

Disability Inclusion in the Workplace

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Joe Smith] Working age Americans with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed as those without disabilities and that's a problem. Part of the solution is to emphasize disability inclusion in the workplace. Thanks to federal policies, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, people with disabilities have better access to employment. However, there is still work to be done, and CDC, its partners, and the communities the agency serves all have a role to play in building a workforce that's inclusive of people with disabilities.

I'm Joe Smith with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and I'm here to talk with CDC disability and health expert, Dr. Shannon Griffin-Blake. Welcome, Shannon.

[Dr. Shannon Griffin-Blake] Thank you so much, Joe, for having me here.

[Joe Smith] Why is creating employment opportunities for those living with a disability so important?

[Dr. Shannon Griffin-Blake] People with disabilities face a number of barriers to employment, such as a lack of education or training, lack of transportation, and the need for accommodations at the job, which contribute to them being excluded from many opportunities. Whether you're in a position to hire someone, raise awareness in your organization, or help to remove these barriers, we all can be part of the solution.

Barriers may exist starting at career training programs, from the application process for new jobs, to transportation to an interview, and to onsite accommodations. Often people focus first on a person's disability instead of looking at the individual's talents and abilities and where there may be opportunities for inclusion in the workplace.

True inclusivity requires us to challenge our own bias and find value in each other, starting with the realization that we all are capable of contributing and deserve the opportunity to do so.

We know that employment status is directly related to potential health status. Better access to health care, improved quality of life, and more inclusion in community have the possibility of helping those with disabilities to live their lives to the fullest potential.

Every October, we observe Disability Employment Awareness Month which serves to spark the conversation and hopefully open doors throughout the year for so many people living with disabilities who simply want to work and may not have the same opportunities as others.

[Joe Smith] Shannon, how many people with disabilities are there in the United States, and how do their employment experiences compare to those without disabilities?

[Dr. Shannon Griffin-Blake] Between 2011 and 2014, about one in eight working age adults in the United States had a disability. However, less than half of them are in the labor force, either

working or looking for a job. Working age Americans with disabilities are *twice* as likely to be unemployed and that is terribly discouraging for us. Having even one disability can seriously affect a person's income, education, and employment prospects.

[Joe Smith] Well, what would you say to potential employers who might consider hiring people with disabilities?

[Dr. Shannon Griffin-Blake] There are so many benefits of hiring people with disabilities, because after all, a good employee is a good employee. You *always* take a risk when you hire someone, with or without a disability, but if you offer the right job to the right person, the sky is the limit.

Employers should spend time with other employers in their industry talking about their experience hiring people with disabilities. Spend time getting to know candidates and understanding their strengths, skills, and aspirations. Think about the various roles and workflows at your business and consider how someone with a unique skill set might be able to help.

Keep in mind, companies that offer accommodations for people with disabilities often realize cost savings and improved productivity.

At CDC, we will continue our work towards the goal that *all* people with disabilities have better health and brighter futures in communities where they are included and can fully participate where they work, live, learn, and play.

[Joe Smith] Well thank you, Shannon. Is there anything you'd like to add?

[Dr. Shannon Griffin-Blake] We can make a difference by providing education and employment opportunities to help all individuals live to their full potential. People with disabilities can and should have the same opportunity to thrive.

Employers, consider hiring people with disabilities. What opportunities can you create? What doors can you open? And how can you be the pioneer for disability inclusion at your company? People with disabilities are ready—are you?

CDC is here to be a resource for you as you consider how your organization can help all individuals lead fuller lives.

[Joe Smith] Thanks, Shannon. I've been talking today with Dr. Shannon Griffin-Blake about inclusion for people with disabilities in the workforce. For more information on disability and employment, visit cdc.gov/disabilities.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.