



Disability Awareness Guide

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Disability Awareness Guide

Purpose	1
What is Disability?	2
Who are People with Disabilities?	3
Disability in West Virginia - Facts and Figures	4
Disability - Myths and Realities	5
Disability Etiquette - What to Do When You Meet a Person with a Disability	7
Disability Rights	
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	9
The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	17
Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act Amendments	19
Disability in the Workplace - Recruiting, Hiring, Retaining, and Accommodating Employees with Disabilities	22
Disability Awareness Events	
Disability Simulations - Things to Consider, Alternatives to Disability Simulations, Disability Simulation Dos and Don'ts	24
National Disability Employment Awareness Month	27
Disability Mentoring Day	28

Purpose

The purpose of this Guide is to increase public awareness of disabilities. The Guide contains general information on disability and disability rights, and practical suggestions for conducting disability awareness events. Readers interested in more information, or information on specific disabilities, are encouraged to consult the Resources section of the Guide.

This is the first printing of this Guide. Future versions will include additional information as it becomes available.

What is Disability?

Disability is limited ability to do something.

Disability is a result of a physical or mental condition.

Disability occurs in people of all ages, races, classes, genders, and nationalities.

Some disabilities are clearly visible. Other disabilities may not be visible.

Some disabilities are conditions people have from birth. Other disabilities may be acquired later in life.

Disability is a Natural Part of the Human Experience

In the past (and sometimes still today), disability was viewed in medical terms as a defect in the individual that needed to be treated or fixed by professionals. Based on this narrow view, many people with disabilities were separated from society and placed in large settings, such as institutions, state hospitals, and group homes with other people with disabilities.

Today we recognize disability as a function of the interaction between the individual and society. Viewed in these terms, disability can be seen as a combination of the unique characteristics of the individual and the characteristics of their environment. Accordingly, the actual limitations experienced by people with disabilities are greatly influenced by factors in their environment, including the attitudes of people in society.

Things such as assistive technology, accessible transportation, and home modifications can assist people with disabilities to overcome many physical and architectural barriers. Public services and supports as well as the support of friends, family and neighbors can assist people with disabilities to enjoy the rights, responsibilities, and benefits of community living.

For more information visit:

- www.disabilityisnatural.com

Who are People with Disabilities?

People with disabilities are people.

People with disabilities are everywhere.

People with disabilities are the largest minority group in America. According to the 2004 National Organization on Disability Harris Survey of Americans with Disabilities, over 54 million Americans have a disability.

People with disabilities can be anyone. They are friends, classmates, co-workers, supervisors, employees, and family members.

People with disabilities attend churches and schools, they work, shop, play sports, vote, take vacations, fall in love, get married, and do all of the activities that people do in everyday life.

Disability in West Virginia

Facts and Figures

Did You Know?

West Virginia has the highest per capita rate of disability in the nation.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 410,781 West Virginians reported having a disability. That's 22.8% of the state's population. In other words, one out every five West Virginians reported having a disability.



That's enough people to fill Milan Puskar Stadium at Mountaineer Field six times!

That's seven times the population of Charleston!



Did You Know?

The incidence of disability among senior citizens is even higher.

In fact, 129,170 people age 65 and older report having a disability. That's 48.6% of senior citizens. In other words, one out of every two senior citizens reported having a disability.



That's enough people to fill the WVU Coliseum 9 times!

For more information visit:

- National Organization on Disability www.nod.org
- The Disability Odyssey www.stevegoldada.com

Disability

Myths and Realities

Myth: *People with disabilities are sick or have something wrong with them and they need to be cured.*

Reality: Having a disability is not the same as being sick. Disabilities are not contagious, and people with disabilities don't need to be cured.

Myth: *People with disabilities have a poor quality of life and deserve sympathy, pity, and charity.*

Reality: The quality a person's life depends on the quality of their living conditions, their access to community activities and social relationships, and their opportunity to contribute to society.

Myth: *People with disabilities are inspirational, courageous, and brave for overcoming their disability.*

Reality: People with disabilities are simply carrying on normal activities of daily living when they do things such as drive to work, compete in athletic events, or participate in recreational activities. However, they do encounter obstacles in the environment and society that can make life challenging. Access to community services and supports can address many of these barriers.

Myth: *People with disabilities need to be protected from failing.*

Reality: People with disabilities have the same rights as everybody to participate in the full range of human experiences – including success and failure.

Myth: *People with disabilities should live in protective settings, such as group homes or nursing facilities, with other people with disabilities.*

Reality: People with disabilities have the right to live as independently as possible in the community setting of their choice.

Myth: *People with disabilities always have problems with transportation.*

Reality: People with disabilities are capable of arranging their own transportation, although they may have difficulty obtaining affordable, accessible transportation in some areas. People with disabilities drive, ride a bicycle, walk, and use public transportation.

Myth: *People with disabilities only want to associate with other people with disabilities.*

Reality: People with disabilities want to have friends with and without disabilities.

Myth: *The lives of people with disabilities are totally different from those of most other people.*

Reality: People with disabilities attend school, they work, develop personal relationships, have a family, shop, do chores, pay taxes, vote, and dream like anyone else.

Myth: *Disability is a sign of weakness, character defect, or punishment from God.*

Reality: Disability is a natural part of the human experience. The incidence of disability increases with age.

Myth: *Disability in one area of functioning implies disability in another area.*

Reality: Disability in one area, such as physical disability, does not mean that a person has other disabilities, such as mental impairment.

Myth: *People with disabilities are a drain on society.*

Reality: All people have inherent value. People with disabilities are contributing members of society.

For more information visit:

U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy
www.dol.gov/odep

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and
Mental Health Services Administration, National Mental Health Information
Center www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov

Michigan Community Service Commission www.michigan.gov/mcsc

Disability Etiquette: What to Do When You Meet a Person with a Disability

When talking with someone with a disability, look at and speak directly to them, rather than to an interpreter or companion who may be assisting them.

Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use words or phrases that are related to a person's disability.

Don't assume that a person with a disability needs your help, or that you know what is best for them.

Always ask before offering assistance to someone with a disability. Wait until the offer of help is acknowledged and accepted by the person.

When providing assistance, ask the person for specific instructions on the best way to be of assistance.

Avoid staring at someone whom you believe has a disability. This is considered impolite.

If you are curious about someone's disability, you may ask the person. If they are uncomfortable talking about their disability, they can let you know.

Be patient if you are having trouble communicating. Rephrase your questions if needed and give the person time to respond.

Treat adults as adults, regardless of a disability. Don't patronize or talk down to a person with a disability. Never patronize people with disabilities by patting them on the head or shoulder.

Address people with disabilities by their name, not "Buddy" or other impersonal expressions.

Avoid labeling. People with disabilities are people, first and foremost. They are not defined by their disability anymore than people should be defined by things such as hair color, race, gender, nationality, etc.

Don't make decisions for people with disabilities about participating in any activity. People with disabilities are the best judges of what they can and cannot do.

Don't let fear and uncertainty keep you from getting to know people with disabilities!

When in doubt, treat other people the way you wish to be treated.

For more information on disability etiquette and person-first language visit:

- City of San Antonio Planning www.ci.sat.tx.us/planning
- Community Resources for Independence www.crinet.org
- www.disabilityisnatural.org
- Memphis Center for Independent Living www.mcil.org
- Paraquad, Inc. www.paraquad.org

Disability Rights

People with disabilities have fundamental civil and human rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution and by various federal and state laws.

The Americans with Disabilities Act

Purpose

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), PL 101-336 is modeled after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title V of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The purpose of the ADA is to extend to people with disabilities civil rights similar to those now available on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex and religion through the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in:

- Employment,
- Services of State and Local Government,
- Public Accommodations,
- Transportation, and
- Telecommunications.

Employment

The ADA prohibits discrimination against a qualified individual with a disability in employment and includes specific features related to reasonable accommodation, qualification standards and other labor-management issues.

“No covered entity shall discriminate against a qualified individual with a disability because of the disability of such individual in regard to job application procedures, the hiring, advancement, or discharge of employees, employee compensation, job training, and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment.”

Public Services

The ADA addresses services and activities of State and local governments including public transportation. Transportation provisions of the ADA are intended to improve access in equipment (buses, rail coaches), facilities, and demand-response systems. Some of these requirements include: the purchase of new accessible public transportation equipment, special transportation services that are

comparable to fixed-route services, modification of key existing facilities to assure access, and inter-city and commuter-rail accessibility improvements.

“No qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination by a department, agency, special purpose district, or other instrumentality of a State or a local government.”

Public Accommodations

The ADA addresses public accommodations and businesses and services operated by private entities. Privately owned transportation is also included. Specific features of the Act vary from section to section laying out how equal access is to be achieved by particular entities.

“No individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and quality enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of any place of public accommodation.”

Telecommunications

The ADA mandates that telecommunications relay services be offered by private companies and includes services operated by States.

“...shall ensure that interstate and intrastate telecommunications relay services are available...to hearing-impaired and speech-impaired individuals in the United States.”

ADA's Impact on Employment

ADA prohibits discrimination against workers with disabilities. ADA employment provisions apply to private employers, State and local governments, employment agencies, labor organizations, and joint labor-management committees.

ADA requires equal opportunity in selection, testing and hiring of qualified applicants with disabilities. ADA requires equal treatment in promotion and benefits. ADA requires reasonable accommodation for workers with disabilities when such accommodations would not impose an “undue hardship.” Reasonable accommodation is a concept already familiar to and widely used in today’s workplace.

For more information and regulations contact:

ADA Regulations for Title I—Employment contact:
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
1801 L Street, NW
Washington, DC 20507
800-669-3362- Voice
800-800-3302- TTY
Alternative formats are available.

Information on making job accommodations contact:

JAN (Job Accommodation Network)
800-526-7234—U.S. (Voice/TTY)

Regulations for Transportation contact:

Urban Mass Transportation Administration
400 7th Street, SW
Room 9315
Washington, DC 20590
202-366-4390 or 1656- Voice
202-366-4567-TTY
Alternative formats are available on request.

ADA Regulations for Title III—Public Accommodations contact:

U.S. Department of Justice
PO Box 66738
Washington, DC 20035-6738
202-514-0301- Voice
202-514-0383- TTY
Alternative formats are available.

ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities and those for Transportation Vehicles contact:

1331 F Street, NW
Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20004-1111
202-272-5434- Voice
202-272-5449- TTY
800-872-2253- Voice/TTY
Alternative formats are available.

ADA Regulations for Title IV—Telecommunications contact:

Federal Communications Commission
Office of Public Affairs
1919 M Street, NW
Room 254
Washington, DC 20554
202-632-7000- Voice
202-632-6999- TTY

For more information visit:

www.ADABasics.org
www.Adaaction.com
The Job Accommodation Network at West Virginia University
www.jan.wvu.edu

For a challenging game featuring questions on the ADA and real-life applications visit:

www.adagame.org

Protection from Discrimination in Transportation

Title II of the ADA specifically covers publicly funded programs, activities and services on the federal, state and local levels. This includes transportation rights.

The ADA protects the right of people with disabilities to use public transportation, regardless of their disabilities. You do not have to be in a wheelchair, use a scooter or have any visible signs of a disability to be covered under the law. Disability may be physical, psychological or developmental in nature. The ADA defines disability as any “impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.” Medical documentation, however, usually is needed.

Public modes of transportation that are covered under the ADA include the following:

- Urban transit
- Paratransit (door-to-door transport service)
- Rail systems and transit facilities (such as Amtrak)
- Buses
- Boats, ships or ferries
- All government-funded transportation

ADA coverage does not extend to air travel because air travel rights already are protected by the Air Carrier Access Act.

The right to transportation also is protected by the ADA if a person uses any privately owned transportation system or service whose “primary business is transporting the general public.” One example is a privately owned bus company.

Businesses that offer transportation to the general public also must provide services to all people regardless of disability. Examples include the following:

- Hotels
- Private colleges

- Funeral homes
- Social centers
- Day care centers

Other federal, state and local laws exist to further protect people with disabilities and their right to transportation.

Implementing ADA standards takes time and may sometimes be costly. For example, vehicles covered under the law may need to be structurally altered or new vehicles may need to be purchased or rented. “Reasonable accommodations” such as paratransit services may have to be provided by some transportation services that do not meet ADA standards. However, exceptions exist. For example, while taxis cannot deny service to people with disabilities, they do not have to structurally alter their vehicles to accommodate wheelchairs and scooters.

For more information on the specifics of the ADA, to ask questions or to file a complaint, visit the United States Department of Justice at: www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm

You may also contact the U.S. Department of Transportation:

400 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590
202-366-4000
www.dot.gov

Protection from Discrimination in Public Accommodations

Title III of the ADA protects the right of people with disabilities to access the same public accommodations as the general public, regardless of physical or mental disabilities. These include the following:

- Places of lodging (hotels, inns, motels)
- Places of exhibition or entertainment (movies, theaters, concert halls, stadiums)
- Places of public gathering (auditoriums, conventions centers, lecture halls)
- Places of public display or collection (museums, libraries, galleries)
- Places of recreation or entertainment (parks, zoos, amusement parks)
- Places of exercise or recreation (gymnasiums, health spas, bowling alleys, golf courses)
- Places of education (nursery, elementary, secondary, undergraduate or postgraduate schools, including private)
- Establishments serving food or drink (restaurants, cafes, bars)
- Sales or rental establishments (Stores, shopping centers, malls)
- Service establishments (hospitals, health care providers, laundromats, dry cleaners, banks, beauty parlors, barbershops, repair shops, gas stations, funeral parlors, and offices of accountants, lawyers, insurance agents)
- Social service establishments (day care or senior citizen centers, homeless shelters, battered women's shelters, food banks, adoption agencies)
- Stations used for public transportation (terminals, depots)

People with disabilities are also protected from discrimination in public accommodations that are privately owned.

The rights of people with disabilities go beyond access to buildings. People with disabilities have the right to the same services, programs and activities offered to the general public. For example, people with disabilities cannot be held to different standards or requirements nor screened from participating due to

disability. They may not be segregated from the general public unless doing so offers equal opportunity access and then only if the disabled person chooses to do so. Safety requirements may be established but only if they indeed offer protection; they cannot be based upon stereotypes or fears of the disabled.

Title III of the ADA establishes the building requirements for all public accommodations. These include making changes to “architectural barriers” when “readily achievable.” Examples of this may include modifying or removing curbs or steps; widening doorways, aisles and bathroom stalls; lowering telephones and drinking fountains; adding ramps and grip bars; and when necessary, relocating programs and services.

All new buildings must be accessible to people with disabilities. Elevators, however, usually are not required in buildings “under three stories or with fewer than 3,000 square feet per floor.” Exceptions to this would include public transit stations, shopping malls and health care facilities. Structures must pass local building code requirements as well.

Private clubs and religious organizations are exempt from ADA requirements. Private residences (apartments and homes) also are exempt. However, people with disabilities are protected from discrimination in both renting and selling practices under the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 (FHAA). The Department of Housing and Urban Development, often known as simply “HUD,” administers the FHAA.

For more information on the ADA and protection from discrimination in public accommodations, or to file a complaint, visit the United States Department of Justice at: www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

What is the Purpose of IDEA?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is an education act which provides federal financial assistance to State and local education agencies to guarantee special education and related services to eligible children with disabilities.

Who Is Protected?

Children ages 3-21 who are determined by a multidisciplinary team to be eligible within one or more of 13 specific categories of disability and who need special education and related services. Categories include autism, deafness, deaf-blindness, hearing impairments, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairments, other health impairments, serious emotional disturbance, specific learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment.

What is a Free, Appropriate Public Education?

A Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) is defined to mean special education and related services. Special education means “specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of the child with a disability...” Related services are provided if students require them in order to benefit from specially designed instruction. States are required to ensure the provision of “full educational opportunity” to all children with disabilities.

IDEA requires the development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) document with specific content and a required number of specific participants at an IEP meeting.

What are the Procedural Safeguards of IDEA?

IDEA requires written notice to parents regarding identification, evaluation, and/or placement. Further, written notice must be made prior to any change in placement. The Act delineates the required components of the written notices.

What are Evaluation/Placement Procedures?

A comprehensive evaluation is required. A multidisciplinary team evaluates the child, and parental consent is required before an initial evaluation. IDEA requires that reevaluations be conducted at least every three years. A reevaluation is not required before a significant change in placement.

For evaluation and placement decisions, IDEA requires that more than one single procedure or information source be used; that information from all sources be documented and carefully considered; that the eligibility decision be made by a group of persons who know about the student, the evaluation data, and placement options; and that the placement decision serves the student in the least restrictive environment. An IEP review meeting is required before any change in placement.

What are Due Process Rights under IDEA?

IDEA delineates specific requirements for local education agencies to provide impartial hearings for parents who disagree with the identification, evaluation, or placement of a child.

For more information visit:

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services: www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

What is Section 504?

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1973 is a civil rights statute that states in part:

“No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States... shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance . . .” (29 U.S.C. § 794[A])

Who is an “individual with a disability” under Section 504?

An “individual with a disability” is any person who (i) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person’s major life activities, (ii) has a record of such impairment, or (iii) is regarded as having such an impairment. (29 U.S.C. § 706[8][B])

What physical or mental impairments qualify as “disabilities”?

Under Section 504, “[p]hysical or mental impairment” means

(A) any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological; musculoskeletal; special sense organs; respiratory, including speech organs; cardiovascular; reproductive, digestive, genito-urinary; hemic and lymphatic; skin and endocrine; or (B) any mental or psychological disorder, such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities. (34 C.F.R. 104.3[j][2][i])

What is the relationship between Section 504 eligibility and special education?

Section 504 is a broader category than special education. Every child who is entitled to services under special education is deemed to be an “individual with a disability” under Section 504. But many persons who are “individuals with a disability” under Section 504 are not covered by special education statutes.

What educational rights does an individual with a disability have under Section 504?

Under Section 504 a recipient [of Federal funds] that operates a public elementary or secondary education program shall provide a free appropriate public education [FAPE] to each qualified handicapped person who is in the recipient's jurisdiction, regardless of the nature or severity of the person's handicap. (34 C.F.R. 104.33[a])

A free appropriate public education (FAPE) under Section 504 entails provision of educational and related services without cost to the handicapped person or to his or her parents or guardian, except for those fees that are imposed on non-handicapped persons or their parents or guardian. (34 C.F.R. 104.33[c][1])

What procedural rights does a student who may have a § 504 disability have?

Section 504 requires that a person who may have a qualifying disability is entitled to a pre-placement evaluation. That evaluation must be conducted by means of "tests that have been validated for the specific purpose for which they are used and are administered by trained personnel in conformance with the instructions provided by their producer; . . . [that are] tailored to assess specific areas of educational need . . . ; and . . . are selected and administered to a student with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills, the test results accurately reflect the student's aptitude or achievement level or whatever other factor the test purports to measure . . ." (34 C.F.R. 104.35[b][1]-[3])

Moreover, Section 504 requires that the placement decision [for a student who may have disability] is made by "a group of persons, including persons knowledgeable about the child, the meaning of the evaluation data, and the placement options . . ." (34 C.F.R. 104.35[c][3])

What if a parent or guardian is dissatisfied with the child's § 504 evaluation and placement?

Section 504 provides that there must be a "system of procedural safeguards that includes notice [to the parent/guardian of the assessment's outcome], an opportunity for the parent or guardian of the person to examine relevant records, an impartial hearing with opportunity for participation by the person's parents or guardian and representation by counsel, and a review procedure." (34 C.F.R. 104.36])

For more information visit:

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services: www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS

Disability in the Workplace

Recruiting, Hiring, Retaining, and Accommodating Employees with Disabilities

One in every five Americans has a disability. If this number seems high, consider that disability includes hearing and visual impairments, chronic health conditions, orthopedic problems and many other conditions. Not all people with disabilities use wheelchairs, and many disabilities are invisible.

Most accommodations (69%) cost less than \$500 and almost 20% of accommodations cost nothing at all. In addition, companies report an average return of \$28.69 in benefits for every dollar invested in accommodations.

Accommodations on the job can include modified work schedules, job restructuring, and providing written materials in alternate format, such as in large print or on audio tape. Accommodations also include providing equal opportunity in the application process. Be sure that the places persons apply for jobs are accessible, and that the application is available in alternate formats, if requested.

Detailed job descriptions can be very helpful to a person with a disability in determining, prior to applying for the job, whether they are actually qualified for the job in question. The ADA does not require job descriptions, but good ones should list the essential job functions.

Federal and state tax incentives are available to employers who hire people with disabilities. Filing for these credits does not increase your chances of being audited!

According to a study conducted in 1995, the biggest barriers to employment for people with disabilities are employers' fears, prejudices, and lack of knowledge about disabilities. Sometimes, all an employer needs to do is see the person first, not the disability.

Many resources are available to provide free assistance to employers in understanding the ADA, locating potential employees with disabilities, and determining and obtaining appropriate accommodations.

People with disabilities are ready, willing and able to work. All they need is an opportunity.

For more information visit:

The Job Accommodation Network at West Virginia University
www.jan.wvu.edu.

Excerpted from: Job Accommodation Network

Disability Awareness Events

Disability Simulations

Things to Consider:

A disability simulation is any activity designed to give participants a sense of what it is like to experience a disability. Common disability simulations include spending a day in a wheelchair, going into the community blindfolded, or playing sports with one arm tied behind your back. Participants are often joined by a partner who simulates providing supports.

Increasingly, people are coming to realize that disability simulations rob people with disabilities of their dignity and self respect. While these activities are well-intended, they actually reinforce negative stereotypes about people with disabilities. Disability simulations evoke pity and mistaken impressions about having a disability.

Disability simulations cannot give participants a real sense of what it is like to experience a disability. In fact, participants get a false sense of what it is like to have a disability. Participants are left with the impression that having a disability is a devastating life experience. Some participants simply choose to end the simulation when it becomes inconvenient, difficult, or uncomfortable.

In a disability simulation, participants experience many of the barriers and challenges faced by people with disabilities without experiencing the benefits of adaptation and training, assistive technology, or human and animal assistance. Disability simulations can't possibly simulate the variety and range of coping skills developed by people with real disabilities. People with disabilities experience unique emotional, physical, and even spiritual responses as they adapt to life with a disability.

Just as you can never really know what it is like to be a person of another race or gender, you can never know what it is like to have a disability until you have one.

Disability Simulation Dos and Don'ts:

If you do plan to conduct a disability simulation exercise, there are some important ethical considerations you should observe.

1. Do respect participant's right to refuse to participate in a disability simulation activity.
2. Do offer alternatives to disability simulation activities (next section).
3. Don't make a game of disability simulations.
4. Do carefully select disability simulation activities and environments.
5. Do allow participants to choose the type of disability simulation in which they will participate.
6. Do pair participants with a partner who can assist them if needed.
7. Do emphasize the physical, psychological, and societal barriers faced by participants in various settings, rather than the perceived limitations of the disability.
8. Do discuss the importance of adaptation to disability and accommodation strategies.
9. Do provide assistive technology and adaptive equipment.
10. Do supplement disability simulation activities with examples of people with disabilities successfully addressing barriers and challenges in real life situations.

For more information and ideas, visit:

www.disabilityisnatural.com

The Ragged Edge OnLine: *www.ragged-edge-mag.com*

The Association on Higher Education and Disability: *www.ahead.org*

Alternatives to Disability Simulations

There are many activities that can increase disability awareness without attempting to simulate the experience of having a disability. Consider the following alternatives to disability simulations.

- Invite people with disabilities to talk about their experiences. For example, people who have mobility impairments, including people who use wheelchairs, can talk about barriers in the community and the need for accessibility. People who are blind can talk about orientation and mobility skills and techniques. Someone who uses a communication device can demonstrate the importance of assistive technology.
- Discuss the ways in which people with disabilities are similar to and have similar experiences to other people.
- Read a book or watch a video about a person with a disability. Talk about how the person was portrayed in the book or video. Talk about the similarities and differences they demonstrate.
- Conduct an informal accessibility survey in the community. Identify and discuss architectural barriers such as steps, curbs, steep inclines, narrow isles, heavy doors, etc. Identify accessible entrances, curb cuts, ramps, etc. Visit local businesses and discuss accessibility with business owners. Make plans to meet with agencies that do formal ADA accessibility surveys.
- Survey accessible parking spaces in the community. Do the accessible spaces comply with ADA regulations?
- Visit local hotels or motels and ask to see accessible rooms. Do the rooms have accessible bathrooms including accessible sinks, roll-in showers and/or shower chairs? Are the rooms located on the ground floor or near an elevator? Does the hotel/motel provide vibrating or flashing alarm systems?
- Come up with your own ideas for alternatives to disability simulations.

For more information and ideas, visit:

www.disabilityisnatural.com

The Ragged Edge OnLine: *www.ragged-edge-mag.com/*

The Association on Higher Education and Disability: *www.ahead.org*

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

WASHINGTON—U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao has selected “You’re Hired! Success Knows No Limitations!” as the official theme for October’s National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

“You’re Hired! Success Knows No Limitations!” emphasizes one of President George Bush’s top priorities—economic opportunity through job creation,” said Secretary Chao. “It also builds upon the accomplishments of the President’s New Freedom Initiative which has created many opportunities for persons with disabilities to be fully included in the 21st Century workforce.”

The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) specifically addresses policies that impact the employment of people with disabilities. It acts as a catalyst to stimulate new ideas about employment through research and development, policy analysis, grant awards, technical assistance and the promotion of effective business practices.

“People with disabilities are an untapped source of both capable employees and valued customers.” said Roy Grizzard, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Disability Employment Policy (ODEP). “You’re Hired! Success Knows No Limitations!” will help federal, state and local governments, advocacy groups and the business community plan events and programs throughout October’s National Disability Employment Awareness Month that highlight the talents and skills of job seekers and working Americans who have disabilities.

Background: Public Law 176, enacted by Congress in 1945, designated the first week in October as “National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week.” President Harry S. Truman designated the President’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities to carry out the law. Congress changed the name to “National Disability Employment Awareness Month” in 1988. The responsibility for leading the nationwide recognition was transferred to ODEP in 2001.

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Contact Name: Michael Volpe

Phone Number: (202) 693-7909

Disability Mentoring Day

What Is Disability Mentoring Day?

Disability Mentoring Day promotes career development for students and job-seekers with disabilities through job shadowing and hands-on career exploration. With leadership, coordination and resource materials from AAPD, local communities around the country organize their own activities that bring students and employers together for informational sessions about career opportunities and one-on-one mentoring with volunteers at public and private places of employment.

What Happens on Disability Mentoring Day?

Disability Mentoring Day is officially commemorated on the third Wednesday of every month and implemented in locations around the country and internationally throughout the year. It is designed to benefit from local creativity, with each community planning activities to best suit the interests and abilities of its students, job-seekers and local employers. Although the core experience is one-on-one job shadowing, event planners may choose to open with a meeting for a group of students and job-seekers featuring several presentations and/or close with a reception where students, job-seekers and mentors can share their experiences. The type of mentoring experience will depend in large part on the participants' interests, education level, and work experience. Job-seekers can focus on specific career advice and discuss potential internships and job openings.

How Will Students and Job-Seekers with Disabilities Benefit from Disability Mentoring Day?

Disability Mentoring Day enables students and job-seekers to spend part of a day visiting a business or government agency that matches their interests and have one-on-one time with volunteer mentors. It's 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. History of the program shows that students' and job seekers' participation in Disability Mentoring Day can result in an internship opportunity with the host employer, function as a first interview on the way to a part-time or full-time employment offer, or even an on-the-spot firm job offer.

How Will Employers Benefit from Disability Mentoring Day?

Disability Mentoring Day provides public and private employers with an opportunity to recruit interns, tap a pool of potential future employees, learn more about the experience of disability, develop lasting relationships with disability community leaders, demonstrate positive leadership in their communities and attract positive media attention. Additionally, employers can get involved by enabling employees to serve as volunteer mentors, functioning as a Local Coordinator for a community, and sponsoring Disability Mentoring Day at the national or local level.

How Can Disability Mentoring Day Support Other Programs?

Disability Mentoring Day can be a point-of-entry for existing mentoring, school-to-work, internship and employment programs. Since many successful programs around the country require extensive year-round commitments, Disability Mentoring Day can be a way to attract new participants and then encourage them to become more involved year-round. Employers with summer internship programs can also utilize Disability Mentoring Day as a means to identify promising internship candidates and encourage them to apply.

How Do Communities Get Involved?

Local Coordinators, who play a match-making role between students/job-seekers and local employers, are the key to Disability Mentoring Day. Communities wishing to participate in any capacity – as an employer, organization, educator, job-seeker or student – should review the list on the AAPD website (www.dmd-aapd.org/docs/coordlist.html) to see if there is already someone coordinating in that community. Individuals interested in playing a crucial coordination role should also refer to the , and then AAPD at 800-840-8844. There is no required size or timing for a successful event — it could involve just a handful of students or several dozen, and can take place at any point during the year. Making an impact in just one person’s life makes a difference and lays a foundation for subsequent years.

How Did Disability Mentoring Day Get Started?

This program started as National Disability Mentoring Day in 1999 in the White House, as a program to increase the profile of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, which is celebrated every October. The program was patterned

after school-to-work activities and began with just three dozen participants. In 2001, National Disability Mentoring Day was passed to AAPD to administer and build; that year, participation included more than 1,500 students and job-seekers, hundreds of public and private employers, and more than 70 Local Coordinators in 32 states plus Washington, D.C. In 2002, National Disability Mentoring Day included the participation of more than 3,800 students and job seekers, hundreds of public and private employers, and 134 Local Coordinators in 41 states and Washington, DC, plus four international locations. In 2003 (the year “National” was dropped from the title, because of the considerable international participation), Disability Mentoring Day saw significant growth, with almost 8,000 students and job seekers, 175 Local Coordinators in every state plus Washington, DC, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and 14 other countries.

What is AAPD’s Role?

As “National Host,” AAPD provides leadership by encouraging employers, students, educators and organizations to get involved; supporting a National Organizing Committee; encouraging the development of State Organizing Committees; recruiting, training and supporting Local Coordinators (who serve in a strictly voluntary capacity for AAPD); developing a Toolkit on how to plan National Disability Mentoring Day activities; referring individuals to published lists of Local Coordinators and participating employers; and generating media attention.

About AAPD

The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) is the nation’s largest cross-disability membership organization, and is dedicated to promoting the economic and political empowerment of all people with disabilities. AAPD educates businesses and the general public about disability issues, and provides membership benefits, such as financial services and product discounts. AAPD was founded in 1995 by cross-disability leaders to help unite the diverse community of people with disabilities — including their family, friends and supporters — and to be a national voice for change in implementing the goals of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency.

For more information:

For a list of 2003 Local Coordinators, go to:

www.dmd-aapd.org/docs/coordlist.html

For the 2003 Disability Mentoring Day Photo Gallery, go to:
www.dmd-aapd.org/mentoring03/gallery03.html

For the 2003 Disability Mentoring Day printed materials in PDF format, go to:
www.dmd-aapd.org/docs/materials.html

To review 2003 Disability Mentoring Day press releases, go to:
www.dmd-aapd.org/docs/pressroom.html

