



Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services

# *Guide for Hiring People with Disabilities*

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**WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS**  
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## Guide for Hiring People with Disabilities

*Texas Workforce Solutions comprises the Texas Workforce Commission, 28 local workforce development boards and our service-providing partners. Together we provide workforce, education, training and support services, including vocational rehabilitation assistance for the people of Texas.*

Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWS-VRS), in conjunction with Office of the Federal Contract Compliance Program and a group of local businesses, has produced this guide on attracting and hiring people with disabilities.

TWS-VRS helps Texans with disabilities to prepare for, find, keep and advance in competitive, integrated employment. These services can reduce the need for support from other public benefits and services.

In 2015, more than 97,000 people with disabilities in Texas received vocational rehabilitation (VR) services, and more than 15,000 of them became employed. More than 36 percent of VR customers have post-secondary education and an additional 28 percent have completed high school.

For every dollar spent on VR services, customers generate nearly \$8 in personal taxable income.

People with disabilities make up a significant pool of talent that can help businesses be more productive and profitable.

*The purpose of the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs is to enforce, for the benefit of job seekers and wage earners, the contractual promise of affirmative action and equal employment opportunity required of those who do business with the federal government.*

## Disability and working Americans

**730,000**  
people with disabilities



**employed in**  
**TEXAS**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau and the Texas State Data Center, between 2012 and 2014 about 39 million Americans had a disability; about 20.3 million of them were of working age (18-64) and 17.7 percent were employed.

Texas state population of approximately 27 million includes more than 3 million Texans (12 percent of the population) who have one or more disabilities; this gives Texas the second largest number of people with disabilities. More than 13 million Texans are in the workforce, which includes nearly 730,000 people with disabilities. Close to 35 percent of people with disabilities aged 16-64 were employed.



## The business case for hiring people with disabilities

Hiring and retaining people with disabilities positions businesses to qualify for federal contracts and requests for proposals (RFPs), qualify for tax credits and expand the employer's customer base.

Tax credits employers may qualify for include:

- Work Opportunity Tax Credit –  
[www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/benefits.cfm](http://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/benefits.cfm)
- Disabled Access Tax Credit –  
[www.irs.gov/Businesses](http://www.irs.gov/Businesses)

## Attracting and hiring people with disabilities

Hiring people with disabilities requires thinking about the business's management program differently.

TWS-VRS and other organizations offer businesses technical assistance in four areas to help make employing people with disabilities a reality by providing:

- Referrals for qualified people with disabilities with the skills businesses need.
- Technology and accessibility consulting services.
- Services for employees with disabilities.
- Disability awareness training and other consultation services.

## The senior executive role

A business's senior executive officer is often the key to accessing, hiring and retaining people with disabilities.

It is critical that an executive officer or other responsible party:

- Ensures that the business culture supports hiring people with disabilities.
- Monitors progress.
- Holds hiring managers accountable for results.



## *Practices that enhance hiring and retaining people with disabilities*

To attract, hire and retain people with disabilities, businesses must provide:

- ① A well-prepared business culture.
- ② An inclusive recruitment process.
- ③ An accessible employment application process.
- ④ An effective screening and interviewing process.
- ⑤ Flexible on-boarding and retention practices and procedures.

### ① **Business culture**

Businesses can build a culture that encourages and promotes diversity by providing a workplace that enables people with disabilities to maximize their potential.

#### **Characteristics to build into business's culture:**

To build and demonstrate a diversity-friendly culture:

- Formulate, document and communicate a commitment to hiring people with disabilities by:
  - Communicating to leadership why hiring people with disabilities is good business.
  - Communicating to management specific hiring goals and business targets for hiring people with disabilities.
  - Providing a positive statement or business policy that says that the business will seek and employ people in all areas of the business, and that it will provide equal employment opportunities.
- Include people with disabilities in the hiring and talent acquisition planning process.
- Budget to fund accessible accommodations.



Business culture

A circular diagram with a blue center containing the text 'Recruitment process' in white. The center is surrounded by a white ring with several thin grey lines radiating outwards, resembling a compass rose or a stylized sun.

## 2 Recruitment process

Recruitment is creating, attracting and retaining people with disabilities at all levels of the business.

A job's structure can often be reasonably modified to accommodate people with disabilities. Considering how a job is structured and how that might limit applications from qualified people with disabilities can help the business reasonably modify the job to attract more applicants. It is also important for businesses to avoid excluding people with disabilities because they are perceived as unqualified to perform a job that they could do with simple accommodation. Building strategic relationships with organizations that help place people with disabilities in jobs will help businesses find and choose from a pool of applicants who can meet their needs.

**Characteristics to build into business's recruitment system:**

### ➔ Structure jobs around essential job functions

Separate essential and non-essential job functions and consider accommodations:

- Review job descriptions and remove non-essential job duties that may deter applicants with disabilities.
- Assess job duties and define the accommodations that could help accomplish them.

### ➔ Accessibility

Businesses should ensure their websites are accessible and work with assistive devices:

- Design the company's website to meet accessibility needs.
- Evaluate IT systems and job boards for appropriate accessibility.

### ➔ Hiring at all levels of the business

Ensure that people with disabilities are hired at and have resources to move between positions at all levels of the business by offering career planning.

### ➔ **Meaningful outreach to people with disabilities**

Target people with disabilities when advertising positions:

- Provide job postings for TWS-VRS to share with people with disabilities.
- Advertise jobs through local Workforce Solutions offices.
- Use recruitment and referral resources from federal and state government agencies.
- Use accessible methods to market positions to people with disabilities.

Tailor recruitment events to people with disabilities:

- Reach out to groups that specialize in recruiting, hiring and retaining people with disabilities.
- Create opportunities with community-based disability organizations for career exploration, volunteer opportunities, on-the-job training and internships.
- Notify the following resources of job vacancies: community-based organizations that work with people with disabilities, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, colleges, universities and high school disability services support and career center staff.
- Contact local workforce agencies for career fair information.

Reach out to people with disabilities:

- Develop recruitment strategies and determine where recruitment should be focused.
- Determine specific people to target for recruitment through word of mouth within the business, including recommendations from employees with disabilities.
- Conduct interviews designed for people with disabilities at job fairs.

### ➔ **Support**

Provide support for people with disabilities who may not have access to information about job vacancies or who may need to ask questions about the job posted or the application process:

- Businesses can put a “help” button on their websites to identify whom to contact with questions, or provide contact information for the human resources department.
- Follow up after job fairs with people with disabilities.
- Modify recruitment efforts to help provide support.



### Lindsay Anderson



Lindsay had difficulty finding a career because she has an attention deficit disorder and a learning disability that make it difficult to process verbal information. In 2012, Lindsay was referred to the two-week “Hands-On Education” program, a partnership with the Hyatt Hotel that provides vocational training for people with disabilities. Lindsay’s VR counselor knew she was interested in clerical work and felt she would benefit from this on-the-job training program at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in San Antonio. Through the vocational training Lindsay received, she was able to apply for a job with the San Antonio-based business World Technical Services. She was hired as a receptionist and can be found greeting customers with a smile and friendly welcome.

#### ➔ Monitoring

Businesses may not know they are not attracting people with disabilities. To avoid this, they can monitor, evaluate and report progress toward meeting hiring targets and goals.

- Set benchmarks for the application rate of people with disabilities.
- Maintain application and hiring data.
- Develop appropriate metrics and monitoring processes.
- Analyze application and hiring data and determine appropriate next steps.

### ③ Application process

People with disabilities do not always have physical access to the business facility; to avoid this:

- Assess the facility for physical barriers.
- Ensure the facility has adequate parking, accessible ramps or someone to help people with disabilities gain access.

#### ➔ Application content

Assess job applications and remove any requirement that is not relevant to the position or is not related to an essential function of the job. Also consider whether the application is too complicated to complete, not user-friendly, or available only online.

Consider people with disabilities when designing the application process:

- Promote assistance (both on the website and at the physical location).
- Provide help filling out applications (kiosk or designated staff member).

Ensure the application does not include invalid tests:

- Ensure that the tested process or skill is job-related.
- Remove any non-job related tests or criteria from the application process.

#### ➔ Time of process

People with disabilities may require a different type of application. Avoid applications that are unnecessarily long, that entail unnecessary steps or that require the job seeker to complete the application in a short time.

- Allow two practice assessments.
- Allow the person to fill out the application in person.
- Make a staff member available to help the applicant.

#### ➔ Access

A job application that is available only online is a barrier to candidates who don't have access to a computer or computer skills. Also, online applications and other screening tools might not be accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired.

- Modify the application process to make it easier for people without computer access or computer skills.
- Use screen readers and/or magnification.
- Build accessibility into each step of the process.



*People with disabilities make up a significant pool of talent that can help your business be more productive and profitable.*



### ➔ Screening

Ensure screening questions are not unnecessarily difficult to understand and answer.

- Ensure that the screening process, including assessments and screening tools, is consistent with the job description.
- Use plain language, as described in the Plain Writing Act of 2010, in applications and screening.
- Ensure staff are available to answer questions.

### ➔ Monitoring

Keep an eye on progress:

- Determine if people with disabilities are being lost in the application and screening process.
- Determine if self-disclosure adversely affects hiring people with disabilities.



## ④ Screening and interviewing

Make the screening and interviewing processes accurate and prepare employees who screen and interview by addressing these factors:

### Screening

#### ➔ Knowledge

To prepare hiring managers for screening, educate them on:

- The benefits that people with disabilities can provide to the business.
- Compliance, and what they may and may not ask in an interview.
- Interview procedures.
- Accommodations.

Educate screeners by:

- Defining appropriate accommodations and providing them to applicants.

#### ➔ Assessments

Timed assessments may dissuade people with disabilities from participating in the screening process.

Address timing and scheduling by:

- Educating applicants on timed assessments.
- Considering accessibility barriers and determine accommodations for timed assessments.

### Interviewing

To prepare hiring managers for interviewing, educate them on:

- The benefits that people with disabilities can provide to the business.
- Compliance and what they may and may not ask in an interview.
- Interview procedures, and on expectations for people with disabilities in the interview setting.

### ➔ Lack of interview experience

People with disabilities might have limited interviewing experience and may require an interview process tailored to their needs.

Assess interview questions and activities from the perspective of the applicant by:

- Informing the applicant of any timed assessments.
- Training hiring managers on asking job-related questions.
- Developing rapport with the applicant.

### ➔ Accessibility of interview site

The location of an interview may prevent people with disabilities from accessing the interview site; to avoid this:

- Identify accommodation needs.
- Consider the accessibility of the interviewing location.
- Assess and remove barriers to the interview site's accessibility.

### ➔ Self-disclosure

Applicants may be reluctant to disclose disabilities for fear it will prevent them from being hired; conversely, they may incorrectly feel compelled to disclose their disabilities. To avoid these situations:

- Determine and review the business's policy on self-disclosure.
- Clarify the option for disclosure or non-disclosure.
- Encourage self-disclosure through offering accommodations for the interview.

### ➔ Scheduling

Evaluate how scheduling interviews may affect an applicant with a disability:

- Schedule the interview when support and/or accommodations are available.
- Offer alternative interview times (allow a minimum of three days to arrange accommodation).

## Shawna Debernitz



Shawna Debernitz, 44, of Joshua, Texas would settle for nothing less than a good job. She is a single parent raising two teenagers and she has hearing loss in both of her ears due to a congenital condition. Shawna had difficulty answering calls at work because she could not hear the caller. VR services were provided to her, including assistive devices such as a programmable hearing aid and a Sonic Boom alarm clock that vibrates the bed to wake her up for work. Her VR counselor also helped her obtain a Certificate for Deafness Tuition Waiver, which helped pay costs of college classes. After receiving VR services, Shawna returned to a job she enjoyed at a company that provides disaster relief clean-up teams. Shawna is part of the company's first crew to specialize in hazardous materials clean-up. Shawna is using the skills she learned with the help of VR services to help her team be more effective on the job; she has even taught her coworkers sign language.

### ➔ Interview process

Evaluate how the traditional interview processes may affect applicants with disabilities and:

- Schedule the interview when support and/or accommodations are available.
- Educate the applicant on the interview process and format.
- Acknowledge nervousness to ease tension.
- Train hiring managers about interviewing people with disabilities and asking job-related questions.
- Combine steps in the hiring process to lessen the effect on applicants.
- Review interview questions for appropriateness.





## 5 On-boarding and retention

Hiring people with disabilities is the first step to building a diverse workforce, and the applicant's on-boarding and retention should be consistent with the business's human resources policies.

Planning on-boarding can ensure that the new employee is integrated into the business culture and is productive. Monitoring performance and providing regular feedback is a sound retention practice.

Implement successful on-boarding and retention activities by:

### ➔ Planning and preparation

Other employees may not understand the needs of people with disabilities and may be confused if on-boarding activities are not planned or sufficient.

Prepare employees by:

- Conducting disability awareness training for employees.
- Assigning the applicant to a work teammate.
- Explaining any accommodations needed by the new employee.

Plan for a smooth entry into the job by:

- Clearly communicating the first day's agenda.
- Ensuring necessary accessible materials and other accommodations are available on the first day of work.
- Planning the on-boarding process.

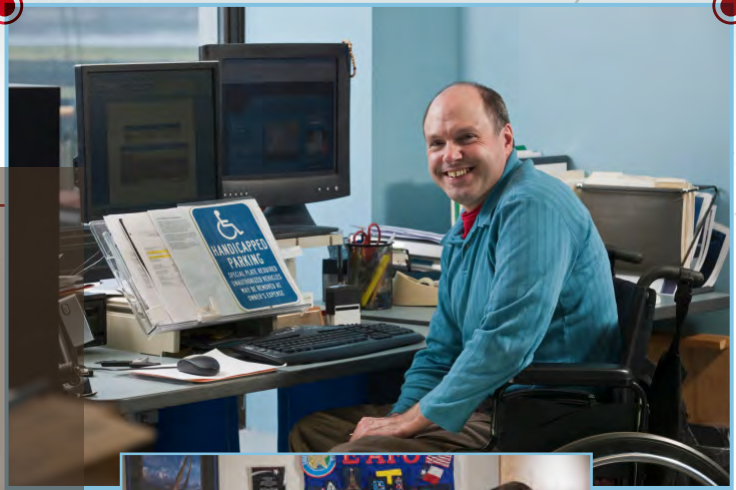
### ➔ Performance and training

Employees, including those with disabilities, may require that their job expectations be clarified, need job coaching or training services, or require regular communication about and feedback on performance.

Clarify job expectations by:

- Clearly communicating job duties to employees.
- Clearly communicating job duties and accommodations to other employees where necessary.

*Recruitment is creating, attracting and retaining people with disabilities at all levels of the business.*



Address the need for job coaching or training by:

- Collaborating with community vocational rehabilitation service providers for job training services.
- Partnering the employee with a job coach to help the employee accomplish job duties when needed.

#### ➔ **Feedback and support**

All employees, including those with disabilities, require feedback and support to maximize their potential and productivity in the workplace.

Provide regular and effective feedback by:

- Stressing the importance of communication.
- Providing immediate feedback.
- Providing feedback and advice to help employees improve their skills and performance.

## John Geter

John Geter of Tyler, 29, lost his vision when he was a child. He began receiving VR services in high school. These services included assistance with developing independent living skills, such as orientation and mobility, Braille, technology, and vocational rehabilitation. He also received work adjustment, job readiness and job placement training. After completing his training, John was hired as a dairy sales associate at a Walmart Supercenter. In addition to his employment success, John received the Goodwill Industries International Program Participant Scholarship; he was selected to attend Goodwill's spring conference in Washington, D.C. He also presented to Congress on behalf of people with disabilities.



Appoint a contact person to help people with work-related difficulties or other issues by:

- Developing a follow-up program.
- Checking in with the employee's manager on the first day and end of first week.
- Conducting formal follow-ups at 30, 60 and 90 days.

### ➔ Job satisfaction

To aid in retention, increase employees' job satisfaction by:

- Providing opportunities for people with disabilities to engage in social networking and career development.
- Holding social events (not workshops) to help develop rapport among employees.



## *How we can help*

TWS-VRS helps businesses to provide awareness, education, hiring and retention services for hiring people with disabilities.

### **Qualified applicants**

TWS-VRS can save employers time and money by providing qualified applicants. Just let us know your requirements.

### **Job retention**

TWS-VRS expertise can help businesses that have employees with disabilities develop services and accommodations. TWS-VRS may even provide employees with adaptive aids to help them maintain their employment and productivity.

### **Technology and accessibility**

If your business needs help accommodating employees, TWS-VRS can help.

### **Consultation**

If your business needs to conduct disability awareness training, complete a TWS-VRS job task analysis and get our recommendations about how to make your business facility and application processes accessible, including providing recommendations on work station IT products that are accessible for people who are blind or visually impaired. We can also help your business address its own unique needs.

TWS-VR can help.



## *References and resources*

For information on federal laws that affect recruiting and hiring people with disabilities, please refer to these resources.

- ➔ U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

[www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov)

- ➔ Employer resources

[www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/disability.cfm](http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/disability.cfm)

[www.eeoc.gov/laws/practices/index.cfm](http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/practices/index.cfm)

- ➔ U.S. Department of Labor - Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs

[www.dol.gov/ofccp/](http://www.dol.gov/ofccp/)

- ➔ Resources for federal contractors

[www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/Resources.htm](http://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/Resources.htm)

- ➔ U.S. Department of Labor - Wage and Hour Division

[www.dol.gov/whd/](http://www.dol.gov/whd/)

## ***Your TWS-VRS Office***

To locate your Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWS-VRS) office, visit:  
[www.texasworkforce.org/find-locations](http://www.texasworkforce.org/find-locations)

**If you have questions or need  
technical assistance, contact:**

**800-628-5115**

***www.texasworkforce.org***



**Texas Workforce Solutions-  
Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

**101 East 15th Street  
Austin, Texas 78778-0001  
800-628-5115**

*Equal Opportunity Employer/Program*

**Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to  
individuals with disabilities.**

**Relay Texas: 800-735-2989 (TTY) and 711 (Voice)**

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