indicate, however, that the number one reason employers hire people with disabilities is NOT the tax credits or incentives; it is because employees with disabilities are loyal, dependable and remain on the workforce longer than other employees.)

### **Myth: Employees with disabilities can be easily offended.**

Common etiquette can avoid hurt feelings. Many people worry that they may say the wrong thing to a person who has a disability, but people with disabilities know that others may not know the appropriate language.

People with disabilities are people first. Using language that puts the individual first (i.e. person with a disability, not the disabled; or someone who uses a wheelchair, not wheelchair-bound) is common sense. If you are unsure, don't be afraid to ask the individual what he or she prefers.







There are a number of things employers can do to include people with disabilities in your workforce. [The Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion](#) (EARN) recommends several strategies including:

- Conduct [training](#) for employees including [discrimination prevention](#) and ADA-specific training for managers and supervisors.
- Committing to diversity and equitable employment for all individuals regardless of their disabilities.
- Surveying employees to understand their perceptions of inclusion or bias.
- Offering mentoring opportunities and including employees with disabilities.
- Focus recruiting and retention efforts on employees with disabilities.
- Include diversity and inclusion effectiveness as part of supervisors' job responsibilities.

For training resources to help you with diversity training, contact Northeast ADA Center, ([www.northeastada.org](http://www.northeastada.org)) or Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation ([ACCES-VR](#))

**Myth: Coworkers may not want to work with people with disabilities and their productivity will decrease.**

People with disabilities who have overcome challenges and who demonstrate a strong commitment and loyalty to the employer are often a positive influence on their coworkers.

**Myth: Getting information on hiring and working with people with disabilities is expensive and time consuming.**

There are a number of resources available to employers. See the Resources section in this toolkit for more information.

**Myth: Hiring people with disabilities makes business's vulnerable to litigation.**

There is no evidence that supports this, as very few businesses experience disability-related claims.

**Myth: Supporting people with disabilities can adversely affect the business's bottom line.**

It's actually the opposite. Hiring people with disabilities provides businesses with a competitive advantage. Research has shown that people have a more favorable view of businesses that employ people with disabilities and would prefer to patronize these businesses. People with disabilities are also customers who spend billions of dollars annually on purchases. Disability-friendly businesses earn the patronage of individuals with disabilities, their families and their friends. In addition, some of the accommodations that benefit people with disabilities, such as automatic door openers, talking ATMs and accessible websites also benefit people without disabilities, and as our population ages, the need for greater accessibility also increases.

**Myth: Hiring workers who have disabilities increases workers compensation insurance rates.**

Insurance rates are based solely on the relative hazards of the operation and the organization's accident experience, not on whether an employer has hired workers with disabilities.

*Sources: Disability: Dispelling the Myths How People With Disabilities Can Meet Employer Needs -- UNTAPPED RESOURCES IN TODAY'S ECONOMY; Center for Workforce Preparation, an affiliate of the US Chamber of Commerce*

*[Think Beyond the Label](#), a public-private network spearheaded by Health & Disability Advocates that works to increase employment for qualified job seekers with disabilities*

## Financial Incentives and Tax Credits for Businesses that Employ People with Disabilities

Although most employers do not consider financial incentives and tax credits as their main reason for hiring individuals with disabilities, employers that do business in New York State and hire individuals who have a disability can trim their labor costs through several workforce and economic development programs. Employment-based tax credits may save your business money by cutting federal or state tax liability.



### Work Opportunity Tax Credit

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal tax credit that benefits businesses that hire and retain workers with various barriers to employment.

**Who May Be Eligible?** Firms that hire workers who have received Social Security Income (SSI) benefits within 60 days prior to being hired, or who are referred to the firm by a vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency.

**How It Works:** Administered by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA), the WOTC provides support to employers by reimbursing a percentage of a worker's wages for up to two years. The maximum amount of reimbursement varies based on the background of the individual hired.

**Highlights:** For workers hired under this program, firms are eligible for a 25 percent reimbursement of first-year wages once the employee has worked 120 hours; workers who work 400 hours result in a 40 percent reimbursement. The maximum reimbursement possible per worker in this category is \$2,400.

The New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), ACCESS-VR, New York Commission for the Blind, or local agencies that participate in OPWDD's Supported Employment Program (SEMP) can help identify potential employees meeting WOTC tax credit criteria and may be able to provide additional support, such as case management and accommodation coaching, through the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work Program.

### NYS Workers Employment Tax Credit (WETC)

Businesses that employ people with disabilities who currently receive vocational rehabilitation services (or people who received them up to two years prior to hire) may earn \$2,100 more in state tax credits. You get the credit during the second year of employment and can combine it with the WOTC credit.

### NYS Workers with Disabilities Tax Credit (WDTC)

For-profit businesses and organizations that hire individuals with developmental disabilities may earn up to \$5,000 for full-time employment (30 hours or more per week), and up to \$2,500 for part-time employment (between 8 hours and 30 hours per week) in state tax credit. The period of employment must be no less than six months. If the amount of the credit exceeds the entity's tax liability, then the tax credit may be carried over for the following three years. Note: Businesses cannot claim this tax credit for an individual they hire if they are already claiming another tax credit for that individual.

### Disabled Access Tax Credit

Businesses with fewer than 30 employees and no more than \$1 million in gross receipts in the preceding year can receive a tax credit of up to 50% of "eligible access expenditures"—eligible expenses include the removal of barriers—architectural, communication, or transportation—including modification of equipment and the use of interpreters, taped text, or alternative format for communication. A small business is eligible for a 50 percent tax credit on expenditures between \$250 and \$10,250, with a maximum credit of \$5,000 per year. This credit can be "carried



backward” up to three years and forwarded up to 15 years to subsidize larger expenditures at up to \$5,000 per year. Visit the [IRS website](http://www.irs.gov/businesses) at [www.irs.gov/businesses](http://www.irs.gov/businesses) for more information about tax benefits.

### **Barrier Removal Tax Deduction**

Businesses of any size can take an annual deduction of up to \$15,000 for expenses related to removing physical, structural and transportation barriers for people with disabilities

The ACCES-VR [Business Relations Team](#) in your area will facilitate the completion of all tax credit request forms.

Additional information is available at the [IRS website](http://www.irs.gov) or at [www.acces.nysed.gov/common/acces/files/vr/wto.pdf](http://www.acces.nysed.gov/common/acces/files/vr/wto.pdf)

### **Work Try-Out (WTO)**

WTO can offset many of the costs associated with hiring new employees, and also assures the employer that the employee is right for the job. ACCES-VR and NYSCB can reimburse a business for 100% of an employee's wages for up to 480 hours. This offers the business the opportunity to evaluate the employee's ability to satisfactorily perform the job. This wage reimbursement program requires the business to place the new hire on the company payroll and cover them with all benefits including Worker's Compensation and Social Security. Reimbursement occurs whether the employment outcome is successful or not. The try out period length is determined jointly by the employer and the ACCES-VR or NYSCB representative. The ACCES-VR WTO reimbursement breakout is calculated on an hourly basis with a maximum of 480 hours reimbursed at 100% gross wage.

### **On-the-Job Training (OJT)**

ACCES-VR and NYSCB can reimburse a business for the wages paid during the training of a new employee when:

1. The trainee requires specific skills training and supervision.
2. The trainee is placed on the company's payroll and covered with all benefits including Worker's Compensation and Social Security during the agreed upon training period covering the usual company benefits.
3. The business agrees to retain the trainee upon completion of the training period.

The counselor and the employer will agree upon the length of the training period appropriate to the job. Upon the final retention of the trainee, the business will be eligible for all applicable tax credits.

In addition, there are a few on-the-job training opportunities designed to specifically assist people with developmental disabilities:

Employment Specialist Services- OPWDD funds over 200 supported employment agencies that provide employment services to people with developmental disabilities. Employment services include the identification of employable interest, skills and abilities; job readiness services and employer services. Once a person is hired, the supported employment agency provides individualized job training and coaching to assist the individual in meeting business expectations. Supported employment agencies maintain ongoing contact as needed with both the business and employee should the need arise for additional training or other supports to help the employee successfully maintain their job.

Employment Training Program (ETP) - ETP is a statewide service funded by OPWDD that provides a wage subsidy for people with developmental disabilities who work for local businesses. Participants in ETP are assessed for their interest, abilities and skills, and then are matched with a business that has similar employment needs. While the worker is in training, OPWDD pays their wages until business standards are met and the person is officially hired, generally within one year.



Sources: ([New York State Employment and Workforce Solutions](#), [Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion \(askEarn.org\)](#), [ACCES-VR](#))

## Improve Your EmployAbility

When you're looking at hiring qualified employees with disabilities, here are some tips from successful employers to help you get started:

- Learn about local available resources for training, awareness and support.
- Create opportunities for job shadowing where a new employee can learn the job by watching and working alongside a coworker who can teach him or her.
- Conduct informational interviews.
- Host a Disability Mentoring Day.
- Participate in the U.S. Department of Labor's National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). [www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam/](http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam/)
- Embed disability components into training for HR and new employees, and include disability in diversity training.
- Participate in job fairs.
- Create internships.
- Join the Business Leadership Network in your state. [www.ourability.com/new-york-business-leadership-network/](http://www.ourability.com/new-york-business-leadership-network/)
- Connect with Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies in your state and work with them on how you can participate; distribute position announcements to them. (NYS Education Department's Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES-VR) [www.acces.nysed.gov/vr](http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr), NYS Department of Labor [www.labor.ny.gov](http://www.labor.ny.gov), New York State Commission for the Blind, [www.visionloss.ny.gov](http://www.visionloss.ny.gov))

(Source: [www.thinkbeyondthelabel.com/learning-tools/bestpractices](http://www.thinkbeyondthelabel.com/learning-tools/bestpractices), [www.labor.ny.gov](http://www.labor.ny.gov))



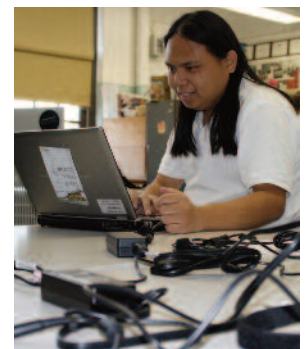
## An Overview of the Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in 1990. The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public.

The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. The ADA is divided into five titles (or sections) that relate to different areas of public life, the first of which relates to Employment.

### Title I - Employment

- Designed to help people with disabilities access the same employment opportunities and benefits available to people without disabilities.
- Applies to employers with 15 or more employees.
- Requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified applicants or employees. A "reasonable accommodation" is a change that accommodates employees with disabilities without causing the employer "undue hardship" (too much difficulty or expense).
- Defines disability, establishes guidelines for the reasonable accommodation process, addresses medical examinations and inquiries, and defines "direct threat" when there is risk of substantial harm to the health or safety of the individual employee with a disability or others.
- Regulated and enforced by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. [www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/disability.cfm](http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/disability.cfm)



## Success Stories, We Employ Ability!



### **OSCAR MARTINEZ, MODELL'S DEPARTMENT STORE**

Oscar Martinez of Brooklyn recalls that when he first headed out into the workforce nearly two decades ago, he was nervous. He recalls being most concerned about how he would be perceived by his employer and his coworkers. Martinez, who uses a wheelchair, has cerebral palsy - a neurological disorder that affects his body movement, muscle control and coordination.

"I thought people would look at me, see me as disabled and think that I couldn't do anything," recalls Oscar. "But I kept it up, I did what my employers asked of me at work, and now look at me."

Fast forward more than 20 years later and the initial fears Oscar had about working seem far away. Modell's Department Store, one of the country's largest sporting goods retailers, hired him at their Bay Parkway store in Brooklyn. He's now that store's longest tenured employee and has moved from attaching security tags to merchandise to greeting and assisting customers and breaking in new-hires.

Modell's, who was recognized as corporate partner of the Year in 2014 by the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities, stressed that Oscar is everything they look for in an employee. "One of the great things about Oscar is he never lets up and is always willing to learn new things," said Danillo Williams, manager at Modell's. "It's not about what you can't do, it's what you can do and what you're willing to do," Williams continued.

Williams stresses that, for him, hiring people who are upbeat, friendly and personable is most important. "Disability or not," he says, "I think that's the way to go."



### **TINA CUTLER, U.S. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

For Tina Cutler, serving as a park ranger with the National Park Service is a career she loves. Since she began working at Fort Stanwix in Rome, NY more than 12 years ago Tina has become an expert in many things Fort Stanwix and her knowledge and enthusiasm for her job has definitely benefited her employer.

Tina's supervisor, Michelle Riter, who is the Chief of Visitor Experiences and has supervised Tina for two years, says that the Fort considers themselves fortunate to have Tina as an employee. Not only does Tina come to work each day with a bright smiling face that immediately makes visitors feel welcome, but she is the only staff member in the Visitor Center that knows American Sign Language. Riter says Tina's skill has helped make Fort Stanwix a more accessible and enjoyable experience for people who are hearing impaired. Fort Stanwix chose to feature Tina in a video where she talks about the Fort's accessibility and her fluency in sign language. It is one of 40 short YouTube videos produced this year about the Fort's history that were made to commemorate its 40th Anniversary.

For Tina, 2016 has been especially exciting year as Fort Stanwix celebrates its 40th Anniversary and the National Park Service celebrates its 100th. This year brought Tina an opportunity to help out with an outdoor cycling and kayaking program along the Erie Canal which she found to be great fun. Tina relates that her favorite part of her job is working with the many groups of kids who routinely come to tour the Fort with their school groups. She loves to explain to the children the different games kids played in the 18th century and point out the 18th century clothing that people once wore.

Tina finds the staff she works with to be both fun and considerate. If her coworkers were to be asked what Tina most excels at, both Tina and her supervisor agree that most would answer "the cash register." She is known as the "go-to person" whenever there is any problem with the cash register. She is the only one who seems to have the special touch needed to fix it.

## How do I Find Qualified Workers?

There are many agencies that can help you find qualified workers who have the skills to match your business needs.

### NYS Department of Labor (NYSDOL)

[www.labor.ny.gov/home/](http://www.labor.ny.gov/home/)

Division of Employment and Workforce Solutions – Business Services  
State Office Campus Building 12, Room 425, Albany, NY 12240  
888-4-NYSDEL

<https://labor.ny.gov/businessservices/landing.shtm>

Visit the website or contract a [field office](#) nearest you.

- Place a Job Order on the [NYS Job Bank](#)
- [Career Fairs](#) and Customized Recruitments [Customized Recruitments](#)
- [Human Resources Consultation](#)
- [JobZone](#) and [CareerZone](#)
- Skills Matching Services ([NY Talent](#))

### Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs)

DRCs can help connect you to talented, loyal, and hard-working individuals with disabilities who would make valuable additions to your staff. To find a DRC close to you, please visit the following website: [https://labor.ny.gov/workforcenypartners/dpn\\_dei.shtm](https://labor.ny.gov/workforcenypartners/dpn_dei.shtm)

### ACCES-VR

[www.acces.nysed.gov/vr](http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr)

89 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY 12234  
800.222.JOBS (5627)

Visit the website for information about how to contact the Business Relations Team in your area.

- Pre-screened, skilled job applicants
- Wage reimbursement program options
- Assistance with the application process or Federal and NYS tax credits
- Consultation and assistance on reasonable accommodations
- Technical assistance and training on the ADA, including disability awareness and etiquette
- Connection to Work Force Development: One-Stop Centers, NYS Department of Labor, the
- Business community, labor organizations, not-for-profits and schools in your community
- Ongoing follow-up services to ensure your satisfaction

### Commission for the Blind

[visionloss.ny.gov](http://visionloss.ny.gov)

New York State Office of Children and Family Services  
52 Washington Street, South 201  
Rensselaer, NY 12144  
518.473.2346







### **Our Ability Connect**

[www.ourability.com/contact/](http://www.ourability.com/contact/)

19 Timber Lane  
Glenmont, NY 12077

518.429.9256

- Our Ability Connect -- an individual digital profile service you build created to promote future employment for people with disabilities through mentor networking, social engagement and personal empowerment. Our Ability Connect gives employers the ability to reach out to people with disabilities by searching, connecting directly with people in our system and posting employment opportunities in order to recruit the best candidates for open positions.

### **New York Business Leadership Network (managed by Our Ability)**

[www.ourability.com/contact/](http://www.ourability.com/contact/)

19 Timber Lane  
Glenmont, NY 12077

518.429.9256

### **NYS Office of Mental Health**

[www.omh.ny.gov](http://www.omh.ny.gov)

44 Holland Avenue.  
Albany, NY 12229

800.597.8481

Contact any of the OMH Field Offices. See website for local addresses and phone numbers.

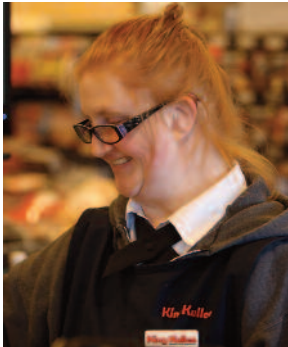
### **NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities**

[www.opwdd.ny.gov/employability](http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/employability)

44 Holland Avenue  
Albany, NY 12229

866.946.9733

You may also contact any of OPWDD's regional offices listed on the website. In addition, OPWDD supports over 200 provider agencies in New York State who provide supported employment services for individuals with disabilities. Check out the listing of Supported Employment Provider Agencies on the OPWDD website ([www.opwdd.ny.gov/employability](http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/employability)) to directly contact with agencies who can connect you with qualified employees.



---

## **Resources**

### **Articles and Papers:**

- The Business Case; National Technical Assistance team at the National Disability Institute and Real Economic Impact: [www.realeconomicimpact.org/asset-development-community/the-business-case](http://www.realeconomicimpact.org/asset-development-community/the-business-case)
- Disability Etiquette: Best Practices; National Disability Institute: [www.realeconomicimpact.org/asset-development-community/disability-etiquette](http://www.realeconomicimpact.org/asset-development-community/disability-etiquette)
- Leading Practices on Disability Inclusion; USBLN and US Chamber of Commerce: [www.uschamber.com/leading-practices-disability-inclusion-0](http://www.uschamber.com/leading-practices-disability-inclusion-0)



- Recruiting, Hiring, Retaining, and Promoting People With Disabilities; The Curb Cuts to the Middle Class Initiative; participation by agencies across the federal government, including the Department of Education, Department of Labor, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Justice, Department of Veterans Affairs, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, National Council on Disability, Office of Personnel Management, and the Social Security Administration: [www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/employing\\_people\\_with\\_disabilities\\_toolkit\\_february\\_3\\_2015\\_v4.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/employing_people_with_disabilities_toolkit_february_3_2015_v4.pdf)

### Helpful Websites

- US Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy ([www.dol.gov/odep/](http://www.dol.gov/odep/))
- Americans With Disabilities Act ([www.ada.gov/](http://www.ada.gov/))
- Think Beyond the Label ([www.thinkbeyondthelabel.com/](http://www.thinkbeyondthelabel.com/))
- AskJAN ([www.askjan.org/](http://www.askjan.org/))
- Disability.Gov ([www.disability.gov/resource/national-disability-institute-ndi/](http://www.disability.gov/resource/national-disability-institute-ndi/))
- Institute for Community Inclusion ([www.communityinclusion.org/](http://www.communityinclusion.org/))
- National Center on Workforce and Disability (NCWD) ([www.onestops.info/article.php?article\\_id=59](http://www.onestops.info/article.php?article_id=59))
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN) recommends ([www.askearn.org/](http://www.askearn.org/))
- Northeast ADA Center @ Cornell University ([www.northeastada.org/](http://www.northeastada.org/))
- Burton Blatt Institute @ Syracuse University ([www.bbi.syr.edu/projects/Demand\\_Side\\_Models/Toolkit.html](http://www.bbi.syr.edu/projects/Demand_Side_Models/Toolkit.html))
- Internal Revenue Service ([www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/tax-benefits-for-businesses-who-have-employees-with-disabilities?\\_ga=1.205889808.2068179500.1435337635](http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/tax-benefits-for-businesses-who-have-employees-with-disabilities?_ga=1.205889808.2068179500.1435337635))

---

## Organizations and Agencies

### NYS Employment First Commission ([www.nyess.ny.gov/employment-first.html](http://www.nyess.ny.gov/employment-first.html))

The Employment First Commission is tasked with creating an Employment First policy for New York, which makes competitive, integrated employment the first option when considering supports and services for people with disabilities. The initiative aims to increase the employment rate, and decrease the poverty rate, for New Yorkers who are receiving services from the State, as well as register 100 businesses as having formal policies to hire people with disabilities as part of their workforce strategy. Participating on the E1 Commission are the NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH), Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR), Commission for the Blind, Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), Department of Transportation (DOT), Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC), Department of Health (DOH), Division of Veterans Affairs, Justice Center, and Economic Development Council

### New York Business Leadership Network (managed by Our Ability)

[www.ourability.com/contact/](http://www.ourability.com/contact/)

19 Timber Lane  
Glenmont, NY 12077  
518.429.9256



**New York State Department of Labor**

[www.labor.ny.gov](http://www.labor.ny.gov)

Division of Employment and Workforce Solutions – Business Services  
State Office Campus Building 12  
Room 425  
Albany, NY 12240  
888-4-NYSDOL

**ACCES-VR**

[www.acces.nysed.gov/vr](http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr)

New York State Education Building  
89 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY 12234  
800.222.JOBS (5627)

**New York State Commission for the Blind**

[www.visionloss.ny.gov](http://www.visionloss.ny.gov)

New York State Office of Children and Family Services  
52 Washington Street, South 201  
Rensselaer, NY 12144  
518.473.2346

**New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)**

[www.opwdd.ny.gov/employability](http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/employability)

44 Holland Avenue  
Albany, NY 12229  
866.946.9733

**New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH)**

[www.omh.ny.gov](http://www.omh.ny.gov)

44 Holland Ave.  
Albany, NY 12229  
800.597.8481

**New York State Inclusive Workforce Alliance**

<http://www.ourability.com/employment-first-inclusive-workforce-alliance/>



---

## Acknowledgements

This Toolkit was compiled by the NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities in collaboration with the members of the NYS Employment First Commission, Inclusive Workforce Alliance and the New York Business Leadership Network.



**Employment First  
Commission**



Special thanks to everyone who appears in the accompanying video.

# EmployAbility

---

A Toolkit for Employers

[www.nyess.ny.gov/employment-first.html](http://www.nyess.ny.gov/employment-first.html)

