

Questions from Employer TA Center Webinar:

Celebrating 25 Years of the ADA: Leading Corporate Voices on the Value of Disability Inclusion

Date: July 9, 2015

The following are questions received during this webinar that time did not allow panelists to answer.

Q: We attended today's webinar entitled, "Celebrating 25 Years of the ADA." We found this webinar to be very helpful. We had a question pertaining to the Diversity Equality Index. Are we able to obtain a copy or view the DEI report?

A: The survey document available at https://www.disabilityequalityindex.org/documents/2014_DEI-Survey.PDF. DEI results can be found at https://www.disabilityequalityindex.org/top_companies.aspx.

Q: We serve clients with physical/mental imparities. Its crucial staff can communicate with our clients. An applicant applied who was deaf. I showed her the job description to discuss reasonable accommodations. Is there anything else I should do?

A: Regardless of disability, every person is different. Removing any barrier to communication is an important step that will allow you to be sure you are able to fully explore the job candidate's background, skills, etc. Since you may not know if the candidate prefers to communicate by reading lips, using sign language interpreter, or something else, it is most important to begin by simply asking the candidate how he/she prefers to communicate (ideally you will know ahead of time if the candidate needs a sign language interpreter, which would be paid for and arranged by the employer). Once you know the best method of communication for the candidate, be sure to proceed with the interview just as you would for any other candidate. For a refresher, you may want to read Communicating With and About People with Disabilities (<http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/comucate.htm>), which provides basic guidelines for interacting with people with a range of disabilities. The AskEARN.org website also offers information about interviewing people with disabilities at <http://askearn.org/refdesk/Recruitment/Interviewing>.

Q: Disability Equality Index - Will this survey instrument roll-out to Federal Agencies?

A: We are not aware of any plans to implement the DEI in the federal sector. However, if you are interested in learning more about the representation of people with disabilities within various federal agencies, you can the latest available data from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management at <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/diversity-and-inclusion/reports/#url=Employment-Statistical-Reports>.

Q: Have any of the panelists hired an Asperger's student and what was their experience and if so what can a transition specialist do to make internships and hiring more successful for those individuals?

A: Since this was asked after the fact, we cannot provide an answer specific to the panelists; however, below is some information regarding employment transition for people with Asperger syndrome in general.

While each and every individual with Asperger's syndrome is different, there are a number of strategies that may help in the transition to employment. These include:

1. Spend time talking about the purpose of employment in order to create enthusiasm and motivation for this transition; work with the student to set goals and discuss how goals can be achieved.
2. Since thinking about different jobs can be quite an abstract task, offer as many community experiences as possible (ideally) before graduation. This includes visits to different workplaces, job shadowing, volunteer experiences, etc. In the community, talk with students about the huge range of jobs available at different locations.
3. Work with the student to develop a list of "informational interview" questions. Encourage them to ask relatives and friends questions such as: How did you get your job? What do you like/dislike about it? What qualifications or training did you need when you started?
4. Offer realistic mock interviewing sessions (parents and family members can assist here, too). These sessions offer the young adult an opportunity to practice appropriate behavior and how to answer some "typical" interview questions.
5. Practice self-advocacy and self-determination skills with the student, especially with regard to helping them learn how to describe how they work best, in what environment they tend to thrive, and any supports they need to be successful.
6. You (or the student) may also wish to educate the employer and/or coworkers on some of the support strategies that were helpful in the classroom, as these translate nicely to the work environment. For example:
 - a. Clearly define the job task; what exactly is expected?
 - b. Break tasks down into smaller components if possible.
 - c. Provide immediate, honest feedback on performance.
 - d. Provide as much routine and predictability as possible.
 - e. Provide predictable routines as much as possible.
 - f. Minimize oral verbal instructions (perhaps provide written instructions), and allow time to respond.
 - g. Provide models of the specific job skill.
 - h. Allow the individual to complete one task before beginning another.
 - i. Provide prioritized checklists and timelines for tasks.
 - j. Provide a strategy to communicate when the employee needs help or has not understood.

- k. The individual may not easily interpret body language or sarcasm, read between the lines, etc. Clear communication is critical; lack of communication between employees with Asperger's syndrome and their supervisors is a main cause of job termination.
- l. Be sensitive to/accommodate any sensory issues the individual may present with that interfere with work.
- m. Explain authority hierarchy, to help prevent co-workers possibly taking advantage of the employee with Asperger's syndrome.
- n. Encourage social interactions with co-workers.
- o. Explain the formal and informal rule structure of how things work at that job site. Explain unwritten (often social) rules of the workplace.

Additional resources:

- Accommodation and Compliance Series: Employees with Autism Spectrum Disorder (<http://askjan.org/media/autism.htm>)
- The 411 of Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities (<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/411-on-disability-disclosure>)
- Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success (<http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/>)