

# Supported Employment FAQs for Employers

## **What is a developmental disability?**

This term is used to describe people with a cognitive disability who have difficulty learning, and need assistance to carry out the practical and social activities of daily living. It is a term that is used to describe a wide range of individuals with unique skills and abilities. Developmental disabilities include Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, and Autism.

## **What should I expect from an employee with a developmental disability?**

Like anyone else, people with developmental disabilities have strengths and weaknesses, talents and abilities. These talents could include experience and interest in your line of work and soft skills you find beneficial to your workplace such as customer service skills, team-work, and strong motivation for work. There may be someone in your community today with a developmental disability who has some or all of the specific skills you are looking for to enhance your business.

## **What do I have to offer?**

At first, you may think that there are no jobs at your workplace for someone with a developmental disability. Take a look around. Ask your managers to list the things that they need done and do not have time to do, or that take time away from more skilled employees. The possibilities are endless. You don't have to work this out alone, either. If you're not sure how a person with a developmental disability can fit into your business, call us to arrange a tour so we can observe the work environment, learn about your specific business needs, and offer suggestions.

## **I can't offer a full-time job. Does that mean I can't hire someone?**

Not at all. Many people with developmental disabilities are interested in working part-time. In fact, part-time employment may be the best way for an employee to learn and master the skills needed for your business.

## **How will this affect my other employees?**

Many co-workers tell us that working alongside a person with a developmental disability has enhanced their teamwork and their work culture. If your employees are uncertain about the concept initially, it's usually because they have no idea what to expect. We can help you address this issue in several ways. An employment consultant from Trillium can visit your business and individually meet with staff to help answer any questions or address concerns that may exist. We can also provide diversity and/or co-worker trainings that are tailored to your specific business needs. As business needs and personnel are always changing, we are there to help you meet these challenges.

## **What about accommodating special needs?**

If you think about it, you are accommodating the individual needs of employees all the time. This may range from providing hand rests for staff using computers, flex time programs, task lists, to simply helping a co-worker with physical tasks that they are not strong enough to do. Most of the time, making accommodations for someone is simple and does not cost your business anything at all. If necessary, there are grants available for workplace modifications or assistive technologies. Ask us for more information.

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## **Will I have support?**

Absolutely! If you decide to hire someone with a developmental disability, a job coach or employment specialist, is available to help you or your staff train your new employee. As your new employee learns the skills needed for the job, the employment specialist fades out of the picture. If you need help teaching your employee new skills later on, a phone call is all it takes to bring the employment specialist back to the worksite.

## **What about liability?**

As a responsible employer, you are already providing a healthy and safe workplace, and your business has Workers Compensation and general insurance coverage. Hiring someone with a developmental disability does not increase your liability. If there is a medical condition or anything else that could affect health and safety on the job, you need to know about it, just as you would with any other employee. While in the workplace supporting a person with a developmental disability, employment specialists are covered under liability insurance provided by their employer.

## **What about wages?**

Employees with developmental disabilities earn minimum wage or above depending on the assigned job duties and the employer's pay scale. Depending on the type of employment services a person is receiving, you may even be able to hire and train skilled workers and get reimbursed for your efforts for a period of time.

## **How will this benefit my business?**

Many employers are finding it hard to find reliable, long term, entry-level employees. People with developmental disabilities are a labor source that is vastly underutilized by most industries and businesses. Many employers tell us that hiring someone with a developmental disability is not only great for the business community, but cost-effective toward their bottom line. Employees with disabilities are known to have lower turnover rates, better safety records, and better attendance. They also offer new perspectives and increase company morale. The accommodations made for employees with disabilities typically end up bettering the workplace for other employees and customers, as well. Companies who hire inclusively are showing that they care about diversity in the workplace and about the people in their communities. It's truly a win-win situation!