

Gulf Coast  
**Business  
Leadership  
Network**



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## Disability Friendly Strategies for the Workplace

Employers who include disability issues in corporate diversity policies enrich and enhance workplace benefits. Such benefits include diverse leadership, innovation, increase in overall morale and the ability to cast a wider recruiting net. Outlined below are strategies to successfully incorporate persons with disabilities into the workplace.

### **Make a corporate commitment to include persons with disabilities among your stakeholders**

Is the CEO committed to a disability friendly workplace? Is there a written document to all staff that affirms this commitment? Do corporate policies, procedures and practices specifically mention disability? Do persons with disabilities serve on the board? Are employees and customers with disabilities seen in the annual report? Are workers with disabilities employed at all skill levels in the workforce, including senior management positions? Are your products or services marketed to customers with

disabilities? ***CEO commitment means senior leadership will embrace disability policies and that the organization will "talk the talk and walk the walk."***

### **Educate all staff on disability**

Does new staff orientation include disability awareness training? Are training materials available in alternate formats such as large print, Braille, and captioning? Do employees with disabilities serve as mentors for new hires who do not have disabilities? ***Providing disability education dispels myths and enables all staff to make sound disability employment decisions.***

### **Provide ongoing information on disability**

Are staff familiar with legislation pertaining to disability? Does staff receive disability information that could be helpful at work, at home or at school? Is disability information provided routinely in the company newsletter or on an intranet site? Are disability resources in the community contacted to help injured workers return to the workplace as soon as possible? ***Continued education enables employees to utilize pertinent disability information to resolve everyday family and worklife situations.***

### **Form a disability support group**

Do employees with disabilities meet to discuss disability employment issues? Does this group have authority to make recommendations to management? Is all staff aware of this group and the contributions it makes to corporate success? ***Disability perspectives enable all employees to contribute their full work potential to corporate success.***

### **Provide accessible facilities and services**

Are buildings, parking areas, work spaces, and communication systems accessible to persons with disabilities? ***Accessible facilities and services are more useful for everybody.***

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### **Accommodate applicants and workers with disabilities**

Is there a central source and budget for accommodations? Are applicants and employees informed that accommodations are available if needed? With permission, are employee success stories that demonstrate improved productivity based on accommodation shared with other employees? Does staff routinely stay abreast of new developments in universal and assistive technology? ***An open policy on accommodations allows candidates and workers with disabilities to demonstrate what they can do.***

### **Project a disability friendly image to attract candidates and customers with disabilities**

Do college recruiters target students with disabilities when making campus calls? Do recruiters search for resumes on disability-related Web sites? Are publications directed to persons with disabilities targeted for company advertising? Are recruiters and other personnel responsible for establishing working relationships with community agencies serving applicants with disabilities? ***Building relationships with community agencies increases referrals of candidates with disabilities.***

### **Hire applicants with disabilities**

Do recruiters regularly attend employment fairs for candidates with disabilities or target students at colleges with known populations of students with disabilities such as Gallaudet University and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf? Are employees offered incentive bonuses for referring applicants with disabilities? ***A diverse workforce includes employees with disabilities.***

### **Train and advance workers with disabilities**

Do employees with disabilities routinely participate in employer-sponsored training opportunities? If not, has this issue been brought before the Disability Support Group for recommendations? Are procedures in place to promote qualified employees with disabilities to management and supervisory positions? Employers who “talk the talk and walk the walk” of disability employment promote qualified workers to upper management positions.

### **Encourage staff to volunteer in the community**

Is staff encouraged to build relationships with disability community service organizations during work hours? Does staff make regular visits to high schools to inform administrators, teachers and students (including students with disabilities) about scheduled open houses and job trends in your industry? Are human resource staff instructing students with disabilities about how to set up a scannable resume or serving as mentors to graduating post-secondary students with disabilities to help them with their job search? ***Employers who want to make a difference in the disability employment arena are eager to influence tomorrow’s disabled workers and help job candidates with disabilities with their search.***

*For additional information contact: The Gulf Coast Business Leadership Network - 281-474-7887 or E-mail at [gcbln@imagineenterprises.com](mailto:gcbln@imagineenterprises.com)*

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