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## Easing Employer Concerns

### Introduction

Despite ongoing efforts changes in research, policy, and practices, people with disabilities have consistently remained disproportionately underemployed and unemployed. In fact, according to Erickson et al. (2020), only 37.8% of people with disabilities are employed, compared to 80% of people without disabilities. One factor of the consistently high unemployment rates for people with disabilities may be employer attitudes and concerns. As an employment specialist, you have the power to help dispel myths and provide educational resources to potential employers to support employer concerns.

### Employer Concerns

Kay et al. (2011) found that while many studies and surveys reported an overall positive employer outlook of hiring and maintaining employees with disabilities, much of the literature either: (1) resulted in social desirability bias, that is, respondents shared what they thought the interviewer wanted them to share, or (2) only sampled employers with a positive record of hiring and maintaining employees with disabilities. Kay et al. instead collected information from businesses and government entities who were known to be, “reluctant to hire and accommodate workers with disabilities”. What they found was that the majority of respondents agreed to many reasons why employers might not hire people with disabilities. The top three reasons include:

1. “They are worried about the *cost of providing reasonable accommodations* so that workers with disabilities can do their jobs”;
2. “They *don’t know how to handle the needs* of a worker with a disability on the job”; and
3. “They are afraid they *won’t be able to discipline or fire* a worker with a disability for poor performance, because of potential lawsuits”.

Kay et al. also found that employers did not retain workers with disabilities because employers are afraid that workers with disabilities will become a *liability* to the business.

### Dispelling Myths

Many of the reasons why employers are reluctant to hire people with disabilities are based on stereotypes and misinformation. For example, regarding concerns about accommodations, the Job Accommodation Network (2020) found that 56% of workplace accommodations cost absolutely nothing. In regard to discipline, employers may fire employees with disabilities so long as it meets at least one of three conditions: (1) termination is unrelated to a disability; (2) the employee cannot perform requirements of the job with or without a reasonable accommodation; or (3) because of the disability, he or she poses a direct threat to health or safety in the workplace



(Office of Disability Employment Policy).

### **Create Positive Relationships**

Creating positive relationships with employers will also encourage the hiring and retaining of employees with disabilities. This starts with employment specialists taking the time and effort to match the right employee with the right business (Wehman, 2011). While it is important for employment specialists to understand an employment seeker's interests, skills, and goals it is equally important to understand the potential employer's goals and needs as well as who its current employees are. By taking the time to create a positive job match and communicating with the employer the process of the match, an employment specialist will become a trusted resource for employers on hiring and retaining employees with disabilities.

### **Listen, Educate, and Train**

By building positive relationships with potential and/or current employers, employment specialists may become a valued resource for employers to come to with questions or worries. Maintaining positive relationships allows the employment specialist the opportunity to listen to an employer's concerns and appropriately educate them on facts of hiring and retaining employees with disabilities as well as provide external resources. It may be beneficial to train both employers and other employees on disability in the workplace to mitigate any concerns throughout the business.

### **Resources**

Below is a short list of potential resources employment specialists may use or share to help change the attitudinal barriers of employers:

1. [The Job Accommodation Network](#)
2. [Employers and the ADA: Myths and Facts from the Office of Disability Employment Policy](#)
3. [Changing Attitudes from the Office of Disability Employment Policy](#)
4. [The Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion](#)

### **Cite Us!**

Snyder, A. (2021). Easing employer concerns. [Fact sheet]. <https://ceiutah.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/cei-sept-2021-factsheet.pdf>

### **References**

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