



*Creating Synergy for
Tomorrow's Workforce:
Employment Engagement*



May 20, 2025
9-3pm EST

Creating Synergy for Tomorrow's Workforce: Employer Engagement

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tammy Jorgensen Smith, Ph.D., CRC - USF• Larry Tartaglino - Galaxy Virtual Reality Lounge• The University of South Florida (USF) was recently awarded funding for the Delivering Innovative Vocational Education through Virtual Reality Technology (DIVE-VRT) project which began in October 2024. The purpose of the project is to develop, implement, refine, evaluate, and disseminate, for easy adoption, a model program to transition youth and adults with disabilities to competitive integrated employment (CIE) in skilled trades. Project activities will take place in the Tampa Bay area. Virtual Reality (VR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies are integral to the project model, adoptability/scalability, and sustainability. Specific aims include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ DIVE-VRT Flyer (Page 7)○ DIVE-VRT Application (Page 8)	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Apprenticeship Toolkit, designed for people with disabilities, supporters, employers, and VR counselors, helps employers meet workforce needs and foster inclusivity. U of I's facilitators session on leveraging the toolkit to enhance employer engagement, address business needs, and expand apprenticeship opportunities for people with disabilities.	
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EMPLOYMENT VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

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Employer Engagement:

Creating Synergy for Tomorrow's Workforce

Conference Agenda | May 20, 2025 | 9 AM – 3:15 PM

Time	Session	Presenters
9:00 AM	Opening remarks, tips, theme, agenda, and overview,	Denise R. Barnes
9:10 AM – 10:15 AM	Session 1: Keynote Panel - Employment Engagement: Creating Synergy for Tomorrow's Workforce Panel will be interpreted by USF Hands On	Robyn Lewis, Kerri Morse, Caitlyn Burnham & Maurice Abenchuchan
10:15 AM – 10:20 AM	Attendee Poll & Break Stretch Activity	Tammy Jorgensen Smith, Ph.D., CRC
10:20 AM – 11:10 AM	Session 2: Changing Expectations for persons with disabilities in the workforce	Robyn Lewis, Ph.D.
11:10 AM - 11:15AM	Session 3: Delivering Innovative Vocational Education through Virtual Reality Technology (DIVE-VRT)	Tammy Jorgensen Smith, Scott Fontechia and Larry Tartaglino
12:10 PM – 1:10 PM	Lunch Break	Tammy Jorgensen Smith, Ph.D., CRC
1:10 PM – 1:55 PM	Session 4: Disability Employment Awareness Month as a resource for Employers and Employment Professionals	Denise R. Barnes
1:55 PM – 2:00 PM	Comments, Video, and Five-Minute Break	Denise R. Barnes
2:00 PM – 3:00 PM	Session 5: Disability Underrepresentation in Apprenticeships: Can We Fix This? Implementing an Apprenticeship Toolkit	Stuart Rumrill, Bryan Austin & Jim Knauf
3:00 PM - 3:15 PM	Closing remarks, general Q&A, survey link and details, Thank Yous	Denise R. Barnes

*Please note that the schedule is subject to change.



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Employer Engagement: Creating Synergy for Tomorrow's Workforce

May 20, 2025
9 AM – 3 PM

Panelists

Kerri Morse, EdS

Robyn Lewis, PhD

Caitlyn Burnham

Moderator: Maurice Abenchuchan

Session 1: Panel Keynote

Join us for an insightful keynote panel discussion on the transformative benefits of hiring people with disabilities. This session will explore the untapped resources individuals with disabilities bring to the workplace. Our expert panelists will delve into the ramifications and concerns employers may have, addressing workplace regulations related to disabilities.



Hands On USF Interpreter Services



Hands On USF was established in the Fall of 2010 with a goal of providing interpreting services to the Tampa Bay Area while educating the next generation of interpreters. We pair senior USF interpreting interns with the most professional and experienced Sign Language interpreters in Tampa. Through our approach, we are able to provide affordable yet high-quality interpreting services to a wide variety of clients.

[Request HOUSF Services](#)

Haley Eyster, B.A., NIC

Director,

Hands On USF (HOUSF)

[Hands On USF web app](#)

Schedule an intensive training session for your organization.

robynl@illinois.edu

618-581-6617

RobynLewisPhd.com

[Link to full dissertation presentation](#)

[Link to full dissertation report](#)



**Creating Synergy for Tomorrow's Workforce:
Employer Engagement**

**May 20, 2025
9 AM – 3 PM**

Robyn Lewis, Ph.D.

**Session 2: Employer Perspectives:
Employment Practices that Sustain
Competitive Employment for Individuals with
Intellectual Disabilities.**

The findings of a dissertation study will be presented, revealing employment practices that sustain the competitive employment of persons with an intellectual disability. Educators, employment support professionals, and employers will learn strategies to increase knowledge, determine employer needs, create allies, and recognize value to engage employers and increase employment outcomes.



Robyn Lewis, Ph.D., has over 25 years of experience advocating, educating, and supporting individuals with disabilities. As assistant director for the Illinois Institute of Rehabilitation and Education Research (IIRER) she serves as liaison to the State of Illinois and national governmental organizations, assists with the administration of the Institute's grant projects, and works with the director on the overall management of the Institute, ensuring alignment of the Institute's projects with the mission.





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Tammy Jorgensen Smith, Ph.D., CRC
Associate Professor and Principal Investigator of DIVE-VRT

Larry Tartaglino
Director, VRG Learning Institute

Session 3: Delivering Innovative Vocational Education through Virtual Reality Technology (DIVE-VRT)

The University of South Florida (USF) was recently awarded funding for the Delivering Innovative Vocational Education through Virtual Reality Technology (DIVE-VRT) project which began in October 2024. The purpose of the project is to develop, implement, refine, evaluate, and disseminate, for easy adoption, a model program to transition youth and adults with disabilities to competitive integrated employment (CIE) in skilled trades. Project activities will take place in the Tampa Bay area. Virtual Reality (VR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies are integral to the project model, adoptability/scalability, and sustainability.



COOL JOB. HOT MARKET.

Learn HVAC Through Virtual Reality



Why Choose DIVE-VRT's HVAC Program?

- Florida's year-round heat and rapid growth mean HVAC techs are in constant demand.
- Certified technicians enjoy stable, high-paying, hands-on careers with strong growth potential.
- DIVE-VRT's program stands out with immersive VR and AI-powered training that helps you build skills faster and smarter.
- This year-long program includes hands on applied learning experiences through paid work, apprenticeships, internships, or through on-the-job training, helping you transition smoothly into the workforce.

About DIVE-VRT

- Curriculum adapted for learners with lifelong or acquired disabilities.
- Workforce success training, job coaching and placement supports available.
- Learn more at dive-vrt.org.

DIVE-VRT's HVAC Technician Certification Starts August 2025! **APPLICATIONS DUE JUNE 13**

Competitive Salaries and Job Security

- Entry-Level: **\$38k-\$45k/Year**
- Mid-Level: **\$50k-\$65k/Year**
- Experienced: **\$70k+**. Some Earn **\$100k+** With Professional Certifications
- Self-Employed: Income Varies

*Salary ranges based on data from: Zip Recruiter, Indeed, Salary.com, Talent.com, SkillCat, and ServiceTitan.

The contents of this flyer were developed under a grant (H421F240044) from the U.S. Department of Education (Department). The Department does not mandate or prescribe practices, models, or other activities described or discussed in this document. The contents of this flyer may contain examples of adaptations of, and links to resources created and maintained by another public or private organization. The Department does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of this outside information. The content of this flyer does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department. This publication is not intended to represent the views or policy of or be an endorsement of any views expressed, or materials provided by any Federal agency.

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There is no cost to participate in this program.



Scan the QR code to learn more or visit:

dive-vrt.org



DIVE-VRT

Delivering Innovative Vocational Education
Through Virtual Reality Technology

Application

APPLICATIONS ARE DUE ON OR BEFORE JUNE 13TH FOR THE PROGRAM YEAR BEGINNING IN AUGUST.

Eligibility

- Adult cohort: Out of high school and age 18+
- Youth cohort: Enrolled in Hillsborough County Schools and age 16-22
- Lifelong or acquired disability, excluding vision impairments/blindness, seizure disorders, or those who are pregnant.
- Ability to use a virtual reality headset.
- Functional communication system: Ability to communicate with staff verbally or with an assistive device. Required for interaction with virtual reality software and to engage with the class curriculum.
- Available to attend Information and Demonstration Session (June 2025).
- Reliable transportation throughout the program period.
- Ability to follow verbal and written directions, including those on a computer and virtual reality headset.
- Basic computer skills: typing, searching, selecting, emailing, and using Microsoft Office programs.

Admission Process

1. Complete the application form and submit required documentation.
2. All participants meeting eligibility and screening criteria must attend an Information and Demonstration Session happening June 2025. During this session, participants will meet DIVE-VRT staff, learn more about the program, and have an opportunity to try out the virtual reality technology.
3. Acceptance decisions will be sent out by July 31st.
4. Classes begin in August 2025 in Tampa, Florida.

Email: cbcs-divevrt@usf.edu **Website:** <https://dive-vrt.org> **Phone:** 813-974-2840

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Date Updated: May 2025

A Complete Application Package Includes:

1. Completed and signed DIVE-VRT **Application Form**
2. **Letter of recommendation** from someone other than a relative – Form included
3. **Documentation of a diagnosed lifelong or acquired disability**, which can include: SSI or SSDI award letter, education records, and medical documentation.
4. **Program Participation Agreement Form** - If you are under the age of 18 or have a legal guardian, please ensure that the parents or guardian also sign the document.
5. **Parent/Guardian Data Collection Consent Form**- Must be completed if the applicant is under 18, or over 18 and has a legal guardian
6. **Student Data Collection Consent Form**- Must be completed by all applicants.

Application Directions:

- Applicants should complete the application as independently as possible.
- Applications can be typed in the online form or printed neatly.
- If you require an accommodation to complete the application, please contact cbcs-divevrt@usf.edu
- If you need assistance with the application process or have questions, please contact cbcs-divevrt@usf.edu
- Application and materials can also be emailed to cbcs-divevrt@usf.edu
- You will receive an email to confirm that we received your application. Please do not call about the status of your application, as we will not be able to provide that information over the phone.
- The application and all supporting documents must be turned in on or before the Information and Demonstration Day in June.

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DIVE-VRT APPLICATION

Applicant Information

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

County: _____

Telephone (Please indicate if home or mobile): _____

Applicant email: _____

Parent/ Legal Guardian Information

Skip this section if you are over 18 and do not have someone who is your legal guardian

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Telephone number): _____

Parent/Guardian Email: _____

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Screeners

Please circle your answer below

Are you at least 16 years old?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Were you born with a disability, or have you acquired a disability?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Do you have a visual impairment or blindness?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Have you ever had a documented seizure?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If you answered Yes, to previous question, was the seizure within the past 10 years?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Are you currently pregnant?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

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Tell Us About Yourself

1. Why are you interested in attending the DIVE-VRT program?

2. Do you have an interest in pursuing employment in a skilled trade? If so, what trade are you interested in? Please note that the first class of the DIVE-VRT program will certify students in Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC).

- ☐ Yes, please specify your desired trade _____
- ☐ No

3. Do you currently receive (or have you previously received?) support or services from any of the following agencies?

- ☐ Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD)
- ☐ Hillsborough County Public Schools
- ☐ Vocational Rehabilitation
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

4. If you are working with a vocational rehabilitation counselor, please list the name, phone number, and email address of your Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor below:

- ☐ VR Counselor Name _____
- ☐ VR Counselor phone number _____
- ☐ VR Counselor email _____

5. Do you speak English fluently (speak or read easily)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

6. Do you have a functional communication system (ability to communicate with staff verbally, using sign language, or with an assistive device)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not sure

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7. Do you have transportation to and from the program? Please note that in-person attendance is required.
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ I am not sure
 - ☐ I will need help identifying transportation resources
8. Do you have basic computer skills? Please check all the activities you are able to do independently below.
- ☐ Use Microsoft Office programs such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel
 - ☐ Type a minimum of 15 words per minute
 - ☐ Use a mouse or a comparable assistive device
 - ☐ Use a computer keyboard
 - ☐ Write and receive emails
 - ☐ Other (please specify) _____
 - ☐ I am not sure
 - ☐ None
9. How comfortable are you with using the following types of technology? Please select the option that best describes your level of comfort for each.

	Very Comfortable (1)	Somewhat comfortable (2)	Somewhat uncomfortable (3)	Very uncomfortable (4)
Smartphones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gaming Systems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Virtual Reality (VR) Headsets (Examples: Meta Quest, Apple Vision Pro, and Sony PlayStation VR 2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Artificial Intelligence (Examples: Siri, Alexa, smart thermostats, ChatGPT, and navigation apps)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Will you need any accommodations to participate in the program? (Examples can include voice recorders, extra time for tests and assignments, noise-cancelling headphones, note-taking assistance, and copies of presentations)
- ☐ Yes, please specify your accommodation needs below

 - ☐ No
 - ☐ I am not sure

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11. Are you currently enrolled in high school?
- ☐ Yes, please provide the name of your high school below _____
 - ☐ No
12. What is your sex?
- ☐ Male
 - ☐ Female
 - ☐ Prefer not to self-identify
13. What is your race? Please select all that apply.
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
 - ☐ Asian
 - ☐ Black or African American
 - ☐ Latin/Hispanic
 - ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - ☐ White
 - ☐ Other (please specify) _____
 - ☐ Prefer not to self-identify
14. Do you also have other disabilities? If so, please select any that apply to you
- ☐ Deafness
 - ☐ Hearing impairment
 - ☐ Speech or language impairment
 - ☐ Autism
 - ☐ Orthopedic impairment (mobility)
 - ☐ Specific learning disability
 - ☐ Intellectual disability
 - ☐ Emotional disturbance or Mental Health Condition
 - ☐ Other (please specify) _____
 - ☐ None
15. How did you learn about the DIVE-VRT program? (Please select all that apply)
- ☐ School (teacher, transition specialist, etc.)
 - ☐ Vocational Rehabilitation
 - ☐ Employment Specialist
 - ☐ Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)
 - ☐ CareerSource
 - ☐ Center for Independent Living (CIL)
 - ☐ College or university. Specify name below: _____
 - ☐ Florida Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD)
 - ☐ Florida Center for Inclusive Communities (FCIC)
 - ☐ News outlet/Social media
 - ☐ Flyer/postcard
 - ☐ Other source – Please specify: _____
-

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16. Did you receive any help with completing this application?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

17. If yes, who helped you complete this application?

- ☐ Name of the person who assisted you? _____
- ☐ What is their relationship to you? _____
- ☐ How did they help you? _____

Disclaimer and Signature

By signing this application, I hereby certify that all information contained in this application, and all documents submitted with it, is true, accurate, and complete to the best of my knowledge.

Applicant

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/ Legal Guardian Signature (if applicable): _____

Date: _____

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Through Virtual Reality Technology

PERSONAL RECOMMENDATION LETTER

Name of Applicant:

Your Name:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Phone Number:

Alternate Phone Number:

Email Address:

Relationship to the Applicant:

I have known the applicant for (specify years/months):

Discuss the following:

1. Describe your relationship with the applicant.
2. Describe why you feel the applicant would benefit from the DIVE-VRT program. Please refer to our website for more information.
3. Describe the applicant's desire to learn and motivation to be gainfully employed, using examples from your relationship.

This letter should be no more than one (1) page in length. Return this sheet and the letter in a sealed envelope to the applicant, who must enclose it in his/her application package. Or email directly to cbcs-divevrt@usf.edu

Email: cbcs-divevrt@usf.edu **Website:** <https://dive-vrt.org> **Phone:** 813-974-2840

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Program Participation Agreement

- I understand that students are expected to fully participate in the DIVE-VRT program unless otherwise permitted by staff.
- I understand the student is central to all decisions regarding participation and follow-through in the DIVE-VRT program.
- I will attend the program daily and minimize absences. Long-term vacations causing absences or virtual participation are not permitted. Four absences per semester are allowed.
- I understand that students in the DIVE-VRT program (adult cohort) are not supervised when class is not in session.
- I understand that students attend DIVE-VRT activities independently of parents or guardians, promoting independence and self-advocacy.
- I understand that students will handle DIVE-VRT equipment carefully and report any issues.
- I understand that students in the DIVE-VRT program are expected to conduct themselves professionally in their language, attire, and interactions with peers and staff.
- I understand that physical aggression towards oneself, peers, or staff is not permitted. If such behavior occurs, an immediate team meeting will be called to discuss the next steps.
- I understand that staff will work closely with the student to provide reasonable accommodations as needed and will call a team meeting if any concerns arise.
- I understand that students and legal guardians are expected to promptly communicate needs, schedule issues, absences, and other matters that staff need to be aware of.

Student signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/ Legal Guardian signature (please sign if your son/daughter is under 18 or over 18 and you have legal guardianship): _____ Date: _____

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Data Collection Parent/Legal Guardian Consent Form

Your son/daughter/ward has been asked to be part of the DIVE-VRT project. The DIVE-VRT project uses Virtual Reality technology to train participants to become certified in a skilled trade. The DIVE-VRT project will also have in-person training to teach participants about other essential employment skills and how to find a job in their certified trade. Then the DIVE-VRT project connects each participant with an applied learning experience, such as volunteering or an apprenticeship. The DIVE-VRT project will last roughly 18 months. As a participant, the DIVE-VRT project needs to find out what worked, what didn't, and how to improve. This will help us make it better for other participants in the future.

Anyone who agrees to take part in this project has rights. Your son/daughter/ward has the choice to say yes or no to being part of this project, and you, as a parent/guardian, have the choice to say yes or no.

	What the project wants to find out? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What your son/daughter/ward thought about being part of the DIVE-VRT project.• Whether it helped them find a job.• What recommendations they have for improvement.
	What will your son/daughter/ward will do if they participate? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your son/daughter/ward will be asked to participate roughly five short surveys over the course of the 18 months that they are part of the DIVE-VRT project. Each one should not take more than five minutes. These surveys will ask some basic information about them. Surveys will also ask if they feel they have learned new skills and if the DIVE-VRT project helped them to get a job.
	What are possible risks of taking the surveys? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your son/daughter/ward might not know how to answer some questions.• They may not feel comfortable sharing their opinions about the project.

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	<p><u>Your youth/ward can skip any questions and still participate. If they feel uncomfortable, they can talk to Christine Hugh (chugh@usf.edu) or Tammy Jorgensen Smith (smithtj@usf.edu)</u></p>
	<p>What are the benefits of taking the surveys?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The surveys will help us understand if the DIVE-VRT project helps people learn new skills and find jobs.
	<p>What are your son/daughter/ward's options for the survey?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They can choose not to fill out the surveys. • They can answer some questions. • They can answer all the questions.
	<p>Your son/daughter/ward can ask questions about the surveys at any time, and so can you.</p>
	<p>Who can my son/daughter/ward talk to if they have questions or who can I talk to if I have questions?</p> <p><u>Christine Hugh (chugh@usf.edu) or Tammy Jorgensen Smith (smithtj@usf.edu) will answer any questions you may have.</u></p>
	<p>Contact:</p> <p>Christine Hugh chugh@usf.edu</p> <p>Tammy Jorgensen Smith smithtj@usf.edu</p> <p>Jaimie Timmons Jaimie.timmons@umb.edu</p>
	<p>How will my son/daughter/ward's information be kept private?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All surveys responses will be stored securely online, and only project staff with a password can access them. Your son/daughter/ward's name will not be known to anyone who reads their surveys.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will remove any identifying information and keep the data for five years. If the data is used in a future study, we will not ask you to consent again unless the study is very different.
	<p>After reading this information, you can choose YES or NO to consent for your son/daughter/ward to participate in the DIVE-VRT project.</p> <p>Reminder: Even if you agree now, your son/daughter/ward has the right to say NO to participating at any time, even after the project starts.</p> <p>Please ensure they review and sign the student consent form.</p>

I **consent to/ do not consent** to having my son/daughter/ward participate in surveying and information-gathering activities during and after the DIVE-VRT program.

Student Name: _____

Parent/ Legal Guardian Name (Print): _____

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

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DIVE-VRT

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Data Collection Student Consent Form*

***If you are over 18, please complete this form.**

***If you are under 18 or over 18 and not your own guardian, complete this form AND have your parent or legal guardian complete the parent form.**

You have been asked to be part of the DIVE-VRT project. The DIVE-VRT project uses Virtual Reality technology to train you to become certified in a skilled trade. The DIVE-VRT project will also have in-person training to teach you about other essential employment skills and how to find a job in your trade. Then the DIVE-VRT project will connect you with an applied learning experience such as volunteering or an apprenticeship. The DIVE-VRT project will last roughly 18 months. As a participant, it is important for us to find out if you liked being part of it and if it helped you find a job. This will help us make it better for other participants in the future.





Anyone who agrees to take part in this project has rights. You have the choice to say yes or no to being part of this project.

	<p>What the project is trying to find out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What you thought about being part of the DIVE-VRT project. • Whether you think the DIVE-VRT project helped you find a job. • What recommendations you might have to improve the project.
	<p>What you will be asked to do if you participate?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will be asked to participate roughly five short surveys over the course of the 18 months that you are part of the DIVE-VRT project. Each one should not take more than five minutes. These surveys will ask some basic information about you. They will also ask if you feel you learned new skills and if the DIVE-VRT project helped you to get a job.
	<p>What are possible risks of taking the surveys? Risk means a chance of something bothering you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not knowing how to answer questions. • Not feeling comfortable sharing your thoughts about the DIVE VRT program.

Email: cbcs-divevrt@usf.edu **Website:** <https://dive-vrt.org> **Phone:** 813-974-2840

Award: H421F240044 - UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

Date Updated: May 2025

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can talk to Christine Hugh or Jaimie Timmons.
	<p>What are the good things about taking the surveys?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The surveys will help others find out whether the DIVE VRT project teaches people new skills and leads to a job.
	<p>What are your options for participating these surveys?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can say no to filling out a survey. You can say yes to filling out a survey but only answer part of the questions. You can fill out the entire survey.
	<p>You can ask any questions about the surveys at any time. Some questions you might ask are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How long will this survey take? Do I have to do this survey? How will you keep my information private? Who sees the answers to my surveys?
	<p>Who do I talk to if I have questions?</p> <p>Christine Hugh chugh@usf.edu Jaimie Timmons Jaimie.timmons@umb.edu</p>
	<p>Contact Us:</p> <p>Christine Hugh chugh@usf.edu Tammy Jorgensen Smith smithtj@usf.edu Jaimie Timmons Jaimie.timmons@umb.edu</p>
	<p>How will my information be kept private?</p> <p>All the surveys will be kept in a secure file online. Only project staff with a password can it. that. Your name will not be known to anyone who reads your survey.</p> <p>We will take out your name and any information that could identify you. We will then store this information for five years. This information could be used for another study later. In this case we will not ask for you to consent again unless the study is very different.</p>
	<p>After you understand everything, you can now choose YES or NO to participating You can say “no” right away or after the DIVE-VRT project has started.</p>

Email: cbcs-divevrt@usf.edu **Website:** <https://dive-vrt.org> **Phone:** 813-974-2840

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Date Updated: May 2025

	<p>Examples of ways that other people have said no:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't want to do this • No thank you • Sorry, I'm busy with other things
--	--

I **consent to/ do not consent** to participating in surveying and information-gathering activities during and after the DIVE-VRT program.

Student Signature:

Date:

Date of Birth:

If you are under 18 or under guardianship, we will also need to obtain permission from your parent, guardian, or someone who legally represents you. Proceed to Parent/Guardian Consent Form.

Email: cbcs-divevrt@usf.edu **Website:** <https://dive-vrt.org> **Phone:** 813-974-2840

Award: H421F240044 - UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

Date Updated: May 2025

EMPLOYMENT VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

Talent Actualized!



Employer Engagement: Creating Synergy for Tomorrow's Workforce

May 20, 2025
9 AM – 3 PM

Denise R. Barnes, M.A.

FCIC Employment Coordinator/CARD Consultant

Session 4: Disability Employment Awareness Month as a resource for Employers and Employment Professionals

Using DEAM 365 to increase employment or volunteer options in your community. DEAM is Disability Employment Awareness Month. What does it take to revive this national event aimed to improve and increase employment opportunities for PWD in America? Learn how to implement DEAM daily and provide job shadowing and experience opportunities for students and adults with disabilities.



NDEAM
2025
80th Anniversary



Explore what's possible with profession-based learning — where industry and education collide.



Quick Guide

What is Profession-Based Learning (Pro-BL)?

Profession-based learning (Pro-BL) is the highest form of experiential learning. Instructors collaborate with local industry partners to design real-world learning experiences. Personalized projects challenge students, as they apply technical and durable skills to produce tangible solutions.

UNDERSTANDING PRO-BL

Pro-BL expands learning beyond the classroom, immersing students in professional settings where they work on projects using industry-standard tools. They learn to solve problems and increase knowledge by collaborating with peers, instructors and industry partners. Students prove their skills by developing products or presentations to share with an audience, increasing critical thinking, team building and communication.

Whether designing marketing campaigns, deciphering engineering challenges or assisting in scientific research (all actual examples of Pro-BL in action!), students contribute in real ways that have lasting impact on their communities.

Explore what **sets profession-based learning apart** from problem-based or project-based learning in the chart on page 3.

IMPACT ON INDUSTRY & EDUCATION

In Pro-BL, teaching isn't about simply meeting the required assessment – students are being taught to learn how to adapt to solve real problems. Learning becomes real and students are engaged through relevant work. They learn from educators and industry experts. They don't have to stay in their lanes. They get to experiment, collaborate and connect to get things done for industry partners, while gaining valuable experience for themselves.

THE ROLE OF INDUSTRY IN PRO-BL

Pro-BL programs are built on a model that has reimagined and restructured high school education by allowing students to focus on finding their passions, strengths and potential careers through tangible experiences. Industry partners engage with local schools to provide real work for students to complete. By leveraging strong community partnerships and combining that with the collective knowledge of Pro-BL classrooms, students engage in powerful, integrated learning that prepares them for life after high school. Delivering education in this way helps students connect their interests with their career, becoming lifelong learners who can adapt to changing circumstances.

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BENEFITS TO INDUSTRY

- Introduces innovative, **fresh ideas and new talent**
- Enables companies to tackle the **"10th item on the to-do list"** by leveraging student involvement
- Introduces the business to their **future workforce**
- Allows the business to **contribute to the needs and wants of tomorrow's workforce**
- Engages students in real-world issues, allowing them to lead and **foster community change**

BENEFITS TO EDUCATION

- Enables instructors to **make a difference** in their students' lives — academically, socially and emotionally
- Reflects **current and projected realities** of industry needs, better preparing students for college and careers
- Empowers students to **seek creative solutions** to problems
- Inspires students to **think differently** about themselves as learners, collaborators and leaders
- Leads students to **master core academic content** in practical ways

"As an employer, I aim to stay competitive by hiring the best talent. As a community member, it's refreshing to see how well the next generation is being educated. I'm excited to see the positive ripple effects this will have on our community."

— Isaac Lee Collins
Owner, Yogurtini KC

Characteristics & Elements of Profession-Based Learning

	Problem-Based	Project-Based	Profession-Based
Time Frame	Short, within one to two class periods	Longer, will require several class periods over several weeks	Longer, will require working in and out of class over several weeks
Relationship	Student & teacher	Student & teacher	Student & client
Number of Participants	Individual effort, typically not a team activity	Individual or team effort, can be organized either way	Team effort, groups of three students optimal
Curriculum Type	"Off the shelf," not always customized	"Off the shelf" or customized, can be organized either way	Organized by the client
Skill Type	Single technical skill, lower range of Bloom's Taxonomy	Multiple technical & soft skills – middle range of Bloom's Taxonomy	Multiple technical & soft skills – high range of Bloom's Taxonomy with emphasis on critical thinking
Focus	Developed from lecture content	Can be on a simulated real-world problem	Real problem(s) with solutions that could be implemented by the client
Method of Assignment	"Turn in" work	"Turn in" work	Differentiated, promote options for students to choose
Method of Assessment	No rubric; objective evaluation with emphasis on public presentation of recommendation to client	Rubric-based subjective evaluation	Differentiated, subjective evaluation
Example	A lease/buy problem requiring the use of Excel	Alleviating poverty in the local community	Developing a social media strategy for a new non-profit organization



Experience
a win-win
partnership that
benefits students
and your business.

Quick Guide

How can my business engage in local profession-based learning?

Profession-based learning (Pro-BL) isn't possible without industry experts like you. If you're ready to make a meaningful impact for students *and* your business, there are many ways to get involved. Let's dive in!

WAYS TO ENGAGE

- **Real-world projects** and **internships** expose students to an array of job options, developing skills in critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and design thinking.
- **Externships** give instructors hands-on industry experience, allowing them to learn best practices, build professional relationships and teach students current skills to stay competitive.
- **Funding support** can be provided in various forms, such as sponsoring events, donating workspace or classroom space, equipment or software.
- **Mentors** model behavior, answer questions and support students with feedback, insight and inspiration within their interest area.
- **Advisory/Steering Committees** provide insight when planning a Pro-BL program, leveraging their networks and resources and acting as subject matter experts to inform curriculum.



WHO TO CONTACT

Every school district manages engagements with local industry partners differently, but below are the types of individuals to look for when starting outreach. You can also ask school admins for direction on who to contact.

- Career and technical education (CTE) directors
- Work-based learning directors
- School counselors or principals
- Internship coordinators
- Executive directors of school foundations

HOW TO REACH OUT

Direct communication is the best way to initiate engagement with your local school — in-person visit, email or phone call. Note that it could take multiple outreaches or contacts to set the stage for a Pro-BL experience with the school.

When speaking with school staff, share your interest as a business professional to engage with courses that you feel you can provide support — via mentorship, career discovery activities or advisory committees.

If educators are unfamiliar with Pro-BL, share the experience.work website with them to learn more.

PREPARE TO ENGAGE

There isn't one way to engage with your local school. Each business offers different skillsets and traits that can be customized to fit mutual needs for you and the school.

One way to begin is to tour the school to learn if/how they are engaging with other business partners. Other easy ways to engage are to attend school showcase events, volunteer as a mock interview mentor or speak to a class. As you get more comfortable engaging with education, opportunities will be created to support projects, experiences and more.

PRO-BL BENEFITS TO INDUSTRY

- Provides fresh perspectives and new ideas from students, leading to **innovative solutions** to existing challenges.
- Enables companies to tackle the **"10th task on the to-do list"** by leveraging student involvement.
- Enables **early access** to a pipeline of future employees.
- Contributes to the development of **durable skills** in the future workforce.
- Gives employees the opportunity to mentor students, **boosting job satisfaction** and retention.
- Enhances **community engagement** by contributing to local education initiatives.
- Boosts brand reputation by being **seen as a leader** in workforce development and positive contributor in the community.

Ready to explore more? Let's connect!
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"Profession-based learning is vital to our industry's growth and development of a skilled workforce... it strengthens community ties and generates innovation."

— Amanda Bohnert
Chief Marketing Officer
S.M. Wilson



Engage students in real-world projects to generate real results for your industry and community.

Quick Guide

How does profession-based learning benefit industry?

Profession-based learning (Pro-BL) creates dynamic connections between students, industry partners and educators. Industry partners from many sectors benefit from this type of collaboration.

While students get to explore their future in a unique way, industry partners benefit by **investing** in the future workforce, **expanding** productivity and **strengthening** company and community engagement.

INVEST IN FUTURE WORKFORCE

Pro-BL is a reciprocal learning experience between education, industry and community to invest in the next generation and the future of work.

Industry partners benefit from engaging with students — their workforce pipeline. Students learn by doing real work on client-connected projects, increasing their engagement in learning and developing professional skills early. In an era when technical skills are evolving at an unprecedented pace, **durable skills** are growing significantly in demand. These skills include critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity, as well as character skills like fortitude, growth mindset and leadership.



EXPAND PRODUCTIVITY

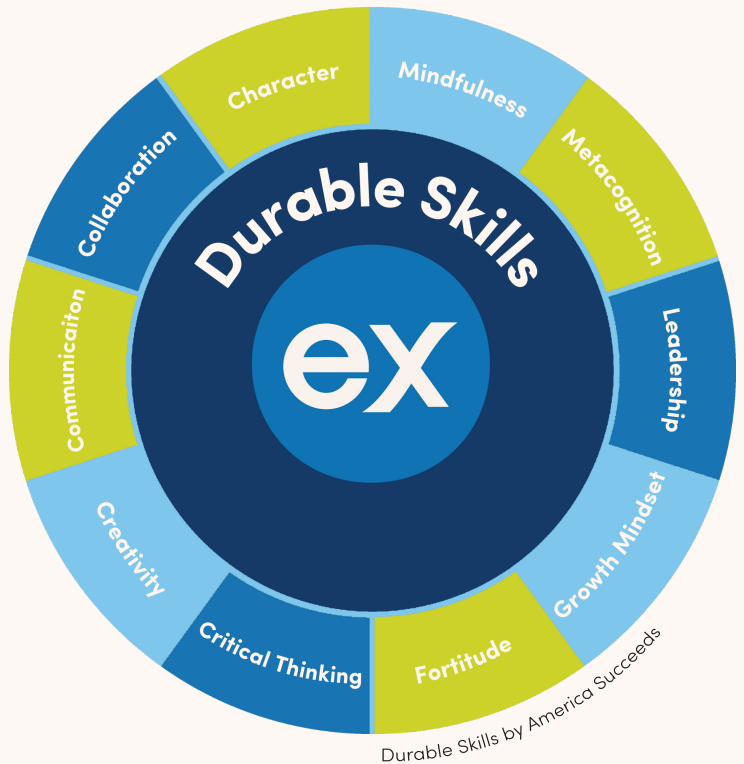
By involving students in real-world projects, businesses have a unique opportunity to tackle the “**10th item on the to-do list**” — those projects that always seem to be pushed to the bottom of the priority list but are still important for long-term growth. With fresh perspectives and energy, students contribute **real work** to address back-burner projects in ways that might not have been possible otherwise. This collaboration not only helps businesses complete valuable work but also drives innovation and efficiency, offering a tangible return on investment.

STRENGTHEN COMPANY CULTURE

Engaging in Pro-BL can significantly **improve employee recruitment and retention** by offering your staff opportunities to mentor students, lead projects and contribute to their professional development. These experiences give employees a deeper sense of purpose and connection to their work, helping to retain talented team members and position your company as a desirable place to work for future recruits.

SUPPORT COMMUNITY TIES

Beyond internal benefits, participating in Pro-BL enhances your company’s **community engagement** by directly contributing to local education initiatives. This involvement not only strengthens relationships with local schools and organizations but also elevates your company’s reputation as a key player in building a skilled and capable future workforce.



“Partnering with this program has been a true asset in showcasing our industry and helping to recruit future talent. Students bring a **fresh perspective** which helps creative troubleshooting in various situations.”

— Mark Turnipseed
Foundation & Community
Engagement Director
BJC Healthcare

Ready to explore more? Let’s connect!
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Disability Mentoring Day 2023

The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) is a convener, connector, and catalyst for change, increasing the political and economic power of people with disabilities. AAPD's [Disability Mentoring Day](#) (DMD) program is a large-scale national effort to promote career development for students and job seekers with disabilities through career exploration and ongoing mentoring relationships.

COVID-19 Considerations

As COVID-19 and its variants coupled with the approaching cold and flu season continues to be a concern, AAPD strongly recommends DMD coordinators to follow the guidance of their local jurisdictions when deciding to host an in-person or virtual event. A significant portion of the disability community may be at a greater risk of contracting and experiencing severe health complications due to underlying conditions. For an up-to-date tracker of the COVID-19 cases, you may visit the [Center for Disease Control website here](#). In addition, we are also including the [CDC's Guidance for COVID-19 prevention in K-12 classes here](#). This gives information on safety measures that should be implemented when conducting in-person learning for students and can be applied to your event.

History and Impact of Disability Mentoring Day

DMD was established to take place on the third Wednesday in October, in conjunction with [National Disability Employment Awareness Month](#). However, as DMD has grown, events may take place throughout the month of October and the entire year. DMD has expanded from a one-day event for a small group of students to an extensive national mentoring program for students, job-seekers and professionals with disabilities across the United States, U.S. territories, and abroad.

Disability Mentoring Day began in 1999 with a proclamation from President Clinton. Less than three dozen students participated in the first DMD hosted by the White House. In 2001, AAPD committed to serving as the national coordinator for DMD, and the program has evolved significantly to encompass participation both nationally and internationally. Through a network of volunteers and employers, DMD positively impacts students and job seekers with disabilities every year.

The DMD program allows employers to connect with people with disabilities outside of the typical hiring context, while at the same time exposing all people with disabilities to new employment possibilities, exciting career tracks, and future educational opportunities. DMD allows students to gain a first-hand look at careers they are interested in with the help of experienced mentors in the field. By working with these mentors, students will develop the interview and job skills needed to be successful. In addition, DMD programs educate employers

on the value of hiring people with disabilities and how to make the workplace more accessible and empowering for employees with disabilities.

Through DMD, students and job seekers are paired with a career professional to learn what it means to work in that field, observe a typical workday, identify necessary skills, and learn about possible internships or employment prospects. While DMD is a one-day event, mentors and mentees are encouraged to stay in touch afterward. Mentoring is invaluable and beneficial for all parties involved, advancing career development and personal growth.

For more information about DMD and how to get involved, please visit www.aapd.com/DMD.

Disability Mentoring Day FAQs

What is Disability Mentoring Day?

AAPD's Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) program is a large-scale national effort to promote career development for students and job seekers with disabilities through career exploration and ongoing mentoring.

Where does DMD take place?

DMD has grown from a one-day event for a small group of students to an extensive national mentoring program for young professionals with disabilities across the United States, U.S. territories, and abroad. [You can let us know about your upcoming DMD event here.](#)

When does DMD take place?

DMD was established on the third Wednesday in October, in conjunction with National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). However, DMD has since grown into a year-long program, and events now take place throughout the month of October and the entire year.

How did DMD start?

Disability Mentoring Day began in 1999 with a proclamation from President Clinton. Less than three dozen students participated in the first DMD hosted by the White House. In 2001, AAPD committed to serving as the national coordinator for DMD, and the program has evolved significantly to encompass participation both nationally and internationally.

Why is DMD important?

The Disability Mentoring Day program allows employers to connect with people with disabilities outside of the typical hiring context, while at the same time exposing all people with disabilities to new employment possibilities, career paths, and future educational opportunities. DMD allows students to gain a first-hand look at careers they are interested in with the help of experienced mentors in the field. By working with mentors, students will be able to develop the

interview and job skills needed to be successful. In addition, DMD programs educate employers on the value of hiring people with disabilities and how to make the workplace more accessible and empowering for employees with disabilities.

What are the goals of DMD programs?

The goals of Disability Mentoring Day include:

- Promoting disability as a central component of diversity recruitment for a more inclusive workforce;
- Disproving stereotypes about hiring people with disabilities;
- Increasing confidence among students and job seekers with disabilities;
- Enhancing internship and employment opportunities for people with disabilities; and
- Serving as a launch pad to promote a year-round, national effort to foster mentoring and career exploration.

What does a successful DMD event look like?

DMD events come in various shapes and sizes. Each event should be customized based on the participating students and employers, to best meet the needs and experience of all involved parties. Overall, a DMD event should connect with the two primary objectives of the program which are to:

- 1) Help participating students and job seekers with disabilities learn more about potential employment opportunities and develop connections to the local business community.
- 2) Counteract unconscious biases, myths, and stereotypes held by employers to make them more comfortable with disability and more likely to hire employees with disabilities in the future.

Elements of a DMD event can include (but are not limited to):

- Job shadowing
- Informational interviews
- Resume workshops
- Mock interviews
- Connecting with the Human Resources and/or Recruiting Department to discuss potential in-person or remote internship and employment opportunities
- Virtual tour of company office/facility or website
- Guest speaker on disability inclusion in the workplace
- Discussion on how a company has adapted their internal and external operations due to COVID-19, and how this may have increased the flexibility of their work policies for employees
- Hosting a virtual career fair

Please be sure to share the details of your DMD event with AAPD so we can help promote it on our DMD Events webpage. [You can share details of your event through this online form](#). We'd

also like to gather some information on your event after it is held to help us track the overall impact of DMD around the country – [please complete this brief survey after your DMD event](#).

Who do I contact to find out more about DMD?

To find out more about Disability Mentoring Day, please contact AAPD at dmd@aapd.com or visit www.aapd.com/dmd.

Questions for Students and Job Seekers with Disabilities

Do I need to be a student to be a part of DMD?

No; we welcome all people with disabilities who wish to advance their career opportunities to be part of DMD programs.

As a student and/or job seeker, what can I expect to gain from being a part of DMD?

Through DMD, students and job seekers are introduced to career professionals to learn what it means to work in a particular field, observe a typical workday, identify necessary skills, and learn about possible internships or employment prospects. While DMD is a one-day event, mentors and mentees are encouraged to stay in touch. Mentoring is invaluable and beneficial for all parties involved, advancing career development and personal growth.

Questions for Mentors

As a mentor, what will I gain from being a part of DMD?

A mentor is someone who — through support, counsel, friendship, reinforcement, and constructive example — helps another person reach their work and life goals. Some of the benefits of being a mentor include a sense of accomplishment; creation of networks; insight into childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood; and improved supervisory skills.

I want to be a DMD mentor, but am unsure how to make my job accessible to people with certain disabilities. Should I still become a mentor?

Yes, most certainly! There are many ways to accommodate people with disabilities. For specific questions on making your platform accessible, review the Accessibility and Accommodations section of this toolkit located on page 14. However, in short, the best way to identify one's accommodation needs is to ask the person directly.

Questions for Employers and Organizational Partners

Why should my organization become involved in DMD?

DMD offers employers an opportunity to engage an untapped demographic of people with disabilities and develop a pipeline of talent into their organization. DMD also allows organizations to help constituents with disabilities develop confidence about their own

employability, to recruit short- and long-term interns/employees, and to demonstrate positive leadership. DMD is a truly unique program that allows companies to actively engage in issues affecting citizens and the business community in a positive way.

[I want to start a DMD program, but I live in an area where there are not many options for mentors. Is there still a way I can host a DMD event?](#)

In the past, local coordinators in small communities have voiced concerns about finding mentors for their programs. However, the expansion of virtual connectivity has drastically improved outreach possibilities. Coordinators now can engage mentors and mentees beyond their local areas, and connect with prospective participants in neighboring counties, states, and other regions across the country.

If coordinators prefer to keep their outreach local, most municipalities have a school, community center, and city/county government that they may wish to contact. Many of the jobs and job functions performed by those employees may fall within the job categories that are of interest to students and job seekers.

[What are the requirements to become a Coordinator for DMD?](#)

To create a DMD program in your area, the first step is to apply to become a DMD Coordinator (if you have not already). [The application can be found here](#). When your application is received and approved, AAPD will provide you with resources to help facilitate your first and successful DMD. Your responsibilities as a Coordinator include, but are not limited to, arranging outreach to potential hosts and mentors for your DMD event (such as businesses, corporations, government agencies, and advocacy organizations) and locating mentees from local high schools and colleges to participate. We have received countless stories from DMD Coordinators on the profound difference this one day can make for young people with disabilities, including leading to their first paid internship or job.

[What will my organization gain from being a part of DMD?](#)

Disability Mentoring Day offers employers an opportunity to engage an untapped demographic of people with disabilities, to help constituents with disabilities develop confidence about their own employability, to recruit short-term and long-term interns/employees, and to demonstrate positive leadership.

[What are the benefits of employing people with disabilities?](#)

Hiring people with disabilities ranked third as an indicator of a company's commitment to social justice, behind protecting the environment and offering health insurance to all ([Disability Employment 101: Introduction](#)). For more information on the value of disability-inclusive workplaces, see the 2018 joint report from AAPD and Accenture [Getting to Equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage](#).

Getting Your DMD Event Off the Ground

Sign up to be a DMD Coordinator and Share Information about your event(s)

The first step in engaging with Disability Mentoring Day is to sign up to be a DMD Coordinator! Coordinators should also submit information about the event(s) they plan to host each year. The form can be accessed below or at www.aapd.com/DMD.

- [Sign up to be a Disability Mentoring Day Coordinator](#)

Establishing Partners

Successful DMD events engage a variety of partners in the community – students, schools, disability organizations, businesses, and more. Some potential partners to consider include:

High Schools

- Engaging high school students with disabilities is a great way to help them learn more about their career opportunities once they transition out of high school. These students benefit from participating in job shadows and professional development workshops.
- NOTE: In most cases, students under the age of 18 will need permission from a parent or guardian to participate in the DMD event.
- The state [Parent Training and Information Center](#) can be an excellent resource and help you engage an organization of parents of students with disabilities.

Colleges and Universities

- Engaging college students is another great way for companies to connect to a talent pool of people with disabilities. Many companies who host DMD events use DMD as a way to find potential interns or future employees.
- The vast majority of colleges and universities around the country have a Disability Services and Supports Office (or a similar resource), which can be an ideal place to connect with the population of students with disabilities.
- The college or university Career Services Office is another helpful resource to engage, along with student clubs and organizations.
- Ideally, Offices of Disability Services and Offices of Career Services should work together to promote inclusive employment opportunities for students with disabilities. Working with these offices for DMD can be a great way to generate conversation and connections and strengthen relationships.

Disability Organizations

- Centers for Independent Living (CIL) are local nonprofit organizations run by people with disabilities with the goal of supporting people with disabilities to live independently in the community. They can be a great resource to find young people with disabilities as well as potential speakers. [Identify your local center for independent living here](#).
- Many national disability organizations have state and regional chapters or affiliates, which can help you identify young people with disabilities or potential guest speakers in your area. Some chapter organizations include:

- [The Arc of the United States](#)
- [Easterseals](#)
- [United Cerebral Palsy](#)
- [United Spinal Association](#)
- [Autistic Self Advocacy Network](#)
- [Paralyzed Veterans of America](#)
- [Epilepsy Foundation](#)
- [National Federation of the Blind](#)
- [Special Olympics](#)
- [American Council of the Blind](#)
- [Little People of America](#)
- [Mental Health America](#)
- [National Association of the Deaf](#)
- [National Down Syndrome Society](#)
- [National Multiple Sclerosis Society](#)

State and City Agencies

- State vocational rehabilitation agencies are another resource focused on the employment of people with disabilities and may be able to make connections to job seekers with disabilities. [You can find your state vocational rehab agency here.](#)

Local Businesses

- The [area chamber of commerce](#) or local business association can be a great starting place to reach a number of businesses simultaneously.
- Disability:IN has chapters across the country, many of which engage local business leaders. [Find your Disability:IN affiliate here.](#)

Form a local organizing committee

Some DMD coordinators establish a local organizing committee to plan and execute DMD. This local organizing committee can help provide or raise funds for the event, help with recruitment of mentors, employers, or participants, and help share the work!

Areas of involvement to consider:

- Educators
- Employers
- Students and job seekers with disabilities
- Nonprofits, independent living centers, etc.
- Local Vocational Rehabilitation offices

- City and county employees

Think about financial considerations (budget)

An in-person event will look slightly different compared to a virtual one. For example, instead of budgeting for venue space and in-person catering, event planners will now need to secure an accessible online platform and accessible event materials to ensure attendees can easily access and navigate the event. Another consideration to take into account is expenses for lunch. If conducting a virtual event, coordinators may want to offer digital gift cards so online attendees may still have access to food and beverages during the DMD program.

Below are two lists outlining budget considerations for an in-person or virtual event.

In-person

- Venue space that can accommodate social distancing measures
- Accommodations (American Sign Language Interpreters, real-time captioning, etc.)
- Honorariums for speakers and presenters
- Food and beverage, individually packaged such as lunch boxes
- Supplies for arts and craft projects digital gift card to purchase these items)
- Giveaways for participants

Virtual

- Accessible online platform
- Accommodations (American Sign Language Interpreters, real-time captioning, etc.)
- Digital gift cards for food and beverages
- Supplies for arts and craft projects (you may want to consider sending attendees a digital gift card to purchase these items)
- Giveaways for participants (this should include expenses for shipping & handling)

Example Budget for Virtual DMD Event

This is based on a two-hour program with speakers.

Expense Type	Cost
CART	\$230
ASL Interpreters	\$380
Food & Beverage	\$500
*Honorarium (optional)	\$50 (per person)
One-time subscription for online platform	\$150
Total	\$1,310

**Please note that honorariums are optional expenses as they may be prohibited by some organizations*

Consider partnering with groups that offer in-kind donations

- What resources and community support do you already have?
- It is very helpful to have some kind of financing starting out. However, DMD events can be done through in-kind donations. Don't let the cost stop you from starting. Plan to increase financial support each year.

Overall, budgeting for a remote event will look slightly different and may be less costly than an in-person activity. Event planners will not have to consider traditional expenses to include venue spaces, transportation and other in-person costs. Instead, coordinators will need to focus on ensuring that their virtual platforms are accessible and user-friendly. All content should be in an accessible format, and there should be alternative options for accessing materials. Attendees should have the ability to connect with event planners to discuss any questions or concerns or needs that may arise before, during, and after the event.

For a comprehensive guide to producing an accessible online event, please refer to this article "[Digital Accessibility in the Age of COVID-19](#)", which gives best practices on creating accessible content and contains a list of highly recommended service providers for accommodation requests.

Determine the structure of your DMD event

DMD events can be organized in many different ways to best meet the needs of participating students and the expertise of participating employers. Possible activities (in-person or virtual) include:

One-on-one or group job shadowing

- Plenary gatherings (before and/or after job shadow)
- Group tours of the company's facility

- Virtual group tours of a higher education institution's website
- Career and internship fair
- Workshops on job readiness training (resume writing, mock interviews, etc.)
- Panel discussions of employed mentors with disabilities, where questions are facilitated by a moderator
- Do not feel as though you have to limit yourself to these specific activities – you can get creative and plan additional activities or guest speakers.

Get city/county leaders involved

- Invite state and local government leaders to attend your event or provide a keynote address
- Secure a proclamation of support for DMD and disability employment
- Consider inviting your federal representatives

Engaging your state and local government is important because it helps develop credibility in the community and makes elected officials aware of the importance of disability employment.

Timing of the event

Although DMD is officially observed on the third Wednesday of October during National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), we encourage you to schedule your events on dates that work best for your colleagues and community. We highly encourage you to host an event or multiple events beyond the month of October!

Prepare mentors for DMD

Provide guidance and resources on:

- How to be an effective mentor
- Getting to know your mentee
- Disability etiquette
- Providing accommodations
- Disability disclosure

Also, give the mentors the opportunity to ask questions.

Create a timeline

Once you have addressed the items above, determine the timing of when tasks need to be completed. Assign various tasks and responsibilities among the committee, if you have one. Creating a timeline helps ensure that you stay on track to host a successful event.

Ensure accessible evaluations or surveys are available to mentees and mentors after the event

Complete and turn in a final report to AAPD in the month following your event. DMD is a partnership between AAPD, national sponsors, and local committees. The final report demonstrates the overall impact of DMD and provides vital information to national sponsors that helps keep them involved and committed. [You can access the final reporting form here.](#)

Background Checks

While you are not required to conduct background checks on mentors who participate in DMD, it is generally a good practice. Some places to start include:

- Abuse and Neglect Central Registry
- State Bureau of Investigation
- Driver's License
- Sex offender registry (national and free) is accessed through the Department of Justice.

Accessibility and Accommodations

It is important to provide all reasonable accommodations and make sure your event's online platform is accessible to facilitate the full inclusion of DMD participants. Addressing disability accommodation requests may seem daunting at first, but with advance planning and clear communication with attendees on their needs, fulfilling these requests will be quite manageable.

Common Accessibility Considerations

- Accessible online platform
- Use simple language in marketing and event materials
- American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters
- Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) captioning
- Captions and audio narration (on any video materials)
- Gift card option that is widely accessible. Selecting a singular food delivery option such as GrubHub, Uber Eats, or DoorDash is not recommended if attendees live in different market areas. A major gift card that is accepted at a majority of vendors is preferred.
- Staff training/awareness of disability etiquette
- Providing visual descriptions

The best way to make sure the appropriate disability accommodations are provided is to ask participants what they need in advance of the event. You'll want to be aware of necessary accommodations at least two weeks in advance to allow time to schedule services.

Resources for accessible online platforms, recommended service providers and other helpful tips can be found below:

- [“Digital Accessibility in the Age of COVID-19”](#)
- Partnership for Employment and Accessible Technology: [Resource Library](#)

Additional Resources

- [A to Z of Disabilities and Accommodations](#) – Job Accommodation Network
- [Accommodations](#) – Office of Disability Employment Policy, US Department of Labor
- [Procedures For Providing Reasonable Accommodation For Individuals With Disabilities](#) – US Equal Employment Commission
- [Reasonable Accommodations](#) – US Office of Personnel Management

Job Shadowing in Rural Areas

If you are a Coordinator in a small community, you may have wondered where to find mentors. Most small towns have a school, community center, and city/county government that can offer suggestions. Many of the jobs and job functions performed by those employees may fall within the job clusters that are of interest to students and job seekers. Some people wear several hats and may not consider themselves experts, but they do those jobs as part of their daily routine. Below are some suggestions you may want to consider:

- **Communications:** Radio station, sheriff dispatcher, school bus dispatcher, hospital public relations, paratransit dispatchers, freelance journalists, photographer or communications consultant
- **Business and Marketing:** Local businesses, entrepreneurs in the area, farmers (discuss how they run the business side of the farm), local chamber of commerce president, business department at school, business office at nursing home or city office
- **Education:** Grade school teachers, principal or superintendent (probably started as a teacher), daycare providers with degrees
- **Food, Recreation, and Hospitality:** Cafeteria at local school, community center director, physical education teacher, state parks ranger
- **Health and Medicine:** Local doctor, dentist, EMT for fire department, nursing home LPNs and nurses, school nurse, community health department
- **Human Services:** Case manager or counselor at school, nursing home, hospital, independent living center, community developmental disability organization, mental health center, or Social and Rehabilitation Services office
- **Law, Government, and Public Policy:** Local courthouse, city/county commissioner, mayor, state senator or representative
- **Law Enforcement:** City police, sheriff, highway patrol
- **Natural Resources, Environment, and Agriculture:** City park official, city environment official, city/county water management, waste management or recycling, university satellite office of agriculture or environment, county extension office
- **Technology, Engineering, and Science:** Public school information technology specialist, technology specialist for city/county government, city/county employee in charge of building permits and construction

Media Outreach Overview

The following information can assist Coordinators in generating media coverage for their DMD event. This includes an outline of how to create a DMD local story, methods to use when contacting a reporter, best practices to follow up with a reporter, and tools and resources to communicate with reporters.

How to formulate your DMD story

When generating DMD press coverage, it is important to note the “Seven Characteristics of a News Story.” These principles will help you define why your DMD event and story are newsworthy. The Seven Characteristics of a News Story are:

- **Timeliness:** Is the story current? Is the story occurring today, tomorrow, or in a few days?
- **Significance:** Is the story or message in the story important to the public? Highlight why your story matters to the community. Include statistics and facts.
- **Proximity:** Is the story occurring within the community? Does it affect a specific segment of the community in some way?
- **Prominence:** Does the story have a connection to national or international issues? Such a story can be an eye-catcher for a reporter. DMD is a national program that occurs in more than 300 locations in the US and more than 20 countries worldwide.
- **Human Interest:** Does the story play to the reader’s emotions? Human interest stories appeal to emotions; they are relevant to the community and provide readers the opportunity to see into someone else’s life and experiences.
- **Uniqueness and Unusualness:** Does this happen often? Has this story ever occurred in your community?

When creating your DMD news story

- Think about what is happening in the news on a national or local level – how can you apply that to your story?
- Tie your message and story to the national DMD program, hosted by AAPD. Reporters and readers of the newspaper want to know that your event is a part of a national initiative.
- Keep in mind the best practices and recommendations (including a language guide) from the [National Center on Disability and Journalism](#).

When contacting the media

- Before you call a reporter, make sure you have listed the top three reasons why the reporter should be interested in your story. Remember the Seven Characteristics of a News Story.

- Select the local newspapers, television stations, or radio stations that would be most interested in your story.
- When calling a reporter, it is polite to ask if they are “on deadline.” This means that they are currently writing a story and their deadline is approaching. If the reporter is on deadline, ask them when you can contact them again, and do so when they are available.
- KISS! - Keep It Short and Simple. Include your three main points, highlight why your story is newsworthy, and provide statistics. You have 15 seconds to catch the attention of a reporter.
- Don’t “sell” the story, “tell” the story! Reporters are always turned off by callers that become salespeople. Remember reporters are human beings and are interested in “real” stories. So be short and concise, but be sure to tell the story.

News/media tools

Media Alert: A media alert, also known as a media advisory, is a condensed news release. It is a document that lists the “who,” “what,” “when,” “where,” “why,” and “how” of your DMD event. It serves as an invitation for reporters to attend your event and why they should be interested. Be sure to include the names of any local DMD sponsors that are supporting your event.

News Release: A news release is a short story highlighting your DMD program. The first paragraph of a news release features the “who,” “what,” “when,” “where,” “why,” and “how” of your event/commemoration. It is best to keep your news release to one page; more than that becomes cumbersome. Be sure to include the names of any local DMD sponsors that are supporting your event.

Fact Sheet: Also known as a backgrounder or one pager, a fact sheet provides background information on the program. It usually includes any historical information that you were not able to include in the news release. The backgrounder can also include:

- Information about your own organization, including the names of the leadership and the local DMD team
- Your DMD program’s major accomplishments or your organization’s major accomplishments in assisting individuals with disabilities
- The goal of the event
- The estimated number of participants
- Sponsors of the event
- Interesting facts and statistics

Press Kit: The press kit includes all media tools: the news release, the media alert, the backgrounder, and any promotional materials for the program and your own organization, including brochures, newsletters, and annual reports.

Timeline to disseminate media materials

If you would like the media to attend your event, we recommend using the following timeline:

- Two to three days before the event, send out the media advisory. It provides all the basic information that a reporter needs to know. Consider this as the reporter's invitation. Once you send it, contact the reporter the same day to ask if they have received your media advisory. It is best to wait about two hours to contact the reporter. This gives the reporter enough time to receive it.
- One day before the event, resend the media advisory. Be sure to include any confirmed guests or VIPs on this updated version. Follow up with the reporter in 30 minutes to an hour and pitch the story. Please keep in mind that you have about 15 seconds to capture the reporter's attention, so be sure to address the three main reasons why the reporter should be interested in the story, include stats, and highlight why your story is newsworthy (refer to the Seven Characteristics of a News Story).
- On the day of the program, make sure you have multiple press kits at the event for the reporter. If the reporter does not attend the event, send them the news release. After your event, wait about an hour to follow up with the reporter with a phone call, pitch the story, and offer yourself as a reference for the story.
- Whether or not reporters attend your event or cover the story, send them an email thanking them for their time and interest in the DMD program. Remember that the goal is to build relationships with the reporter and build your reputation and your DMD program's brand.

Disability-Friendly Strategies for the Workplace

Are you an employer interested in participating in Disability Mentoring Day? Employers who include disability in corporate diversity efforts enrich and enhance workplace benefits such as diverse leadership, innovation, intersectionality, and the ability to cast a wider recruiting net. Below are strategies to incorporate people with disabilities into the workplace.

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

Is the CEO committed to a disability-positive workplace? Do corporate policies, procedures, and practices specifically mention disability? Do people with disabilities serve on the board? Are workers with disabilities employed at all skill levels in the workforce, including senior management positions? Are your products or services accessible and marketed to customers with disabilities?

Educate all staff on disability

Does new staff orientation include disability awareness training? Are training materials available in formats such as large print, Braille, accessible PDFs, and captioned videos? Do employees with disabilities serve as mentors for new hires who do not have disabilities?

Provide ongoing information on disability

Are staff familiar with legislation pertaining to disability? Is disability information provided routinely in the company newsletter or website? Does your company contact disability resources in the community to help injured workers return to the workplace as soon as possible?

Form a disability support group

Do employees with disabilities meet to discuss disability 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?

Provide accessible facilities and services

Are buildings, parking areas, workspaces, online platforms and communication systems fully accessible to people with disabilities? Do workers have the option to work remotely due to an accommodation request?

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? Does staff routinely stay current on new developments in universal design and assistive technology?

Project a disability-positive 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 websites? Are recruiters and other personnel responsible for establishing working relationships with community agencies serving applicants 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, Rochester Institute of Technology and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf)?

Train, promote, and empower workers with disabilities

Do employees with disabilities routinely participate in employer-sponsored training opportunities? If not, has this issue been brought before the Disability Employee Resource Group for recommendations? Are procedures in place to promote qualified employees with disabilities to management and supervisory positions?

Encourage staff to volunteer in the community

Is staff encouraged to build relationships with disability community service organizations? Do staff make regular visits to high schools to inform administrators, teachers, and students with disabilities about open houses or job trends in your industry?

Source: This information was prepared in cooperation with Disability:IN, (formerly known as the Business Leadership Network (BLN)), an employer-led endeavor of the Office of Disability Employment Policy supported by the U. S. Chamber of Commerce. This program promotes best disability employment practices to enhance employment opportunities for job candidates who happen to have disabilities. For more information about the BLN and other programs of the Office of Disability Employment Policy [check out their website here](#).

DMD Best Practices for Companies

Many companies want to get involved with Disability Mentoring Day, but often do not know where to start. The following are a few suggestions to help make DMD a great experience for your organization.

Determine how your corporation can get involved

- Will employees volunteer as remote mentors?
- Can you host an online event?
- Can you sponsor a plenary session or luncheon?
- Can your company offer financial support for students towards distance learning supplies or equipment?

Think about the end goal of your DMD event

- What does your organization hope to accomplish through their involvement with DMD?
- If you hope to increase your community engagement, make sure you are partnering with other community organizations, such as your local independent living center, the disability services office at a local college, etc. as well as engaging with the disability community online
- If you are hoping to use the event as an opportunity to build a pipeline of talent, consider what types of entry-level jobs are available at your organization and how you can align the qualifications with the type of students you will invite to the event. Engage with your company's human resources or recruiting department.

Publicize participation in and importance of DMD across organizations

- Advertise the event or opportunity through your internal communications
- Add a mention of DMD to your website
- Utilize social media
- Request an endorsement from your CEO or senior leadership

Get all departments and groups involved

- If your company has an employee resource group (ERG) for employees with disabilities, make sure they are involved in the planning (and if you don't have one yet, start one!)
- Include human resources, including any diversity and inclusion personnel, as well as any recruiters that may be able to talk about employment opportunities
- Include the corporate social responsibility office, if you have one
- Invite employees from across the organization and from all departments to become mentors
- Include diverse groups of company representatives in each step of the process

Consider how you will develop the programming for the event

- Have a theme for your event (align the event with the purpose of participating)
- Ensure electronic handouts, videos, etc. shown during recruitment and on the day of the event are accessible (including video and audio captioning)
- Think about how you can make the day interactive and fun for the participants. Since your event will be online, you may need to think more creatively on how to

engage younger participants, especially in a world where “Zoom fatigue” can be a concern.

Appendices

Appendix A – Disability Mentoring Day Graphics



Image caption: Image of two stacked crescent moons facing upwards on a white background. The outer crescent moon is yellow and the smaller inner moon is orange. The orange crescent moon holds a small orange circle. The image depicts a person raising their arms upward in a victorious stance. Next to the image is the letters “DMD” printed in large navy blue capital letters.



Image caption: Dark blue text against a black background that takes up the center and right side of the image. The words on the bottom of the image read American Association of People with Disabilities and the abbreviation AAPD written above. On the top left-hand corner there is a white power symbol against a blue background.

Appendix B – Sample letter to potential partners

[It is best to place the following on organizational letterhead.]

[Date]

Dear [potential partner]:

I am reaching out as a representative of [company/organization] and as a Coordinator for [Disability Mentoring Day](#) (DMD) with an inquiry about a potential partnership with [potential partner organization].

Disability Mentoring Day is a large-scale national effort coordinated by the [American Association of People with Disabilities](#) (AAPD) to promote career development for students and job seekers with disabilities through virtual career exploration and ongoing mentoring. DMD is designed to bring students and job seekers with disabilities into the workplace to learn about various career opportunities. Through DMD, students and job seekers are connected to career professionals through job shadowing, panel discussions, informational interviews, professional development workshops, and more. While DMD is a one-day event, mentors and mentees are encouraged to stay in touch afterward. Mentoring is invaluable for both the mentor and student, advancing career development and personal growth.

This year, [company/organization] is planning to host a virtual DMD event and would like to engage the local community. Specifically, I am reaching out to you to see if [potential partner organization] would be interested in partnering with us to [list request – help connect to students with disabilities, serve as a speaker during an event, serve as a mentor, help promote the event, etc.].

Our event will be held at [time] on [date] through [online platform]. During the event, we will [brief description of event].

Please let me know if you are interested in learning more about this partnership opportunity. You can contact me directly at [contact information].

Sincerely,
[signature]

Appendix C – Sample mentor recruitment letter

[It is best to place the following on organizational letterhead.]

[Date]

Dear Prospective Mentor:

We want to offer you the opportunity to become a mentor to a student or job seeker with a disability who is interested in your field by participating in Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) on [date].

DMD is designed to bring students and job seekers with disabilities into the workplace to learn about various career opportunities. Through DMD, students or job seekers are paired with a career professional to learn what it means to work in that field or occupation, observe a typical workday, identify necessary skills, and explore possible internships or employment prospects. While DMD is a one-day event, mentors and mentees are encouraged to stay in touch afterward. Mentoring is invaluable for both the mentor and student, advancing career development and personal growth.

Disability Mentoring Day originated at the White House in 1999 with less than three dozen local students participating. DMD has since evolved significantly to encompass participation across the country and is now sponsored by the American Association of People with Disabilities, the nation's largest cross-disability organization. To find out more about DMD, please visit our website at <http://www.aapd.com/DMD>.

To participate in DMD, please return the attached mentor application to [name of local organization] by at [insert email] by [insert date].

If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. We hope you will take advantage of this mentoring opportunity and join us on [insert date].

Sincerely,

[Name]

Local Coordinator for DMD-[City Name] and

[Title]

[Organization Name]

Appendix D – Sample mentee recruitment letter

[It is best to place the following on organizational letterhead.]

[Date]

Dear Prospective Mentee:

We want to offer you the opportunity to be mentored by a professional in a career field that interests you by participating in Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) on [date].

DMD is designed to bring students and job seekers with disabilities into the workplace to learn about various career opportunities. Through DMD, students or job seekers are paired with a career professional to learn what it means to work in that field or occupation, observe a typical workday, identify necessary skills, and explore possible internships or employment prospects. While DMD is a one-day event, mentors and mentees are encouraged to stay in touch afterward. Mentoring is invaluable for both the mentor and student, advancing career development and personal growth.

Disability Mentoring Day originated at the White House in 1999 with less than three dozen local students participating. Now sponsored by the American Association of People with Disabilities, DMD has since evolved significantly to encompass participation across the country. To find out more about DMD, please visit our website at <http://www.aapd.com/DMD>.

To participate in DMD, please return the attached mentee application to [name of local organization] at [insert email] by [insert date].

If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. We hope you will take advantage of this mentoring opportunity and join us on [insert date].

Sincerely,

[Name]

Local Coordinator for DMD-[City Name] and

[Title]

[Organization Name]

Appendix E – Sample general support letter

[Organizational Letterhead]

[Date]

[Company Name] is pleased to announce our support for the AAPD [insert year] Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) program. The main objective of the AAPD DMD program is to increase exposure to career exploration, networking, and employment opportunities for job seekers with disabilities. Since the program's inception in 1999, participation has grown exponentially, both nationally and internationally. DMD has typically been observed on the third Wednesday in October; however, the program has evolved to encompass events year-round, encouraging participants to embody the true spirit of Disability Mentoring Day all year.

[Company name] recognizes the importance of programs like Disability Mentoring Day because [Customize with organization information such as info related to diversity statements, initiatives, etc.]

[Company name] applauds the leadership of [Insert name of DMD program/AAPD] in promoting the importance of mentoring and career development for people with disabilities.

[Organization Representative Name]

[Organization Name]

*****NOTE: The General Letter of Support template is for businesses or other organizations that wish to publicly support Disability Mentoring Day. This letter may be used as a promotional tool, fundraising tool, etc. and can be customized.*****

Appendix F – Sample media release form

MEDIA RELEASE FORM – Disability Mentoring Day

I, (print name) _____, hereby grant permission to the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and its employees or representatives to take and use:

(Check all that apply)

- ☐ Photographs/digital images
- ☐ Video
- ☐ Audio recording or quoted remarks
- ☐ Educational or other PowerPoint or presentation materials

of me for use in promotional or educational materials. These materials might include printed or electronic publications, websites, or other electronic communications. I further agree that my name and identity may be revealed in descriptive text or commentary in connection with the image(s).

I authorize the use of these materials indefinitely without compensation to me. All negatives, positives, prints, digital reproductions, and video and audio recordings shall be the property of the American Association of People with Disabilities.

(Signature of subject)

(Date)

(Print Full Name)

(Address)

(City, State, ZIP)

Appendix G – Sample DMD Proclamation

Proclamation

WHEREAS, more than one million people with disabilities have entered the labor force since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990; and,
WHEREAS, as taxpayers, consumers, and workers, people with disabilities are contributing to our society and to their own fulfillment of the American dream; and,
WHEREAS, new generations of young people with disabilities are growing up in [City Name, County Name, or State Name], graduating from high school, going to college, and preparing to participate in the workplace; and,
WHEREAS, job seekers with disabilities, regardless of age, are striving to attain economic independence through self-sufficiency and gainful employment; and,
WHEREAS, both students and job seekers with disabilities have the right to maximize their potential by making the most of their intellect, talents, and abilities in an environment free of physical, programmatic, and attitudinal barriers; and,
WHEREAS, Disability Mentoring Day provides an opportunity for students and job seekers with all types of disabilities to gain insight into career options by spending part of their day in the workplace shadowing an employee as he or she goes through a normal day on the job; and
WHEREAS, employers from the private, governmental, and non-profit sectors may benefit from mentoring people with disabilities as a way of learning about the experience of disability, developing lasting relationships with disability community leaders, and recruiting new and emerging talent for meaningful internship and employment opportunities; and
WHEREAS, these efforts are made possible through a broad partnership with the American Association of People with Disabilities (supported by a host of private corporations) and a dedicated local team of organizers from businesses, non-profit organizations, school districts, colleges and universities, and government agencies [modify this list according to your own Local Organizing Committee makeup or state the name of the local coordinating organization(s) instead];

Now, Therefore, Be it

RESOLVED that I, [Full Name of Elected Official], [Mayor/County Executive/Governor] of the [City/County/State] of [Name of City or State] do hereby proclaim [Day/Month/Year] as:

Disability Mentoring Day

in the [City/County/State] and encourage all citizens to recognize the enormous potential of people with disabilities and to work toward their full integration into the workforce.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the [City/County/State] of [Name of City/County/State] to be affixed.

Done at [the County Hall of Administration/City Hall the Capital], City of [Name of City], State of [Name of State], this the [Day] day of [Month], in the year of our Lord, [Year], and in the [insert age of state such as "One Hundred Sixty Third year"] of the [City/State].

[End of Proclamation]

**** NOTE: Only insert the name of the city or state when expressly mentioned. Where the text says "[City/County/State]", merely insert the applicable word.****

Appendix H – Teacher Tip Sheet

Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) is an opportunity for your students to learn more about their career interests and goals. It is important to prepare all students accordingly so that they can maximize their experiences at your upcoming DMD event.

Goal Setting:

Help students write down goals by finishing the following sentences:

- My educational goals are to _____.
- My career goals are _____.
- My personal goals are to _____.

Exploring Skills and Strengths:

Help students explore their skills and strengths by finishing the following sentences:

- Some things I'm really good at are _____.
- My friends/teachers/family would describe me as _____.
- I would be an asset to a job because I am _____.
- I would be an asset to a job because I can _____.

Help them use a diagram like the one below to plot out important skills and how they relate to career goals.

And then have them answer:

- What do you already do well that will be useful to you in your dream job?

Introduction to the Workplace

It is important for students to know what to expect from Disability Mentoring Day; we recommend you prepare them with a brainstorming activity. Some questions to be brainstormed:

- What are appropriate workplace behaviors and manners?
- What will you learn?
- What will you get out of Disability Mentoring Day?
- What's a good way to make a good first impression?
- What's a good way to make a good final impression?

Mock Interviews

Help your students learn to think and talk about themselves. Students should be able to introduce themselves and tell their mentors a little about themselves and their goals as well as ask questions. Help students work up a script, do mock interviews with the class, and allow students to help their classmates. Some suggestions:

Interview 1 (Talking About Yourself)

Mentor: Tell me about you. What sort of career do you want to have?

Mentee: _____

Mentor: Why that job or career?

Mentee: (Students can talk about strengths, accomplishments, general goals, etc.)

Mentor: How do you plan to get that job?

Mentee: (Students can talk about education, short-term goals, internship possibilities, etc.)

Mentor: What sort of experience do you have?

Mentee: _____

Interview 2 (Learning About Mentor's Job)

Mentee: Hi, My name is _____ and I attend *(insert school name)*.

Mentor: Hello. My name is [NAME] and I work at the Department of Labor in the Human Resources Department.

Mentee: *(Possible questions to ask your mentor – choose a few or come up with your own.)*

- What is your job title, and what is your role and responsibilities?
- What do you enjoy about your job?
- What are your biggest challenges at work?
- How did you get this current position?
- What is a typical workday like for you?
- How do people learn about job openings in your field?
- What types of employers, other than yours, hire people to perform the kind of work you do?
- If you were hiring someone for an entry-level position in your field, what would you look for?
- Is there any advice you can offer me?

Appendix I – Sample mentor application

Mentor Application [City Name] Area

Return by Email to [insert email address]

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MENTOR TO A STUDENT OR JOB SEEKER WITH A DISABILITY?

Then Disability Mentoring Day is for you! DMD enables students and job seekers to spend a day visiting a business, nonprofit organization, or government agency that matches their interests and have one-on-one time with volunteer mentors. It is an opportunity to underscore the connection between school and work, evaluate personal goals, target career skills for improvement, explore possible career paths, and develop lasting mentor relationships. It all begins with this application, so fill it out, send it in, and spread the word!

Deadline: All applications MUST be received by [date].

SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Last Name: _____ **First Name:** _____

Name of Business, Government Agency, or Non-Profit Organization: _____

Address: _____ **City:** _____ **State:** ____ **ZIP:** _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

How would you prefer for us to contact you? _____

SECTION II: WORK EXPERIENCE INFORMATION

Job Title: _____

Please indicate the career category or categories that best describe your job.

___ Arts and Communication

___ Law, Government, and Public Policy

___ Business and Marketing

___ Law Enforcement

___ Education

___ Natural Resources,

Environment, and Agriculture

___ Health and Medicine

___ Technology, Engineering, and Science

___ Human Services

___ Food, Recreation, and

Hospitality

___ Other: _____

Please summarize your job responsibilities:

SECTION III: WORKPLACE LOGISTICS

Location of your work site: _____

Please indicate the setting that most accurately describes your workplace.

☐ Private business ☐ Government agency
☐ Non-profit organization ☐ Educational institution

Please describe all categories that apply to the mentees you hope to host for Disability Mentoring Day.

☐ High school students
☐ College students
☐ Students in post-graduate work
☐ Job seekers not currently in school
☐ No preference; the most important factor is area of interest.

Is your facility wheelchair accessible? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does your business, organization, or agency offer internship opportunities? If so, please briefly describe, including the areas of focus for such a program. If the mentee pool permits, we will do everything we can to match you up with students who may be interested in separately applying for an internship that your organization may be offering. Feel free to include websites to visit and to use additional pages.

SECTION IV: GENERAL INFORMATION FOR WORKPLACE COORDINATORS (OPTIONAL)

If you are coordinating a Disability Mentoring Day program at your job site or would like to lead such efforts in your office, please fill out this section. Check all that apply.

☐ One-on-one job shadowing
☐ Tour of company site
☐ Small group discussion with all mentees
☐ Lunch with mentees
☐ Lunch covered by mentor/organization
☐ Mentee must bring own lunch or money for lunch

On-Site Agency or Organization Coordinator name and contact: _____

Total number of mentees to host: _____ Total number of mentors to host: _____

Coordinators are asked to gather applications from their offices and send everything in together. Every attempt will be made to match each mentor with a mentee, but in the event that this proves impossible, advance notice will be provided.

SECTION V: BACKGROUND CHECK

It is a best practice for mentoring programs to run a background check on mentors for students for the students' protection. The background check will be done through the state Abuse and Neglect Registry and the state Bureau of Investigation Criminal Records Check. The SRS Information and Registry Form is a separate document. Please include it when you return this application.

Have you ever been convicted of a crime? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, please explain: _____

Do you object to our agency running a background check on you? ____ Yes ____ No

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____

Middle Name: _____ Maiden Name (if applicable): _____

Preferred Name (if different from above): _____

Date of Birth _____ Sex: M F

This information will be kept confidential and only be used for reference purpose to ensure the safety of the students being mentored. Thank you for your cooperation.

(signature)

(date)

(print full name)

Appendix J – Sample mentee application

Mentee Application [City Name] Area

Return by Email to [insert email address].

ARE YOU A STUDENT OR JOB SEEKER WITH A DISABILITY LOOKING FOR A WORKPLACE MENTOR?

Then Disability Mentoring Day is for you! DMD enables students and job seekers to spend a day visiting a business, nonprofit organization, or government agency that matches their interests and have one-on-one time with volunteer mentors. It is an opportunity to underscore the connection between school and work, evaluate personal goals, target career skills for improvement, explore possible career paths, and develop lasting mentor relationships. It all begins with this application, so fill it out, send it in, and spread the word!

Deadline: All applications MUST be received by [date].

SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____
Gender: _____ Date of Birth: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____ Email: _____
Phone: _____

SECTION II: EDUCATIONAL SUMMARY

Please check one of the following:

___ High school student, attending _____ Grade _____

___ College/graduate student, attending _____ Year _____

___ Job seeker, not currently in school

Major or area of interest: _____

Highest level of education attained (check one):

___ Some high school

___ College Degree(s): _____

___ High School Diploma

___ Post-Graduate Degree(s): _____

___ Vocational License: _____

SECTION III: SCHOOL OR PROFESSIONAL CONTACT

(Teacher, Counselor, Professor, or Service Provider)

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____
Title: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ E-mail: _____
Phone: _____

SECTION IV: PLACEMENT PREFERENCES

All mentees are responsible for their own transportation to and from the central venue for their local Disability Mentoring Day events or to designated meeting places as arranged in advance. Check with your local organizer to determine the details that pertain to you.

Below, using the Career Clusters Worksheet (located on the last page of this application) as a guide, please select up to four career fields of interest and rank by preference.

<input type="checkbox"/> Arts and Communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Law, Government and Public Policy
<input type="checkbox"/> Business and Marketing	<input type="checkbox"/> Law Enforcement
<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Natural Resources, Environment, and
<input type="checkbox"/> Food, Recreation and Hospitality	Agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> Health and Medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> Technology, Engineering, and Science
<input type="checkbox"/> Human Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

SECTION V: ACCOMMODATION REQUESTS

Please check any accommodations you may need at Disability Mentoring Day events:

<input type="checkbox"/> Braille	<input type="checkbox"/> Sign Language Interpreter
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer disk	<input type="checkbox"/> Oral <input type="checkbox"/> Tactile
<input type="checkbox"/> ASL <input type="checkbox"/> PSE	
<input type="checkbox"/> Large print	<input type="checkbox"/> Dietary restrictions: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Wheelchair access	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

SECTION VI: GOALS, INTERESTS AND HOBBIES (OPTIONAL)

On separate pages, briefly answer the following questions. We strongly encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to provide more information, since this will help event organizers with the mentor/mentee matching process. Also feel free to include a resume.

- What is your ultimate and/or long-term career goal?
- Describe your major and/or educational area(s) of interest.
- Describe your paid and/or unpaid work experience (if any). Include extracurricular activities, internships, and community service work.

- Describe the job-related skills that you have (if any). What skills do you hope to gain from Disability Mentoring Day and in the future?

SECTION VII: TRANSPORTATION

PRELIMINARY TRANSPORTATION PERMISSION

(Please have your parent/guardian sign below if under the age of 18)

_____ I understand that I am responsible for making transportation arrangements for my child to the plenary event, and I understand that this may involve traveling between different locations during the day in vehicles that may be either school district vehicles or business-owned vehicles and may be driven by either school district employees or local business people. I further understand that, in certain cases made known to me in advance, employers may escort my child to job shadowing work sites via public transportation and that such arrangements will depend on the agency to which my child is matched.

_____ I will provide transportation for my child to and from the mentoring site on [date]. I will also transport my child from the plenary to the particular mentoring organization and then back to the afternoon plenary event in accordance with arrangements individually made with that organization in advance.

Signature

Date

TO BE COMPLETED BY PARTICIPANTS UNDER 18

NOTE: For students in high school or younger, this authorization must be completed by a parent or guardian.

Your child has been invited to attend the Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) event on [date], nationally hosted by the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and locally coordinated by [Organization Name]. Your child will attend a morning session for a large group of students before being assigned to an employee for a one-on-one mentoring and job shadowing experience. Mentees will learn about career opportunities, typical attitudinal and structural barriers faced by people with disabilities in a particular industry, and the types of skills needed to succeed in the working world. Following the receipt of the application and your initial consent, your child will be matched with a local business, public agency, or non-profit organization. Additional details will be forthcoming at that time. For further information, please contact [Your Name] with [Your Organization] at [Your number] or [Your email].

PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE IN DISABILITY MENTORING DAY

My child, _____, may participate in Disability Mentoring Day activities on [date], from __:__ AM to __:__ PM.

Signature

Date

PHOTO/NAME RELEASE. I further understand that the Disability Mentoring Day can attract attention from the media and that it is used to promote ongoing partnerships between schools, disability organizations, and employers. Additionally, I understand that participating mentee names may be provided to the [State] DMD statewide planning committee to print a recognition certificate from DMD. I hereby grant permission to release the name and photograph my above-mentioned child for promotional and educational purposes.

Signature

Date

Career Worksheet

NAME: _____

On Disability Mentoring Day, mentees may be paired with a workplace mentor at a job site. To make your experience more meaningful, please rate your top three choices among the following career clusters. If possible, you will be paired with a mentor who works in one of the clusters you selected.

Place the number of your choice next to the appropriate career cluster below.

1 = First Choice

2 = Second Choice

3 = Third Choice

_____ **Arts and Communication:** Do you like to communicate ideas? Do you like to share information? Are you creative, imaginative, and innovative? Do you like to express yourself in writing or with audio, visual, or media arts? Do you like to perform? Could you imagine yourself working at a museum or in other settings that promote and celebrate artistic expression?

_____ **Business and Marketing:** Are you organized, accurate, and self-motivated? Are you a leader? Do you enjoy organizing people and planning events? Do you like working with computers? Do you like creating reports? Do you like marketing things? Do you enjoy working with numbers?

_____ **Education:** Would you enjoy teaching either children or adults in an academic setting?

_____ **Food, Recreation, and Hospitality:** Do you enjoy the preparation of and/or serving of food, either in a cafeteria or restaurant setting? Do you like organizing recreational activities such as social outings, competitive sports, arts and crafts, and picnics? Do you like putting together the logistics for conferences and conventions, community service projects, or other community relations activities? Do you enjoy being around people and picture frequent interaction with others as a vital part of your ideal work environment?

_____ **Health and Medicine:** Do you like to work with people? Are you interested in wellness and nutrition? Are you interested in working as a doctor, nurse, nurse practitioner, or medical assistant? Do you like new technology? Are you interested in medical research and figuring out the causes of diseases? Can you stay calm in an emergency?

- _____ **Human Services:** Are you able to get along with a diverse group of people? Do you like serving the public? Are you a leader? Are you patient, polite, and able to make decisions? Are you dependable and hardworking?
- _____ **Law, Government, and Public Policy:** Do you like to follow current events? Do you like to learn about local, state, national, or international politics? Are you interested in how laws are enacted? Do you aspire to hold elected or appointed political office? Do you like speech and debate? Do you see yourself arguing a case in court? Do you like conducting research on the law, its practical application, and how it is interpreted? Do you envision helping to draft major public policy on issues you care about?
- _____ **Law Enforcement:** Do you want to work as a police officer, sheriff, marshal, detective, or criminologist? Would you be interested in investigating and solving crimes?
- _____ **Natural Resources, Environment, and Agriculture:** Are you passionate about the environment? Do you like working with plants and animals? Are you interested in physical resources such as land, water, soil, and weather? Do you like to observe, learn, investigate, and solve problems?
- _____ **Technology, Engineering, and Science:** Do you enjoy math, technology, or science? Do you have the ability to be accurate, analyze data, and solve problems? Do you like designing things or drawing detailed plans? Do you like using machines and heavy equipment?
- _____ **Other:** Is your main interest not covered above? If so, tell us about your preferences in the space provided on the previous page.

Appendix K – Sample mentee application – Spanish

¿ÉRES UN ESTUDIANTE O ESTÁS BUSCANDO TRABAJO? ¿ÉRES ENERGÉTICO Y ENTUSIASTA? ¿TIENES ALGUNA DISCAPACIDAD? ¿ESTÁS BUSCANDO UN MENTOR PROFESIONAL?

¡Deberías ser parte del Día del Mentor y Discapacidad (DMD)! DMD les permite a estudiantes y personas con discapacidad en búsqueda de trabajo participar de un día de guía profesional, visitando negocios, agencias sin fines de lucro, o agencias gubernamentales afines a los intereses de dichos estudiantes y personas con discapacidad. Además, cada participante tiene la oportunidad de conectar con un mentor en el área de trabajo de su interés. Es una oportunidad para evaluar tus metas personales, refinar tus habilidades laborales, explorar oportunidades y desarrollar una relación duradera con mentores profesionales. Todo comienza con esta aplicación. ¡Lléнала, envíala y pasa la voz! Fecha límite: la aplicación DEBE ser recibida para el [fecha].

SECCIÓN I: INFORMACIÓN GENERAL

Apellido: _____ Nombre: _____
Género: _____ Fecha de Nacimiento: _____
Dirección: _____
Ciudad y Estado: _____ Código Postal: _____ e-mail: _____
Teléfono () _____ - _____

SECCIÓN II: RESUMEN EDUCATIVO

Por favor, marque alguna de las siguientes opciones según tu estado académico:

___ Soy estudiante de secundaria, cursando _____ Promedio _____
___ Soy estudiante en una Universidad/Postgrado, cursando _____ Año _____
___ Estoy buscando trabajo, pero no estoy estudiando actualmente.

Especialidad o área de interés: _____

Nivel de educación más alto obtenido (Seleccionar uno):

___ Bachillerato incompleto ___ Grado(s) universitario: _____
___ Diploma de bachillerato ___ Postgrado(s): _____
___ Licencia de vocacional _____

SECCIÓN III: CONTACTO ESCOLAR O PROFESIONAL

(Maestro, Consejero, Profesor, o Proveedor de servicios)

Apellido: _____ Nombre: _____
Título: _____
Dirección: _____
Ciudad y Estado: _____ Código Postal: _____ e-mail: _____
Teléfono: _____

SECCIÓN IV: PREFERENCIAS PROFESIONALES

Todos los participantes son responsables de coordinar su llegada al lugar central de los eventos del Día del Mentor y Discapacidad (DMD) y otros lugares designados según como se organice con anterioridad. Comuníquese con su organizador local para determinar los detalles que le corresponden a usted.

En la parte de abajo, (usando la hoja de trabajo de agrupaciones de carrera en la última página de esta aplicación), por favor seleccione tres o más opciones laborales de su interés y ordénelas por preferencia. Esta información será usada por su organizador local para identificar posibles mentores para usted.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Artes y Comunicación | <input type="checkbox"/> Ley, Gobierno y Política Pública |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Negocios y Marketing | <input type="checkbox"/> Aplicación de la Ley |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educación | <input type="checkbox"/> Recursos Naturales, Medio Ambiente y |
| Agricultura | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gastronomía, Recreación y Hospitalidad | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Salud y Medicina | <input type="checkbox"/> Tecnología, Ingeniería y Ciencia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Servicios Humanos | <input type="checkbox"/> Otra: _____ |

SECCIÓN V: ACCESIBILIDAD

Por favor seleccione si usted requiere de cualquiera de las siguientes asistencias:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Documentos en Braille | <input type="checkbox"/> Intérprete de lenguaje de señas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flash Drive con Documentos | <input type="checkbox"/> ASL <input type="checkbox"/> PSE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Impresora grande | <input type="checkbox"/> Necesidades Alimenticias _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Acceso de silla de ruedas | <input type="checkbox"/> Otra _____ |

SECCIÓN VI: METAS, INTERESES Y PASATIEMPOS (OPCIONAL)

En una hoja de papel aparte, brevemente conteste las siguientes preguntas. Aunque son opcionales, le recomendamos que tome ventaja de esta oportunidad para proveer más información, ya que esto ayudará a los organizadores del evento en el proceso de asignar mentores. Siéntase libre de incluir su CV.

¿Cuál es su principal meta profesional a largo plazo? Describa su especialidad y/o interés educativo. Más allá de bachillerato, ¿de qué instituciones se ha graduado y cuándo? Describa su experiencia de trabajo , remunerado y no-remunerado (incluya actividades extracurriculares, pasantías, y servicio comunitario). Describa sus habilidades laborales relacionadas al trabajo actualmente ejerce (o que ha ejercido). Si no, ¿qué habilidades espera obtener?

SECCIÓN VII: TRANSPORTE

PERMISO DE TRANSPORTE PRELIMINAR

(Por favor haga que su padre/tutor firme abajo si es menor de 18 años)

_____ Entiendo que soy responsable por hacer los arreglos de transporte para mi hijo(a) a la plenitud del evento (el evento plenario), y entiendo que esto incluye que mi hijo(a) viaje a diferentes localidades durante el día en vehículos que pueden ser vehículos del

Distrito Escolar o vehículos propiedad de negocios. Estos vehículos pueden ser manejados por empleados del Distrito Escolar o personas de negocios locales. También entiendo que, en ciertos casos, siendo hechos de mi saber previamente, los empleados pueden escoltar a mi hijo(a) a lugares de trabajo, acompañándolo(a) en transporte público y que tales arreglos dependerán de la agencia a la que él/ella sea asignado(a).

_____ Proveeré transporte para mi hijo(a) hacia y desde el lugar del evento en [fecha]. También lo(a) transportaré desde el plenario a la organización del mentor asignado y después de regreso al evento plenario por la tarde de acuerdo a los arreglos individuales hechos con dicha organización previamente.

Firma

Fecha

A SER COMPLETADA POR TODOS LOS PARTICIPANTES

NOTA: Para estudiantes de bachillerato o menores, la autorización debe ser completada por su padre o tutor.

Su hijo o hija ha sido invitado(a) para asistir al evento Día de Tutoría en Discapacidad (DMD) el [fecha], organizado nacionalmente por la American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) y localmente coordinado por [Nombre de la Organización]. Él o ella asistirá a una sesión matutina para un grupo de estudiantes numeroso antes de ser asignado a un mentor para una reunión profesional. Los aprendices aprenderán sobre oportunidades laborales, barreras encontradas por personas con discapacidades en la industria de su interés, y los tipos de habilidades necesarias para tener éxito en el mundo laboral. Tras la recepción inicial, su hijo(a) será asignado(a) a una empresa, agencia pública u organización local sin fines de lucro. Detalles adicionales serán proporcionados en su momento. Para mayor información, por favor contacte a [Tu nombre] con [Tu organización] a [Tu número] o [Tu correo-e].

PERMISO PARA PARTICIPAR EN EL DÍA DEL MENTOR Y DISCAPACIDAD

Mi hijo(a), _____, puede participar en las actividades del Día del Mentor y Discapacidad [fecha], de __:__ AM a __:__ PM.

Firma

Fecha

PERMISO DE FOTOGRAFÍA/NOMBRE. Entiendo, además, que el Día del Mentor y Discapacidad puede atraer la atención de medios de comunicación, los cuales pueden promover alianzas permanentes entre escuelas, organizaciones de personas con discapacidad y empleadores. Además, entiendo que los nombres de los participantes pueden ser proporcionados a dichos medios de comunicación y serán proporcionados al comité de planificación de DMD en todo el estado de [] para imprimir un certificado de reconocimiento por parte de DMD. Por la presente autorizo divulgar el nombre y fotografiar a mi hijo(a) antes mencionado(a) para fines de promoción y educación.

HOJA DE TRABAJO

NOMBRE: _____

En el Día del Mentor y Discapacidad, los participantes pueden reunirse con un mentor en su sitio de trabajo. Para hacer más significativa esta experiencia, por favor evalúe sus tres principales opciones entre los siguientes grupos de carreras. Si es posible, será asignado a un mentor en su área de mayor interés.

INSTRUCCIONES: Coloque el número de su elección junto al área de trabajo correspondiente.

1 = Primera opción

2 = Segunda opción
Tercera opción

3 =

_____ **Artes y Comunicación:** ¿Le gusta comunicar ideas? ¿Le gusta compartir información? ¿Eres creativo, imaginativo e innovador? ¿Le gusta expresarse por escrito, en audio, o de forma visual o gráfica? ¿Te imaginas trabajando en un museo o en otros ambiente que promueva y celebre la expresión artística?

_____ **Negocios y Marketing:** ¿Es organizado, preciso y motivado? ¿Es usted un líder? ¿Le atrae la organización de eventos? ¿Te gustan las computadoras y equipos de oficina? ¿Te gusta escribir informes? ¿Te gustan las cosas de marketing? ¿Te gusta trabajar con números?

_____ **Educación:** ¿Le gustaría enseñar a los niños o los adultos en un ambiente académico?

_____ **Comida, Recreación y Hospitalidad:** ¿Disfruta de la preparación y / o servicio de alimentos, ya sea en un entorno de cafetería o restaurante? ¿Le gusta la organización de actividades recreativas como salidas sociales, deportes competitivos, y picnics? ¿Te gusta organizar la logística detrás de congresos y convenciones, proyectos de servicio comunitario, u otros eventos comunitarios? ¿Le gusta estar rodeado de gente y cree que la interacción frecuente con los demás es una parte vital de su trabajo ideal?

_____ **Salud y Medicina:** ¿Le gusta trabajar con la gente? ¿Está interesado en el bienestar y la nutrición? ¿Está interesado en trabajar como médico, enfermera, o asistente médico? ¿Le gusta la tecnología? ¿Está interesado en la investigación médica y averiguar las causas de las enfermedades? ¿Puedes mantener la calma en caso de emergencia?

_____ **Servicios Humanos:** ¿Es capaz de llevarse bien con un grupo diverso de personas? ¿Te gusta el servicio al cliente? ¿Tiene capacidad de liderazgo? ¿Eres paciente y amable, pero capaz de tomar decisiones? ¿Eres confiable y trabajador(a)?

_____ **Ley, Gobierno y Política Pública:** ¿Le gusta seguir las noticias actuales? ¿Le gusta aprender acerca de política local, estatal, nacional o internacional? ¿Está interesado en cómo se promulgan las leyes? ¿Aspira a ser elegido o nombrado a un cargo político? ¿Te gusta el discurso y el debate? ¿Te ves discutiendo un caso en la corte? ¿Le gusta la realización de investigaciones sobre la ley, su aplicación práctica, y cómo se interpreta? ¿Se imagina ayudando a elaborar las principales políticas públicas en temas que le interesan?

_____ **Aplicación de la Ley:** ¿Quieres trabajar como oficial de policía, sheriff, mariscal, detective, o criminólogo? ¿Estaría interesado en investigar y resolver crímenes?

- _____ **Recursos Naturales, Medio Ambiente y Agricultura:** ¿Te gusta el ambiente? ¿Le gusta trabajar con las plantas y los animales? ¿Está usted interesado en los recursos físicos como la tierra, el agua, el suelo y el clima? ¿Le gusta observar, aprender, investigar y resolver los problemas?
- _____ **Tecnología, Ingeniería y Ciencia:** ¿Disfruta de las matemáticas, la tecnología o la ciencia? ¿Tiene la capacidad de ser preciso, analizar datos y resolver problemas? ¿Le gusta el diseño de las cosas o dibujar planos detallados? ¿Te gusta el uso de máquinas y equipo pesado?
- _____ **Otro:** ¿Sus intereses no están representados en las descripciones/preguntas anteriores? Si es así, indique su preferencia en el espacio provisto en la página anterior

Appendix L – Sample mentor survey

DMD Mentor Evaluation Form

Thank you for participating in Disability Mentoring Day! In order to continue to improve next year's event, we would appreciate it if you would complete this brief evaluation form and return it to us by [date].

Please circle the appropriate ranking for each statement below based on the following scale:

5 – Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Neutral 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

1. I felt well-prepared to be a workplace mentor.
5 4 3 2 1
2. The DMD event was well-planned and organized.
5 4 3 2 1
3. I was at ease interacting with my mentee.
5 4 3 2 1
4. I felt that I had enough time with my mentee during DMD.
5 4 3 2 1
5. I enjoyed my DMD experience and would participate again
5 4 3 2 1
6. Would you like to participate in next year's DMD? ☐ **Yes**
☐ **No**

7. *If yes, please print your name below so we can keep your record active in our database:*

8. What did you enjoy most about DMD?

9. What did you like least about DMD?

10. How can we make next year's DMD experience better?

Please complete by [DATE] and email to: _____

OR return via mail to:

[Local Coordinator Name], [Organization Name]
[Organization Address], [City], [State], [ZIP]

Appendix M Sample mentee survey

DMD Mentee Evaluation Form

Thank you for participating in Disability Mentoring Day! In order to continue to improve next year's event, we would appreciate it if you would complete this brief evaluation form and return it to us by [date].

Please circle the appropriate ranking for each statement below based on the following scale:

5 – Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Neutral 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

1. I felt well-prepared for DMD prior to the event.
5 4 3 2 1

2. The DMD event was well-planned and organized.
5 4 3 2 1

3. The opening session fired me up for my day of mentoring.
5 4 3 2 1

4. I felt that I had enough time with my mentor during DMD.
5 4 3 2 1

5. DMD helped me learn more about my chosen future career.
5 4 3 2 1

6. I enjoyed my DMD experience and would participate again.
5 4 3 2 1

7. Would you like to participate in next year's DMD? ☐ **Yes**
☐ **No**

8. If yes, please print your name below so we can keep your record active in our database:

9. What did you enjoy most about DMD?

10. What did you like least about DMD?

11. How can we make next year's DMD experience better?

Please complete by (Date) and email to _____

OR return via mail to:

[Local Coordinator Name], [Organization Name]
[Organization Address], [City], [State], [ZIP]

Conclusion

Thank you for your interest in Disability Mentoring Day! We hope this toolkit will help you with your disability inclusion efforts. If you have any questions that may not be covered in this resource, please feel free to email us at dmd@aapd.com. We wish you well with your DMD event. Happy planning!

AAPD

AAPD is a convener, connector, and catalyst for change, increasing the political and economic power of people with disabilities. As one of the leading national cross-disability civil rights organizations, AAPD advocates for the full recognition of rights for the over 60 million Americans with disabilities. AAPD's programs and initiatives have been effective in mobilizing the disability community through communications advocacy; cultivating and training new and emerging leaders with disabilities through leadership development programs; increasing the political participation of Americans with disabilities and elevating the power of the disability vote through the REV UP (Register! Educate! Vote! Use your Power!) Campaign; and advancing disability inclusion in the workplace through the Disability Equality Index (DEI) — the nation's leading corporate benchmarking tool for disability equality and inclusion. To learn more about AAPD, visit www.aapd.com.



A Toolkit for Establishing and Maintaining Successful Employee Resource Groups

The Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN) is a resource for employers seeking to recruit, hire, retain and advance qualified employees with disabilities. It is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy under a cooperative agreement with The Viscardi Center. For more information, visit AskEARN.org.

Preparation of this item was fully funded by the United States Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy in the amount of \$9,241,750 (five year total grant amount) under Cooperative Agreement No. OD26451-14-75-4-36.

This document does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Toolkit for Establishing and Maintaining Successful Employee Resource Groups

This informational toolkit was prepared in recognition of the increasing number of employers expressing an interest in developing or enhancing Disability Employee Resource Groups.

Regardless of company size or industry, the best and most effective way to undertake or maintain new business initiatives is by learning from the success of others.

This Toolkit outlines twelve steps on how to start, implement, and maintain Disability Employee Resource Groups.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

As America's minority population continues to expand and evolve, so does the desire for a corporate environment that is equitable and fair for all employees. Increasingly, companies are establishing internal organizational structures to address the unique needs and issues of this diverse workforce. These structures, known as Employee Networks, Affinity Groups or Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), are found in 90 percent of Fortune 500 companies and are gaining additional business support throughout the country. These groups offer employees an opportunity to network, address common issues and concerns, and receive support from those who share similar backgrounds, experiences, or interests. ERGs are most effective when senior management is involved and an Executive Sponsor or Champion is assigned to lend support. Senior management participation also serves as an excellent opportunity for a CEO or other executives to be in touch with the workforce and link the group's mission to specific business goals.

The catalyst behind the establishment of ERGs is common interest and a desire to create a positive workplace culture where employees and business partners with different backgrounds, lifestyles, and abilities are respected, have equal rights, and are given the opportunity to succeed. Although these groups are generally initiated by employees, they bring significant business value as they convey a broad range of diverse perspectives that can be leveraged for product development and marketing. Furthermore, recognizing and respecting the talents and contributions of all employees increases morale and maximizes retention and productivity, critical factors that impact the bottom line while raising an organization's profile in the community.

Historically, most companies started these initiatives with African American and women's groups, followed by Latino and Asian employees. With changes in regulations and the composition of the workforce, companies began developing groups for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) employees, employees with disabilities, religious and generational groups and veterans. It is important to note that most resource groups are inclusive, allowing anyone to join.

According to the Society for Human Resource Management, ERGs offer employers excellent opportunities to recruit and retain diverse talent and profit from the wide range of thoughts, perspectives, cultures, and experiences they bring to the workplace. This rich diversity is especially important in today's global economy as it allows companies to extend their reach and understanding of the world marketplace.

Internally, ERGs can be instrumental in improving workplace culture and shedding light on specific issues or barriers that may negatively impact certain groups of employees. For example, Disability Employee Resource Groups may share information on appropriate etiquette; assist in promoting physical and virtual accessibility; offer guidance and insight on the types, costs, and availability of accommodations; and dispel myths and misconceptions about the abilities and talents of persons with disabilities. They may also be a resource to employees who have family members with disabilities and serve as role models and mentors for newly hired or recently diagnosed employees with disabilities. Lastly, they may serve as built-in focus groups for developing and testing new products and services designed for customers with disabilities. This has been the case, for example, at Ford Motor Company, where resource groups have provided input for vehicle design and advertising campaigns, and at Hewlett Packard (HP), where the Disability Resource Group conducted accessibility testing of products.

Toolkit for Establishing and Maintaining Successful Employee Resource Groups

Employee Resource Groups are a functional, strategic tool for advancing organizations' diversity initiatives, including the recruitment of diverse talent. At Ford, as well as HP, members of the ERGs participate in college fairs alongside company recruiters to connect with diverse candidates. At Ely Lilly, ERG members compiled information about their local communities to assist recruitment staff in marketing job vacancies to a broad range of potential applicants.

Each of these examples illustrates a strong link to a strategic business objective and demonstrates the significant value that ERGs may bring to their respective companies.

GETTING STARTED

STEP 1: START AT THE TOP – GAIN THE SUPPORT OF CORPORATE EXECUTIVES

ERGs are company-sponsored entities comprised of employees who have at one time felt underrepresented in the workplace. Although these groups are typically initiated by employees, it is critical to gain top management support and to identify an Executive Sponsor. From the beginning, interested employees should reach out to top-level management, such as a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Chief Operating Officer (COO), President, Vice President or other corporate leaders who may have a specific interest in the mission of the group. Companies utilize different strategies for assigning Champions. For example, at Verizon, Executive Champions are chosen by the Employee Resource Group while at Ford, each group is assigned one. Merrill Lynch also assigns its Executive Champions and rotates them every three years to ensure that they are exposed to as many employees as possible. Additionally, many companies make it a point to designate an Executive Champion who is not a member of that interest group.

At this stage the following actions should be taken:

- ➔ Create a business case for the Employee Resource Group
- ➔ Articulate a mission statement which is tied to a business objective
- ➔ Draft a tentative plan to accomplish your goals
- ➔ Prepare a preliminary budget
- ➔ Secure executive sponsorship
- ➔ Share the group's objectives with employees and management
- ➔ Establish a leadership team
- ➔ Communicate to staff that member enrollment is voluntary

STEP 2: CREATE PARTNERSHIPS WITH EXISTING INTERNAL DIVERSITY TEAMS

The new ERG should network and partner with internal diversity groups already in place at the organization. Request permission to attend meetings or to meet with the Executive Sponsor and group representatives to share your ideas, obtain feedback, and build relationships.

Find out:

- ➔ How the group was started?
- ➔ Who they reached out to and how?
- ➔ What steps were taken to seek approval?
- ➔ What obstacles may have been encountered along the way?
- ➔ How were those obstacles managed?
- ➔ When and how often are meetings held?
- ➔ What are the typical meeting agendas?

STEP 3: GET EMPLOYEES INVOLVED

ERG leaders should draw up a plan and work with their team to develop outreach strategies and generate interest for joining the group.

Toolkit for Establishing and Maintaining Successful Employee Resource Groups

The following steps are suggested to reach this objective:

- ➔ Develop materials to introduce the group
- ➔ Advertise the Employee Resource Group through: company newsletters, email blasts, company intranet, flyer inserts with paychecks, events, ads on interoffice note-boards and networking with staff.

STEP 4: DEVELOP BUDGET AND SECURE FUNDING

Once the goals of the ERG are established and agreed upon, prepare a budget that would support implementation and submit it to the Executive Sponsor. Since this individual represents upper management, he or she may be in the best position to advocate for the group and to secure the funding needed to carry out its stated mission and goals.

In order for the group to be perceived as part of the organization, it is critical to obtain financial support. Information compiled from leading companies indicates that most allocate funds for their own Employee Resource Groups. However, it is advisable to consider other methods of funding.

These may include:

- ➔ Employee membership fees
- ➔ Funding from the company's national diversity budget
- ➔ Funding from representative departments
- ➔ Funding from annual grants provided by the Human Resource Diversity Department

IMPLEMENTATION

STEP 5: NAME THE GROUP

The name of the ERG should reflect the group's mission and values and should be decided upon collaboratively.

Making this decision may include:

- ➔ Soliciting name recommendations from the group
- ➔ Having a meeting to discuss ideas or an alternative method for making suggestions

- ➔ Choosing a name that reflects the purpose or values of the group
- ➔ Ensuring that this name clearly communicates the mission of the group and is interesting enough to make someone want to learn more or join

Once the name of the group is chosen, send an interoffice email to inform staff that there is a new Employee Resource Group available.

STEP 6: SET MISSION AND GOALS

The mission and goals should be established in collaboration with all ERG members and be linked to specific business goals. Together, they should communicate both the organization and the group's core values and common interest.

While the mission defines the overarching purpose for which the group was established, the goals should clearly articulate specific activities and timelines.

The following questions should be addressed when setting the mission and goals:

- ➔ What are the core values of the group?
- ➔ How is this group different from other groups in the company?
- ➔ What steps need to be taken to achieve the group's mission?
- ➔ What are the short and long term goals?
- ➔ What resources are needed for each goal?
- ➔ Who will take the lead in the implementation of each goal?
- ➔ What are reasonable and achievable timelines?

STEP 7: DESIGN STRUCTURE

The structure and meeting schedule should be decided by the group with the input and support of the Executive Sponsor.

Below are suggested steps for organizing the group's structure and meeting schedule:

- ➔ Create an alternate plan for those who may not be able to attend in person (e.g., teleconferences)

Toolkit for Establishing and Maintaining Successful Employee Resource Groups

- ➔ Determine the day, time, length, and frequency of Meetings
 - Select a location
 - Consider specific roles for members
 - List the roles and discuss with the group
 - Designate member(s) to:
 - Lead meetings
 - Create meeting agendas
 - Share agendas with members prior to meetings
 - Send reminders to members and staff regarding the meeting place and time (ensure locations are accessible for everyone)
 - Receive responses and track attendance
 - Take notes and send minutes before the next meeting

STEP 8: CREATE AN INNOVATIVE BUSINESS SOLUTION

Identifying a special feature for the program is critical to generating interest, fostering participation, and enhancing attendance. Defining this special feature in the context of a business solution creates added value and increases support and recognition for the group. For example, setting a goal to establish a cadre of mentors to guide newly hired persons with disabilities or for employees or caregivers who manage newly diagnosed impairments may significantly improve productivity and job retention. Community involvement is another goal with high visibility that may enhance the company's external image with diverse groups and organizations. Serving on boards or participating in special events promotes overall brand recognition while establishing the company as an employer of choice, with the former contributing to increased market share and the latter to talent acquisition. Brainstorming with group members will help generate ideas that will give a unique focus and purpose for all to work towards.

Following are a few steps for consideration in meeting this goal:

- ➔ Send out an invitation for a brainstorming session

- ➔ State the purpose of the session so members are prepared with ideas
- ➔ Set up an alternative for members who cannot attend to share ideas
- ➔ Assure members that all ideas will be considered and respected
- ➔ Record all concepts/ideas
- ➔ Group like concepts together
- ➔ Eliminate, through consensus, ideas that do not fit
- ➔ Have all members vote
- ➔ Adopt the consensus idea and disseminate company-wide

STEP 9: CHALLENGES

If faced with challenges during development, implementation, or maintenance, identify the root causes and then take steps to reduce or eliminate them.

As a group, members should take the following steps:

- ➔ Define the challenge
- ➔ Analyze the cause
- ➔ Explore solutions
- ➔ Decide whether the challenge is worth solving
- ➔ Take action to overcome the challenge
- ➔ Consider the necessary steps to avoid similar challenges

Examples of challenges may include:

- ➔ Obtaining senior level support
- ➔ Recruiting employees
- ➔ Maintaining member participation
- ➔ Managing work schedules
- ➔ Addressing meeting conflicts
- ➔ Securing funding
- ➔ Dealing with lack of resources
- ➔ Increasing membership

Toolkit for Establishing and Maintaining Successful Employee Resource Groups

STEP 10: MAINTAIN MOMENTUM

Ongoing company and member support is vital to success. The ownership for maintaining the momentum resides with the entire group, including the Executive Sponsor.

The following tips may be used to maximize efficacy and ensure continued momentum:

- ➔ Establish credibility by adhering to mission, objectives, and timelines
- ➔ Communicate the group's efforts utilizing all internal resources
- ➔ Continue building a network to increase enrollment
- ➔ Create visibility by conducting or participating in special events
- ➔ Respond to challenges and remove obstacles

Suggested activities that may help to maintain momentum and sustainability can include:

- ➔ In-house networking events
- ➔ Workshops on topics related to the program (e.g., Lunch & Learn seminars, National Disability Employment Awareness Month celebrations, etc.)
- ➔ Engagement with outside agencies (e.g., volunteering, mentoring, serving on boards, etc.)
- ➔ Monthly updates on program status

Suggested in-house resources:

- ➔ Company newsletters (related articles, tips)
- ➔ Intranet
- ➔ Notice boards
- ➔ Email blasts and blogs
- ➔ In-house T.V. streaming of the ERG's upcoming events and event highlights

STEP 11: LEVERAGE RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER INTERNAL RESOURCE GROUPS

Employee Resource Groups are internal networks that represent a community of team members who share a common interest relating to such characteristics as ethnicity, gender, nationality, culture, disability, or sexual

orientation. These groups may form relationships with one another in order to gain additional visibility and increase impact.

Ways to leverage relationships with other internal resource groups may include:

- ➔ Maintaining an ongoing partnership with the leadership of other groups
- ➔ Keeping open communication with members from these groups
- ➔ Exchanging or sharing information and resources
- ➔ Collaborating on community and professional events and activities
- ➔ Disseminating ERG announcements of news and upcoming events
- ➔ Sharing financial resources
- ➔ Reporting progress
- ➔ Sharing best practices
- ➔ Establishing partnerships with other business leaders that have a vested business interest in the group

STEP 12: MEASURE SUCCESS

To measure success, the group first must establish goals and success criteria (benchmarking). These will ultimately define how the group has done and what it has delivered. The group's goals and success criteria should be easily understood, support the mission, and be measurable.

Some success criteria for consideration may include:

- ➔ Recruiting 10 new members per year
- ➔ Publishing a quarterly newsletter
- ➔ Conducting one annual event
- ➔ Designing two group activities
- ➔ Increasing participant attendance at meetings and events

CONCLUSION

With a clear business focus, Employee Resource Groups can be strategic partners that contribute significantly to an organization's overall success and profitability. As with any effective business practice, ERGs must be carefully planned, well managed, and have clear and measurable outcomes. They have been most effective when senior management was involved and an Executive Sponsor or Champion assigned to lend support and link the group's mission and work directly to business goals. Operating a successful ERG is an on-going process, which requires continuous nurturing, but the benefits derived are well worth the effort.



The Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN) is a resource for employers seeking to recruit, hire, retain and advance qualified employees with disabilities. It is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy under a cooperative agreement with The Viscardi Center. For more information, visit [AskEARN.org](https://www.AskEARN.org).

Preparation of this material was funded by the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor, Grant No. OD-26451-14-75-4-36. This document does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

EARN

Employer Assistance and Resource
Network on Disability

Publications

Look through our publications and download them in PDF format.

[Getting Started](#)

For Employers

[A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [H](#) [I](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [W](#)

A

[Accessible and Authentic Interviews for Candidates with Disabilities](#)

Learn how to ensure your organization's interview process is accessible and welcoming to candidates with disabilities.

B

[Building a Talent Pipeline](#)

Learn about key steps in building a talent pipeline that includes people with disabilities.

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C

[Centralized Accommodation Programs \(CAP\) in Practice](#)

This checklist provides an overview of the essential components of a centralized accommodation program.

[Checklist: Health Care Plans that Support Mental Health](#)

Use this checklist to assess your organization's health care plan and ensure it is mental health-friendly.

[Communicating the Benefits of Self-Identification: Five Steps to Success](#)

Learn the five steps to success to communicate the benefits of self-identification of disability.

[Company Website Disability Messaging: Observations of Job Seekers with Disabilities](#)

Learn about the outcomes of focus groups with job seekers with disabilities regarding website content and messaging.

[Creating an Accessible Workplace: The Role of Accommodations \(Learning Guide\)](#)

Learn about the important role accommodations play in creating supportive workplaces.

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[Disability Outreach Messaging: Assessment Checklist for Career Pages](#)

Learn how to ensure your organization's career pages are using messaging and outreach techniques that are welcoming to job candidates with disabilities.

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[Encouraging Applicants with Disabilities: Job Descriptions and Announcements \(Checklist Explainer\)](#)

Find tips for writing accessible job announcements and descriptions.

[Encouraging Applicants with Disabilities: Job Descriptions and Announcements \(Checklist\)](#)

Use this tool to review your organization's job descriptions and announcements for accessibility.

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[Frequently Asked Questions About the Schedule A Excepted Service Hiring Authority for People with Disabilities](#)

Find answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) about using the federal Schedule A Excepted Service hiring authority to support employment of people with disabilities.

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[Hiring and Supporting Neurodivergent Workers: Strategies for Success \(Learning Guide\)](#)

Read the companion piece to EARN's webinar "Hiring and Supporting Neurodivergent Workers: Strategies for Success," which took place on August 17, 2022, to learn about strategies employers can use to attract, retain and advance neurodivergent workers.

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[Interns with Disabilities: Maximizing the Internship Experience](#)

Explore four components of a successful internship program for students with disabilities.

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[Lead the Way: Merck's Supportive Business Culture](#)

Learn how Merck is supporting employee mental health.

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[Mentally Healthy Workplaces Checklist](#)

This checklist reviews the 4 A's of a mental health-friendly workplace.

[Mentoring Student Interns with Disabilities](#)

Find ideas for being a supportive mentor for interns with disabilities.

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[Neurodiversity Hiring: Checklist for Organizational Success](#)

This checklist summarizes some of the lessons learned from successful neurodiversity hiring programs.

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[Partnerships to Build Your Talent Pipeline](#)

Learn about the important role partnerships play in identifying candidates with disabilities and how to collaborate effectively with key community organizations.

[Planning an Accessible Meeting or Event](#)

This checklist outlines steps to take to ensure the accessibility of online or in-person meetings or events.

[Professional Development and Advancement of Employees with Disabilities](#)

The research brief explores effective strategies for retaining and advancing employees with disabilities.

[Putting Research into Practice: Online Outreach Strategies for Attracting Job Seekers with Disabilities](#)

This research-to-practice brief explores how targeted online outreach to job candidates with disabilities is an effective talent strategy.

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[Retaining Valued Employees with Disabilities: The Importance of Performance Coaching and Management \(Learning Guide\)](#)

Learn about effective strategies to ensure you are engaging employees with disabilities in meaningful dialogues about workplace performance.

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[Supporting Digital Accessibility in the Public and Private Sectors](#)

Explore strategies that have been identified by research as promising practices to help ensure digital accessibility in organizations.

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[Transportation and Workplace Flexibility](#)

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EMPLOYMENT VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

Talent Actualized!



Employment Engagement: Creating Synergy for Tomorrow's Workforce

May 20, 2025
9 AM – 3 PM

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Session 5: Disability Underrepresentation in Apprenticeships: Can We Fix This? Implementing an Apprenticeship Toolkit

The Apprenticeship Toolkit, designed for people with disabilities, supporters, employers, and VR counselors, helps employers meet workforce needs and foster inclusivity. Join U of I's facilitators for an interactive session on leveraging this toolkit to enhance employer engagement, address business needs, and expand apprenticeship opportunities for people with disabilities.



Image courtesy of Eddie Hall



Apprenticeships:

**Key Information, Sequence of Events, and
Strategies for Enhanced Collaboration**

**A Practical Toolkit for Service
Providers, Employers, and
Vocational Rehabilitation Customers**

Developed by the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance
Center for Quality Employment (VRTAC-QE)
Apprenticeship Learning Community

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DISCLAIMER: *The contents of this toolkit were developed under a grant, the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center For Quality Employment, H264K200003, from the U.S. Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal government.*



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List of Acronyms

- ADA Americans with Disabilities Act
- DOL Department of Labor
- EEOC Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- FAQs Frequently Asked Questions
- FLSA Fair Labor Standards Act
- IT Information Technology
- JAN Job Accommodation Network
- NTACT National Technical Assistance Center on Transition
- OA Office of Apprenticeships
- OJL On-the-Job Learning
- Pre-ETS Pre-Employment Transition Services
- RAPs Registered Apprenticeship Programs
- RAPIDS Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Data System
- SAA State Apprenticeship Agencies
- STAR Situation, Task, Action, Result
- STEM Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
- TBI Traumatic brain injury
- UIUC University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- VR Vocational Rehabilitation
- VRTAC-QE Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment
- WIOA Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act





Introduction

In January 2023, the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment (VRTAC-QE) team at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) initiated an Apprenticeship Learning Community, which concluded in March 2024. This community included three UIUC facilitators and 11 stakeholders from diverse professional backgrounds and geographic locations. The learning community's primary objective was to enhance the access and success of apprenticeships for job-seekers and workers with disabilities.

The group convened approximately once a month online via Zoom for 14 one-hour sessions, and participated in additional small group work, to develop an apprenticeship toolkit designed for professionals, employers, and individuals with disabilities seeking apprenticeships. Content for the toolkit was primarily drawn from learning community members' personal knowledge and expertise. This comprehensive guide offers information, resources, and advice on various topics including:

- An overview of apprenticeships
- A detailed sequence or timeline for prospective apprentices
- Strategies to foster interagency collaboration
- Guidelines on disability disclosure during apprenticeships

This document represents the culmination of their collaborative efforts.





Section 1. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About Apprenticeships

During our apprenticeship learning community, a critical issue emerged: people lack sufficient knowledge about apprenticeships. The fundamental aspects—what apprenticeships entail, how they function, and their benefits—were often unclear to both our learning community members and the colleagues, clients, and businesses they engage with. To address this challenge and equip stakeholders with comprehensive information about apprenticeships, Section 1 of this toolkit offers answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) on the topic. These questions will be presented from the perspectives of potential apprentices, employers, and service providers.

Registered Apprenticeships, Pre-Apprenticeships, and Youth Apprenticeships

Definitions

An **Apprentice** is a worker at least 16 years of age, except where a higher minimum age standard is otherwise fixed by law, who is employed to learn an apprenticeable occupation (defined below) under standards of apprenticeship fulfilling the requirements of [§ 29.5 of this chapter](#).

An **Apprenticeable Occupation** is one which is specified by industry and which must: **(a)** involve skills that are customarily learned in a practical way through a structured, systematic program of on-the-job supervised learning; **(b)** be clearly identified and commonly recognized throughout an industry; **(c)** involve the progressive attainment of manual, mechanical or technical skills and knowledge which, in accordance with the industry standard for the occupation, would require the completion of at least 2,000 hours of on-the-job learning to attain; and **(d)** require related instruction to supplement the on-the-job learning.

A **Registered Apprenticeship** is an industry-driven, high-quality career pathway where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce, and individuals can obtain paid work experience, receive progressive wage increases, classroom instruction, and a portable, nationally-recognized



credential. Registered Apprenticeships are industry-vetted and approved and validated by the U.S. Department of Labor or a State Apprenticeship Agency ([Registered Apprenticeship Program | Apprenticeship.gov](#); U.S. Department of Labor).

A **Pre-Apprenticeship** is a program or set of strategies that is designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a Registered Apprenticeship Program ([Explore Pre-Apprenticeship | Apprenticeship.gov](#); U.S. Department of Labor).

Youth Apprenticeships and registered apprenticeship stakeholders—employers, educators, and workforce professionals—across the country are launching apprenticeship programs that serve youth, ages 16-24. These programs, often referred to as youth apprenticeship, combine technical classroom instruction with paid work experience ([Youth Apprenticeship | Apprenticeship.gov](#); U.S. Department of Labor).

There are many apprenticeshipable industries to explore ([Apprenticeship Industries | Apprenticeship.gov](#); U. S. Department of Labor) and include Advanced Manufacturing, Agriculture, Construction, Cybersecurity, Education, Energy, Financial Services, Healthcare, Hospitality, information Technology, Telecommunications, and Transportation. For free online training modules and information to learn more about apprenticeships, See “Registered Apprenticeships for Additional Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities” [Registered Apprenticeships for Individuals With Disabilities](#); Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Why Apprenticeships are Important in Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

About 90% of workers who complete a registered apprenticeship training program retain employment with an average annual salary of \$80,000 (U.S. Department of Labor). However, only about 1% of the 581,110 active apprentices in 2023 identify as having a disability (U. S. Department of Labor). Individuals with disabilities, including VR customers, who could benefit from becoming an apprentice to launch their career, are simply missing out. This important labor pool—job seekers with disabilities, should be well represented in apprenticeship training programs. It is therefore important for State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies, who are experts in helping customers with disabilities to achieve their employment goals, to take the lead in establishing programming and collaborative relationships with partner agencies (federal, state, and local) to increase apprenticeship opportunities and outcomes for adults and youth with disabilities. Additionally, the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 contains a heavy emphasis on quality employment. By investing in registered apprenticeships,

VR agencies can assist clients in obtaining measurable skill gains, credentials, and quality competitive integrated employment outcomes.

Questions VR Customers or Individuals with Disabilities May Ask About Apprenticeships:

What kind of apprenticeships are there?

Many kinds! Regarding the scope of apprenticeship occupations and industries, the opportunities are expansive. There are currently over 950 occupations that are ‘apprenticeable.’ Major trades include healthcare, information technology (IT), advanced manufacturing, banking, insurance, and transportation, distribution, and logistics. As for the format, apprenticeships are primarily completed in-person, although some remote/virtual options are available. When searching for apprenticeship opportunities on the website [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov), there is an option to [search for “remote” apprenticeships](#).

As of February 6, 2024, there are 27 remote apprenticeships being offered nationwide, spanning from bases in Alaska to North Carolina. A few of these remote options include apprenticeships in “Low Voltage Technician,” “Graphic Designer/science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) Instructor,” and “Advanced Home Health Aide,” to name a few. As you can see, remote apprenticeship options still welcome a variety of industry choices.

How do I find apprenticeship opportunities?

One of the best places to find apprenticeship opportunities is via the website [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov). This website connects career-seekers with opportunities and allows them to search for apprenticeships by several criteria. Other ways to find apprenticeship opportunities include:

- [The Department of Labor’s Apprenticeship Finder](#)
- [The American Job Center](#)
- [Explore VR](#)
- [The Career OneStop Apprenticeship Office Finder](#)
- and checking in with your [State Office of Apprenticeship](#)



How do I become an apprentice?

In order to become an apprentice, your first step is to figure out what kind of career you would like, or find apprenticeship programs and review supported occupations. Then ask yourself if this might interest you. You may wish to utilize an apprenticeship job/program finder to do this, such as the one offered on [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov). Once you have located a potential apprenticeship opportunity that fits your interest, you should review the summary of the program along with the required qualifications.

These would include elements such as the start date, length, whether the program is in-person or remote, requirements, essential functions, tasks, related training courses, and where training will be held. If all of this sounds good, then the final step is to apply through the employer/entity who is offering the apprenticeship program.

What are the academic and experience requirements for an apprenticeship?

The good news is that apprenticeships are available to novices and beginners, catering primarily to individuals with little or no work experience. This includes those entering or re-entering the workforce, such as individuals who have sustained a disability or are exploring a new career path. While there are no universal prerequisites, possessing personable qualities and good people skills can go a long way. Previous work experience, although not required, can also be beneficial. In essence, apprenticeships do not have stringent academic and experience requirements.

Can I receive accommodations for an apprenticeship?

Yes! Individuals with disabilities can receive the necessary supports, including accommodations, in apprenticeships. This is possible as long as they are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), are qualified for the job in question, would benefit from accommodations, and the accommodations do not impose an undue hardship on the sponsor or learning institution.

What happens after I complete an apprenticeship?

Good things follow completing an apprenticeship program. Upon completing an apprenticeship, you stand to gain numerous benefits.

Credentials: Firstly, you will have earned an industry-recognized credential that attests to your proficiency in your occupation, which can significantly aid you when applying for other jobs within your industry.



Marketable Skills: Apprenticeships typically last an average of four years, during which you can expect to invest over 2000 hours. Following this, you will have developed into a highly skilled worker, enhancing your competence and marketability to prospective employers.

Networking: Lastly, you will likely have forged many personal connections along the way - friends, colleagues, teachers, bosses, coworkers, supervisors, and so on. Possessing a broad social network is often instrumental to achieving career success and personal fulfillment.

How am I going to pay for completing an apprenticeship training program?

The cost of an apprenticeship training program is typically covered by the apprenticeship sponsors, which can be employers, employer associations, or labor-management committees. In some cases, the government may also provide funding. In the U.S., the Department of Labor announces funding opportunities, some of which are focused on apprenticeship expansion activities

Questions Employers May Ask About Apprenticeships:

What are the unique challenges for workers with disabilities?

Workers with disabilities can encounter numerous unique challenges, both when entering the workforce and during their employment. Many of these challenges often stem from stigma, or negative attitudes, beliefs, or perceptions towards people with disabilities. Another challenge that individuals with disabilities may face in the workplace is related to their functional impairments. For example, a person with a traumatic brain injury (TBI) may struggle to work in environments with extreme temperatures due to their condition. The good news is that these and other challenges can be addressed through means such as disability-sensitive training, information dissemination, and the provision of reasonable accommodations for workers with disabilities.

How expensive are job accommodations?

Most accommodations, at least 50%, cost less than \$500. Remarkably, approximately 25% of accommodations do not incur any cost at all- they're free! In most instances, accommodations involve altering the way work is conducted rather than procuring an expensive item or piece of equipment. An example of such a low cost or cost-free accommodation could be permitting a grocery store cashier experiencing chronic pain to sit on a stool while performing their checkout duties, instead of standing.



What are common misperceptions about workers with disabilities?

There are many misconceptions and misperceptions about workers with disabilities. Here are the most common ones along with their corresponding truths:

Misconception	Truth
Workers with disabilities need extra time to do their jobs	Although certain tasks may take longer for individuals with disabilities, their overall productivity levels match those of individuals without disabilities (Kaletta et al., 2012)
Workers with disabilities have trouble getting their work done, and they frequently need help	Many studies show no significant difference between job performance compared to those without disabilities (e.g., Hernandez et al., 2008)
Only certain jobs are suited to people with disabilities	As with all people, specific jobs may be better suited to some than to others
Co-workers do not like working with people with disabilities	Co-workers with reservations may simply need more information about disability. In fact, most employers who have hired workers with disabilities report that the experience was overwhelmingly positive for everyone involved (e.g., Morgan & Alexander, 2005)
Disability inclusive workplace initiatives and universal design only benefit workers with disabilities	Hiring job seekers with disabilities is good for society AND good for business



Questions VR Counselors or Service Providers May Ask About Apprenticeships:

How does VR assist a customer with an apprenticeship?

What is VR's role?

VR's role in supporting a customer in an apprenticeship is very similar to how it would support any other vocational training program. First, VR can introduce clients to the concept of apprenticeship through counseling and guidance and exploring apprenticeship resources such as the apprenticeship finder on [apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov). Then, the counselor can provide information/referral and counseling/guidance to the prospective apprentice and explore together whether a given apprenticeship opportunity would be appropriate and compatible with their interests, abilities, capabilities, etc. If the counselor and customer agree, VR can provide support services that will allow the customer to successfully complete the conditions of the apprenticeship and after they obtain employment, including post-employment services. In addition, a counselor should add 'Registered Apprenticeship Training' as a VR service to the customer's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) when this service is provided to a customer to report the customer's participation in an apprenticeship training program; [See RSA-911 Data Elements 164-169](#).

What types of services can VR provide in support of an apprenticeship?

Vocational rehabilitation (VR) can provide many different services which include, but are not limited to, rehabilitation technology, maintenance (monetary support provided for living expenses such as food, shelter and clothing that are in excess of the normal expenses of the individual), transportation, books, supplies, etc. VR can pay for tutoring services to assist customers with the academic training aspects of the apprenticeship training program in order to facilitate measurable skill gains (e.g., training milestone, skills progression; <https://rsa.ed.gov/sites/default/files/subregulatory/pd-19-03.pdf>), credential attainment, and successful completion of the program and passage of exams. Job placement assistance services are also available to the apprentice. Relocation expenses can be provided to the customer once the customer secures employment. If a service can be directly connected to the completion of the customer's plan for employment, VR can potentially provide it.



How do we know a customer is ready for an apprenticeship?

A couple things to consider—

Motivation and Soft Skills: Completing an apprenticeship requires significant dedication and effort. A candidate needs to be sufficiently motivated to succeed in any apprenticeship endeavor. At the very least, a candidate's attitude towards completing an apprenticeship should be enthusiastic. A passing interest will likely not be enough to get you through. A candidate should also possess basic soft skills. This includes appropriate posture and eye contact (unless limited by disability), the proper exchange of social pleasantries such as saying please and thank you, and being personable and agreeable.

Academic and Work Experience: While there are not usually specific qualifications that an apprenticeship-seeker needs to apply, many, but not all, apprenticeship programs do have an entrance exam. These exams are designed to assess candidates who apply for the apprenticeship. The test might include numerical verbal, and visual/spatial reasoning tests, as well as situational judgment tests. People with disabilities who need accommodations to take and pass the exam are entitled to them. The website [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov) provides language from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) on accommodations, including “appropriate adjustment of or modification to examinations.” It may be beneficial for interested candidates to look at some practice questions or take some practice aptitude tests to determine if the apprenticeship would be a good fit or if the exam seems passable. Here is an example, and there are many more online: [Practice Aptitude Tests](#).

How do high schools connect students with disabilities to an apprenticeship?

High schools, for example, special education teachers or transition coordinators, may be well connected and know about available pre-apprenticeships or registered apprenticeships that students can apply for in the local area, and who to contact if interested. For information and resources for how high schools may also initiate development of youth apprenticeships for their students—See [High School Apprenticeships: A Guide For Starting Successful Programs](#); U.S. Department of Labor, and [AASA Expanded Pathways Youth Apprenticeship Toolkit](#); The School Superintendents Association, 2020. It is also recommended to establish a partnership with the [State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency and WIOA Youth Program](#) and [U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship or State Apprenticeship Agency](#) to receive assistance and to learn more about available apprenticeship training programs. This [VR Explore National Resource](#) can also be used to help identify pre-apprenticeships and registered apprenticeships for youth that are available in your area.



How do Pre-Employment Transition Services (pre-ETS) apply to apprenticeships?

Although high school students with disabilities can initiate their career path through pre-ETS, pre-ETS activities are not registered apprenticeships or pre-apprenticeships. These services include Job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on post-secondary education opportunities, workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living, and instruction in self-advocacy. Any one of these Pre-ETS can be provided to students with disabilities and be used to help students gain actual work experience through paid work experiences, internships, and job shadows. These services and work-based learning experiences can assist students in learning about themselves, including their interests and abilities or aptitudes, and the world of work. Pre-ETS may therefore be important in helping students to make a career decision about an occupational goal and in determining whether completing an apprenticeship training program is the best way to achieve that goal or if it is right for them.

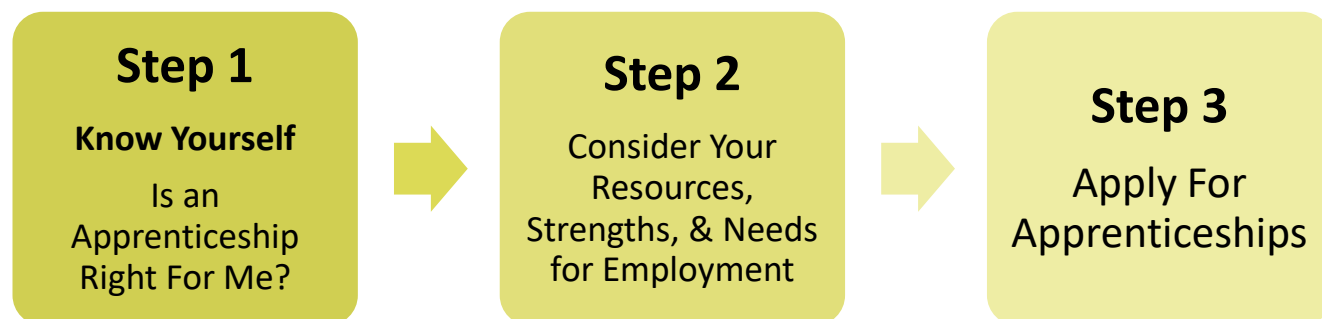
How early in school should students be introduced to apprenticeships?

Pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs typically start during a student's junior year in High School. Students may start OJL (On-the-Job Learning) activities at age 16, which will count towards entry into a registered apprenticeship program ([Training and Employment Notice](#); U.S. Department of Labor). The specific types and conditions of permissible work activities are outlined for 16- and 17-year olds in the Fair Labor Standards Act and in State Child Labor laws ([Child Labor Provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act \(FLSA\) for Nonagricultural Occupations](#); U.S. Department of Labor).





Section 2. Preparing a Vocational Rehabilitation Customer for an Apprenticeship



Another significant issue that arose during our learning community pertains to people’s uncertainty about the apprenticeship process. Questions such as, “How do I determine if apprenticeships are a suitable option for me?” and “What are the essential steps for preparing and securing an apprenticeship?” were frequently raised. In response, Section 2 of the toolkit offers a comprehensive guide to assist customers in preparing for an apprenticeship. This guide spans three critical steps: understanding oneself, evaluating available resources, and navigating the application process.

Step 1: Know Yourself – Is an Apprenticeship Right for Me?

Career Exploration

- Work together! Talk to your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor about your career goals and apprenticeship.
 - ◆ Not yet a Vocational Rehabilitation customer? Contact your [local office](#) to apply for services.
 - ◆ Talk to your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor about taking vocational assessments, such as [O*Net Interest profiler](#) to help you identify careers that fit your interests and personality.
- Explore occupations.



- ◆ Check out [CareerOneStop's](#) career exploration website to learn about careers, take career assessments, find jobs, resumes, interview preparation, training programs, scholarships, and more!
- ◆ Take brief self-assessment to learn if an apprenticeship is right for you (See Addendum for self-assessment tool "Is Apprenticeship Right for Me?" on page 31).

Research Apprenticeships

- Search the occupation on [Apprenticeship.gov](#). Do you see a lot of results? If not, there may not be any apprenticeships in your area.
- Find your state's [Registered Apprenticeship Program](#)
 - ◆ Visit the Registered Apprenticeship Program's website.
 - ◆ Search for apprenticeship employers.
 - ◆ Contact your state's Apprenticeship Training Representative.
 - Ask them for the Work Process Schedule (also known as Schedule of Work) (See Addendum for an example on page 29) for a particular apprenticeship program.
 - Each apprenticeship is broken down into work processes or skill areas that outline the required work hours, tasks, skills (or competencies) and related instruction.
 - What are the requirements/qualifications?
 - Identify the physical/academic/cognitive/social demands.
 - Explore whether there are any Pre-Apprenticeship Programs for this occupation.

Do you Need More Information About the Career Before You Decide? Explore Work-Based Learning Experiences with Your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor:

- Informational Interviews (be sure to come prepared with questions!)
- Job shadows
- Company tours
- Paid work experiences
- Pre-Apprenticeships
 - ◆ Contact your state's [Registered Apprenticeship Agency](#) to learn if pre-apprenticeships are offered in your area.



Step 2: Consider Your Resources, Strengths, and Needs for Employment

If you have barriers that may make it difficult for you to get or keep a job, talk to your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor about them. Your Counselor can help you find resources to assist you. Work with your Counselor to figure out if an apprenticeship is feasible and realistic for you right now.

Commitment

Are you willing to commit to at least 1 year of full-time work AND the required classes? Classes could be offered at night, during weekends, or online.

Level of Support Needed

- How much support do you need on the job and in required classes?
- Is the job realistic/safe?
- Will the job make your health condition(s) worse?

Transportation

- Do you have reliable transportation?
- What days/times can you realistically travel for work?
- Do you have your own vehicle?
- Do you rely on others for transportation?
 - ◆ Look up public transportation options.
 - ◆ Talk to family members about transportation to work.
- How far can you travel for work?
 - ◆ Map out your job search radius.
- What kinds of businesses are in your area?
- Are you willing or able to relocate to get the job you want?

Criminal Background

- Do you have a criminal background?
- If yes, work with your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to plan how to discuss your background with potential employers.
- Is the type of job you want attainable with your background?



Drug Testing

- Some jobs are hazardous, and accidents can happen, which may result in injuries and damage to expensive property. Workers must be alert and conscious of safety. For this reason, many employers require drug testing as part of the application process.
- Will you pass a drug test?
- If you have a substance problem, talk to your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, or the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services national helpline](#)

Limited Experience

- Remember, even if experience is not required, jobs are still competitive. Employers will select the best candidate.
- Do you have related work experience?
If not, look for jobs or volunteer positions that are relevant to your goals to gain work experience and to become a more competitive applicant for an apprenticeship.
 - ◆ For example, if your goal is to work in the medical field, consider customer service jobs. If your goal is to work in Construction Trades, or manufacturing, consider jobs in stocking, materials handling, production, and construction helper.
- Have you taken industry-related or relevant coursework before?
 - ◆ Safety training
 - ◆ College classes
 - ◆ Trade/Vocational school
 - ◆ Adult Education classes

Employment Gaps

- Consider getting a job to close the employment gap, if needed, to build your resume, to demonstrate recent work history, and/or to become a more competitive candidate for a Registered Apprenticeship.
- Be ready to explain employment gaps.
- What were you doing that could be considered unpaid work?
 - ◆ Caring for a family member/child
 - ◆ Volunteering and/or doing odd jobs
 - ◆ Taking classes/studying
 - ◆ Work training program



Resume

Do you have a quality resume that highlights your strengths and experience?

Ask your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for assistance. Also, visit your local [Career OneStop center](#) for resume assistance, interview preparation assistance, and more!

Child/Family Care

Identify resources for childcare/after school care for when you start working.

Worried About Losing Your Disability Benefits?

- Request benefits counseling from your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.
- Determine if working full-time is right for you. How much do you need to earn to live? How will working affect your health insurance benefits?
- Explore Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Services to learn what work incentives are available to help individuals to maintain their disability benefits while working:
 - ◆ [Work Incentives Planning and Assistance](#)
 - ◆ [Benefits Counseling and the Path to Employment Fact Sheet](#)

Qualifications/Requirements – Do you need these for the job? Can you get them?

- Driver's license
- Personal vehicle
- High school diploma / equivalent
- Related work experience



Required Skills

- Every job requires workers to have certain skills, abilities, and attributes.
 - ◆ Find out what skills, abilities and attributes are needed for the apprenticeship you are looking for.
 - ◆ To learn more about skills and abilities employers are looking for in job candidates, visit the [CareerOneStop Skills & Abilities Video Page](#).
- What are the requirements/demands for the apprenticeship you are interested in? What kind of attributes is the employer looking for?
 - ◆ Examples of **physical demands**
 - Must be able to lift and carry 50 pounds frequently.
 - Must be able to tolerate long work hours with limited breaks.
 - ◆ Examples of **cognitive demands**
 - Must be able to memorize and recite scripts.
 - Must be able to pay attention and stay on task even with background noise and distractions.
 - ◆ Examples of **social requirements**
 - Must be able to work cooperatively and courteously with others.
 - Must be able to work with a team.
 - ◆ Examples of **communication demands**
 - Must be able to listen and follow instructions.
 - Must be bilingual in speaking and writing in English and Spanish.
 - ◆ Examples of **academic requirements**
 - Must be able to perform simple arithmetic and utilize geometrical formula.
 - Must be able to read at a college-level.
 - ◆ Examples of **other attributes** that employers are looking for
 - Must be responsible, honest, and trustworthy.
 - Must be positive and have a good attitude.

Support System

- Who is considered part of your social support system?
- What role do they play in supporting you with employment?



Step 3: Apply For Apprenticeships

- When you're ready to apply, get help from your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Job Developer, and/or Employment Specialist.
- Identify the Registered Apprenticeship contact for [your state's Apprenticeship program](#).
 - ◆ This person can provide specific information about Registered Apprenticeship Programs and Pre-Apprenticeships.
 - ◆ Learn what schools/training institutions provide apprenticeship-related technical instruction.
- Are you able to find the Work Process Schedule (also known as Schedule of Work) for the occupations?
- Apply for the Apprenticeship job position as you would apply for any other job.

It is important to know that apprenticeships can be structured in various ways depending on the goals of the program, the industry, and the specific skills being taught. A few examples include competency-based apprenticeships, time-based apprenticeships, and hybrid apprenticeships.

In competency-based apprenticeships, progress is based on how the apprentice's skills, knowledge, and experience have developed. The apprentice moves forward in the program as they demonstrate mastery of specific skills or competencies. This type of program is often used in industries where measurable skills can be clearly defined and assessed.

In time-based apprenticeships, progress is based on a set number of hours working within a company or learning skills in a classroom. This is a more traditional model and is often used in trades and professions where a certain amount of practical experience is required.

In hybrid apprenticeships, elements of both competency-based and time-based models are combined. The apprentice's progress is evaluated based on both the development of specific skills and the amount of time spent in the program.

In terms of milestones, these can vary greatly depending on the structure of the apprenticeship. For example, in a competency-based program, milestones might include the successful completion of a particular project or the demonstration of a specific skill. In a time-based program, milestones could be tied to the completion of a certain number of hours or the end of a particular phase of training.





Section 3. Collaboration with VR, Office of Apprenticeship, and Employers

Within the context of an apprenticeship program, numerous entities must collaborate effectively to ensure its success for customers. However, our learning community observed that this collaboration often falls short of its potential. In response, Section 3 of the toolkit is dedicated to addressing this issue. It accomplishes this by precisely defining the roles and responsibilities of various apprenticeship stakeholders. Additionally, this section offers valuable tips and suggestions to foster successful interagency collaboration.

Defining the Entities and Their Roles

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) serves individuals with disabilities and provide a variety of employment-related services, including apprenticeships. For example, VR provides services such as job placement, training, job retention, reasonable accommodations, counseling and guidance, information and referral, and a myriad of other types of assistance to job seekers. VR is a federal program and much of the policy and procedures are consistent nationally; however, each state has different provisions that may affect service delivery. The designated provider of VR services in each state works to ensure that individuals with disabilities who participate in the VR program achieve a competitive integrated employment outcome.

The apprenticeship system consists of two types of entities responsible for registering and overseeing Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs). These two entities include the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of Apprenticeship (OA); and recognized State Apprenticeship Agencies (SAA). Both the Office of Apprenticeship and SAAs provide technical assistance and support to program sponsors, answer questions about the apprenticeship model, guide partners on each phase of developing a program, connect businesses to training providers, and advise partners on available funding sources to support apprenticeships. While both entities function pretty similarly, there are some key differences that may apply:



Office of Apprenticeship	State Apprenticeship Agencies
Registers and oversees programs in states without a recognized SAA through state field offices. In some circumstances, OA may register a program in a state with an SAA	Recognized by OA to act on behalf of the federal U.S. DOL to register and oversee programs in their recognized state
Staff members are U.S. Department of Labor federal employees	Staff members are state employees
Registers all programs through standard documentation	May utilize the standard federal paperwork and documentation, or may use documentation specific to that state
Utilizes the Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Data System (RAPIDS) system for registration, oversight, and tracking of apprentice progress and apprenticeship compliance	May utilize the same RAPIDS system as OA, or may use a separate system unique to that state

Sponsors of apprenticeships could be employers, associations, unions, schools or training institutions; however, the end result of the experience must be gainful employment. The sponsors role includes owning the standards, coordinating related technical instruction, tracking progress, and ensuring apprenticeship standards are being followed by the employer of record. The apprentice is hired by an employer and employers may also be a registered apprenticeship sponsor.

Tips in Facilitating Communication and Collaboration

- Understanding and learning what each entity is about through meeting and interaction.
- Becoming an active member of an Apprenticeship Coalition or developing one if it doesn't exist.
- Distributing specific VR-related marketing materials to sponsors to show how the program can support apprenticeship activities.



Bringing Collaboration to the Next Level—Perfect Implementation

- Designate one specific person from your agency to be the point of contact for apprenticeship partners and stakeholders.
- Schedule regular meetings and check-ins with key apprenticeship partners.
- Visit agency and company staff meetings and share a PowerPoint presentation about your agency/business and what you have to offer as an apprenticeship partner.
- Determine a specific referral process and outline this process in a flow chart to share with other businesses/agencies.
- Develop a funding matrix website outlining the funding for apprenticeships in your state so businesses can easily apply for funding and other business services.

Additionally, VR can reach out to the state apprenticeship agency to begin collaborating. Some state apprenticeship agencies may even assist VR in developing a pre-apprenticeship program if the VR agency is interested.





Section 4. Lead with Ability and Strengths & When and How to Disclose a Disability

Disability disclosure during apprenticeships is a topic that frequently came up in our learning community. Revealing one's disability is both emotionally and practically sensitive. However, the process of when, where, why, and how to disclose a disability can be unclear. In response, this section offers a comprehensive guide for customers on how to disclose their disability to an employer.

Before delving into this section, it is essential to recognize that disability disclosure can vary based on whether an individual's disability is apparent or non-apparent. Let's consider an example: If an individual has an apparent disability, such as blindness, and uses a white cane, they may not need to formally request reasonable accommodations just to participate in a job interview. However, upon arriving for the interview, a job seeker's need to use a white cane will make it evident that the person has a disability. At this point, verbal disclosure is not immediately necessary because no specific accommodation is required. Nevertheless, voluntarily disclosing the disability can be beneficial. The interview committee may have questions, such as, "How will this person perform essential job functions?" By openly discussing the disability (in this case, blindness), the interview committee can focus on the applicant's skills, abilities, and knowledge, rather than fixating on limitations or barriers. This approach may promote a more productive interview process.

How to Disclose a Disability to an Employer

Emphasizing Disability Strengths in Disclosure

Disclosing your disability to your employer can be a daunting task. You may worry about how they will react, whether they will treat you differently, or how it will affect your career prospects. However, disclosure can also have many benefits, such as getting the accommodations you need, building trust and rapport, and creating a more inclusive work culture.

One way to make disclosure easier and more positive is to emphasize your strengths. Disability strengths are the unique abilities and skills that you have developed that make you a good candidate



for the job. ***Highlighting your strengths can help you—stand out from other candidates, perform your job better, and contribute to the organization's success.***

When you tell your employer about your disability, these are some ways to share your strengths:

- Be polite and friendly in your conversation with your employer. Avoid using legal jargon or threatening language. Try to communicate in person if possible, or by phone or email if not.
 - ◆ Action tip: Start with a positive statement, such as "I enjoy working here and I appreciate the opportunity to learn and grow."
- Focus on your abilities and skills, not your limitations. Explain how your disability has helped you develop valuable qualities, such as resilience, creativity, or problem-solving.
 - ◆ Action tip: Use the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to describe a situation where your disability was a strength to achieve a positive outcome.
- Give specific examples of how your disability strengths can benefit your work performance and the organization. For instance, if you have generalized anxiety disorder, you can say that your anxiety gives you energy, motivation, and attention to detail.
 - ◆ Action tip: Link your disability strengths to the job requirements and the organization's goals and values.
- Anticipate and address any potential concerns or questions that your employer may have. For example, if you have dyslexia, you can mention the strategies and tools that you use to overcome reading and writing challenges.
 - ◆ Action tip: Prepare a list of possible questions and practice your answers beforehand.
- Express your willingness to learn and adapt to the work environment. Show that you are open to feedback and suggestions from your employer and co-workers.
 - ◆ Action tip: Ask for constructive feedback and demonstrate how you can improve your skills and performance.



Role Playing

Counselors can use a simple chart like this to prompt responses from the individuals they are working with and can adapt these prompts as needed.

Prompt	Response
My disability is (describe in simple terms)	Example: Depression
My valuable skills and abilities at work are	Example: I enjoy routine, I am a problem solver, I a team player, I am a fast learner
My disability might impact me at work by	Example: Time management skills
Accommodations that have helped me be successful are	Example: Outlook reminders, Color Coded Schedules

Once the Counselor has worked through the prompts and recorded answers, the counselor and individual can then merge the content to create dialogue around the disclosure.

Example for the info provided above:

"I would like to mention that I have a diagnosis of Depression. After reviewing the job description I do not anticipate my Depression impacting my ability to do this job. I enjoy routine work, I am a problem solver, I enjoy working with a team, and I am a fast learner. There have been times that time management has been difficult for me but I have mastered that by using Outlook reminders and color coding my tasks for the day and this has been very helpful for me. I am open to hearing what tools you use to help people with time management and I am happy to discuss further if you'd like."

Why—When—Where—and—How to Disclose Your Disability

Why to Disclose Your Disability.

- Disclosure increases access to support and accommodations
- Provides protection from disability discrimination
- Provides an explanation for things that may be different about you
- The employer can appreciate your honesty



When to Disclose Your Disability.

- During the application process
- During the Interview
- After the job is offered

Where to Disclose Your Disability.

- Early in your employment. This supports any reasonable accommodations requested and it also allows involvement of your VR counselor.
- In-person (preferred)
- Via phone call or virtual meeting (like Zoom)
- Through email (usually not preferred unless there exists a communication barrier)

How to Disclose Your Disability.

- Disclose your disability in a concise manner
- Avoid prolonged and complicated medical explanations
- Disclose it in a positive way
- Explain that it will not impede your job performance

Benefits and Risks of Not Disclosing Your Disability**Benefits.**

- It allows the request for reasonable accommodations
- It supports the involvement of your VR counselor and support staff
- Peers and supervisors can appreciate your honesty and be willing to help when you need it

Risks of **NOT Disclosing.**

- No protection from discrimination
- No accommodations provided
- No explanation for altered performance
- Increased anxiety that the disability could be revealed in uncomfortable ways
- Potential to put others at risk for safety



Specific Steps to Take in Disclosure

Disclosing your disability to your employer is a personal and strategic decision. You need to consider—the pros and cons of disclosure, what, when, and how to disclose if you choose to, your rights and responsibilities, and the best way to communicate your needs and strengths.

Here are some specific steps to help you plan and execute your disclosure:

- **Step 1:** Weigh the pros and cons of disclosure. Consider the benefits and risks of disclosing (or not disclosing) your disability, such as gaining access to accommodations, building trust, or facing discrimination.
 - ◆ **Action tip:** Make a list of the advantages and disadvantages of disclosure and compare them. Think about how disclosure will affect your short-term and long-term goals.
- **Step 2:** Research your rights and responsibilities. Learn about the laws and policies that protect you from disability discrimination and require your employer to provide reasonable accommodations.
 - ◆ **Action tip:** Visit the websites of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) [Home | U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(eeoc.gov\)](https://www.eeoc.gov) and the [JAN - Job Accommodation Network \(askjan.org\)](https://askjan.org) to find out more about your rights and responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- **Step 3:** Prepare your disclosure statement. Plan what you want to say, how much you want to share, and when and where you want to disclose. You can use a script or an outline to guide your conversation.
 - ◆ **Action tip:** Write down your disclosure statement and rehearse it with a friend or a mentor. Use clear and concise language and avoid unnecessary details.
- **Step 4:** Disclose your disability to your employer. Choose a suitable time and place to have a private and respectful discussion with your employer. Use your prepared statement and emphasize your individual and disability strengths.
 - ◆ **Action tip:** Schedule a meeting with your employer at a convenient time and location. Be confident and respectful in your tone and body language. Listen to your employer's response and acknowledge their perspective.
- **Step 5:** Ask for an accommodation. Explain what kind of support or adjustment you need to perform your job effectively. Provide evidence or documentation if required. Negotiate and agree on a reasonable accommodation plan with your employer.
 - ◆ **Action tip:** Research the possible accommodations that are suitable for your disability and apprenticeship job position. Provide examples or evidence of how they will help you work better. Be flexible and open to alternative solutions.





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Addendum

Work Process Schedule

HVAC Technician | 860.381-010

Topic	Approximate Hours
Refrigeration basics and orientation	500
Safety	160
Customer relations	160
Methods of handling equipment	500
Constant humidity	320
Heavy air conditioning	500
Soldering and welding	1000
Tube bending and fitting	500
Diagram and blueprint reading	320
Pipefitting	1000
Controls	180
Power tools	1000
Test instruments	1000
Testing equipment	160
Service and trouble shooting	1200
Total Hours	8000



*This example provided is for HVAC technician Apprenticeship. ****[US DOL Schedule of Work \(Also called Work Process Schedule\) Dropbox](#)**: An online repository created by the US DOL, which includes work process schedules (or Schedules of Work) for apprenticeable occupations. Note that the resources included in this repository are organized by occupation. We recommend searching the page for key words related to the occupation and industry you're working with.

Related Theoretical Instruction

The following related training outline identifies subject matter which must be mastered by the apprentice to successfully complete the program:

HVAC Technician | 860.381-010

Math	Science	Graphics	Communications	Trade Theory
Basic Math	Physics I	Blueprint	Technical Writing	Rigging
Algebra	Reading	Principles of Basic Drafting	Principles of Refrigeration	Air Conditioning
Geometry	Hydraulics	Sketching	OSHA Safety	Basic Electricity
		AC Theory	Welding/Blazing	
		DC Theory	Soldering	
		DC Circuits		



Is Apprenticeship Right for Me?

Answer yes or no to the questions below and then score your answers to see if you might be a good match for an apprenticeship!

1. Are you looking to go straight to work, rather than focus on college?
2. Do you prefer hands on learning over traditional classroom settings?
3. Have you found apprenticeship positions that match your goal?
4. Does the career you want require a certification or credential?
5. Do you know exactly what career you want to pursue? Have you had a career in mind for several years, researched it thoroughly, and decided it is the best fit for you?
6. Do you have specific goals for what you want to achieve through an apprenticeship?
7. Are you looking for your next position to be a permanent or long-term job?
8. Are you committed to completing the full duration of the apprenticeship program? See Schedule of Work for the demands for the program you are interested in.
9. Are you committed to following safety protocols and guidelines in the workplace?
10. Are you prepared to dedicate time to both on-the-job training and classroom instruction?
11. Are you good at balancing a job and school?
12. Are you committed to investing the required time and work in this career?
13. Can you use your time wisely and get your work done on time?
14. Would you describe yourself as self-motivated – knowing what needs to get done and doing it without others telling you to do it?
15. Do you take direction well? Are you comfortable with someone checking your work to make sure it was done correctly and critiquing areas you can improve?

If you answered mostly “yes”

Congratulations! An apprenticeship may be the right fit for you. You have the skills and the drive to succeed in an apprenticeship – and the perfect one is out there waiting for you!

If you answered mainly “no”

An apprenticeship may not be the best fit for you at this time. The good news is that you may be ready for an apprenticeship in the future – and the perfect one will be out there waiting for you!

* Quiz: Is Apprenticeship Right for Me? [Information taken from Lenawee Now.](#)



Other Resources

[**The Evin B. Hartsell Endowed Memorial Scholarship**](#) is a unique opportunity for FCIC/UCEDD trainees to gain recognition and support for their commitment to the field of disabilities—apply now to make an impact!

[**Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Publications Guide**](#)

[**MTC Innovation Program**](#)