



National Network

Information, Guidance, and Training on the
Americans with Disabilities Act

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Ten Tips for Employers: Tapping into the Talents of Veterans with Disabilities

Introduction

Veterans have a lot to contribute to the workplace: skills, resilience, teamwork, loyalty, discipline, and adaptability. This is also true for the approximately 50% of veterans who return from service with a disability.

Many employers want to do “the right thing” in employing veterans with disabilities. Goodwill alone may not be enough, however. Employers must have workplace practices in place that allow veterans with disabilities to contribute to their full potential.

Two recent surveys have shown that many employers do not understand what veterans with disabilities are capable of and what their needs are.^{1,2} Employers also may not know what the law requires concerning employment of people with disabilities.

1. Can you separate fact from fiction?

There are many myths and misconceptions about employees with disabilities. In general, workers with disabilities perform as well as any other employee. Employees with disabilities are no more likely to be violent in the workplace, have more workplace accidents, or be absent from the job than are other employees. Reasonable accommodations cost far less than what many employers believe. Also, financial assistance and tax incentives may be available to assist with providing accommodations.

2. Do you know about the unique disabilities of many veterans today, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI)?

About 30% of veterans returning from recent engagements have PTSD, TBI and/or depression. These disabilities are not always obvious or apparent to others. Here are some key features of these non-apparent disabilities:

- **The disability may still be unfolding.** Many returning service members enter jobs before their disability has been diagnosed.
- **The disability may continue to change over time.** For this reason, employers must have in place responsive, flexible, and effective accommodation practices.
- **Symptoms vary from person to person.** People with the same diagnosis can have very different symptoms and needs.
- **Many employers have unfounded, negative attitudes about PTSD and TBI.** PTSD, especially, is often thought of as a “character flaw” or a risk for workplace violence. These attitudes may keep employers from hiring veterans and discourage veteran employees from requesting accommodations.

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3. Make sure your diversity plan includes people with disabilities.

A diversity plan should include specific methods for recruiting, hiring and supporting employees with disabilities.

4. Resources for employing veterans with disabilities:

Learn about recruiting, hiring, and accommodating veterans with disabilities at USA Jobs for federal employers (<https://www.usajobs.gov/>) or Civilian Jobs for general employers (<http://www.civilianjobs.com/employermain.aspx>).

5. Are you trying to go it alone?

There are many other organizations that can help employers do a better job of including veterans with disabilities in their workplace. To get started, contact the ADA National Network at 800-949-4232. You can also visit the Northeast ADA Center's Making Work Happen Toolkit for Vets at <http://www.makingworkhappen.com/Veterans.cfm>.

6. Make sure managers have the information they need.

In many organizations, mid-level managers are often the ones who decide who gets hired, who gets coached and developed, who gets promoted, and who gets fired. Also, managers are likely to be the ones getting and granting an accommodation request.

7. Be prepared to accommodate both physical and non-apparent disabilities.

Most employers understand the need to accommodate employees with obvious disabilities, such as those who use wheelchairs. But they may not understand how to accommodate employees with non-apparent disabilities such as PTSD or TBI. Learn how to accommodate veterans with non-apparent disabilities by calling the ADA National Network at 800-949-4232, or visit the Job Accommodation Network website at <http://askjan.org>.

8. Find out how to include veterans with disabilities in your hiring practices.

Many employers are not aware of and do not use recruitment resources that would reach veterans with disabilities. Learn about these at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Employers Hiring Veterans website at <http://www.vetsuccess.gov/employers>.

9. Know the laws that apply to employing veterans with disabilities.

Many employers do not know what they are and are not allowed to do when hiring a person with a disability. For example, individuals with disabilities are not required to tell employers about their disability when applying for jobs. The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) applies to veterans with disabilities in the workforce. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) applies to all individuals with a covered disability, including veterans. Learn about USERRA at The U.S. Department of Labor's USERRA Advisor at <http://www.dol.gov/elaws/userra.htm>. Learn about the ADA or ask a question by calling the ADA National Network at 800-949-4232 or visiting <http://adata.org>.

10. Be aware of how your workplace currently treats employees with disabilities.

When workers with disabilities in your workplace request accommodations, how does your business respond? Are steps taken to help them fully contribute to their jobs? Or does coming forward often lead to termination? Find out how your workplace can and should be supportive to people with disabilities by visiting the Making Work Happen for Veterans tutorial at <http://www.makingworkhappen.com/Veterans.cfm>.

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