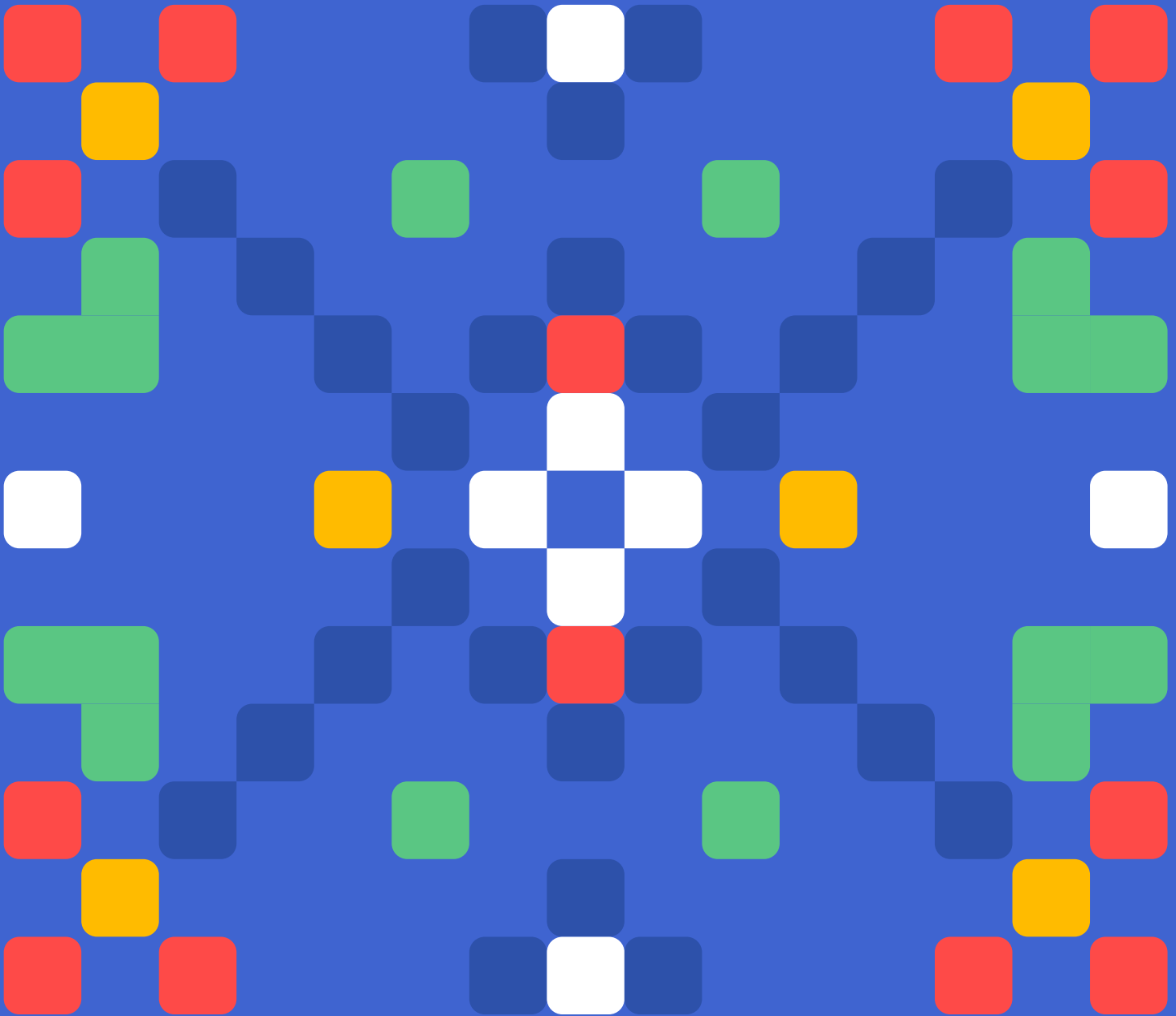


The Unified Work™ Playbook:

Curated Resources for Employing Persons with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities



“Unified Work” is based on Special Olympics’ Unified Sports model, which brings together athletes with and without disabilities and provides a great model for workplace inclusion.

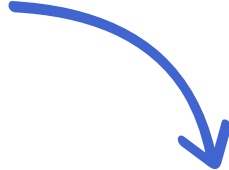
This work was created by Accenture in partnership with the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games. Unified Work™ is a registered trademark of Minnesota Diversified Industries, Inc.

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26**

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Why Do We Need Another Playbook?

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AN INTRODUCTION



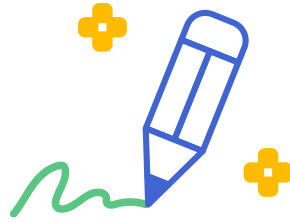
This Playbook Isn't Just Another Resource— It's a Bridge

What it IS →

- ✓ A curated collection of resources for employing individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and key considerations from expert interviews
- ✓ For employers to begin or expand their inclusive hiring practices of individuals with IDD in the U.S.
- ✓ For employers to be able to provide tools and resources proactively to their employees with IDD
- ✓ A call to action for the expansion of employment of individuals with IDD

What it's NOT →

- ✗ Net new research, thought leadership, or a published POV
- ✗ An exhaustive listing of all available IDD employment resources
- ✗ To be primarily used by individuals with IDD – the primary audience is employers



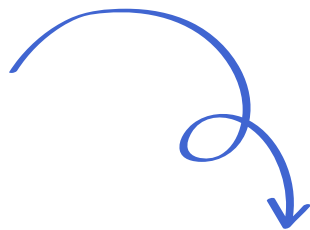
What is IDD?

According to the American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, an individual has intellectual disability if they meet three criteria:

1. There are significant limitations in intellectual functioning such as with learning, reasoning, problem solving etc.
2. There are significant limitations in adaptive behavior in one or more of the following areas: conceptual, social or practical skills (skills that are needed to live, work, and play in the community)
3. The condition manifests itself before the age of 22 (AAIDD)

The key takeaway: because all individuals with IDD are different – with varying abilities and developmental experiences – there is no “one size fits all” approach to inclusive hiring.

**Learn
more
here!**



What is Intellectual Disability?

[See more](#)

There are many kinds of intellectual disabilities—and many causes. Intellectual disability is the most common developmental disability.

Developmental Disability Basics

[See more](#)

According to the CDC, developmental disabilities are a group of conditions due to an impairment in physical, learning, language, or behavior areas.

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDDs)

[See more](#)

NICHHD says IDD include disabilities and disorders that affect the nervous system, metabolism, and cell function and survival.

Why Hire with **Inclusion** in Mind

Hiring people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) isn't about being nice. It's about being human and forward-thinking. You're not just filling a role. You're building something better for your team, your business, and your community.



Good for Business

Hiring people with IDD makes business sense.

- ✦ Employees with IDD often have lower turnover rates and a strong sense of loyalty (Herson)
- ✦ Leaders in disability inclusion show 2x more economic profit and 25% more productivity than their peers (Accenture)
- ✦ Your customers notice: People want to support companies that actually walk the talk (Awad et al.)
- ✦ Tight labor market? Fill critical gaps with an untapped talent pool
- ✦ Quality of work products and customer service is often improved

[Read more](#)



Strengthen Workplace Culture

Inclusive hiring reinforces a culture of respect, belonging, and purpose (Accenture). Teams that include people with diverse abilities tend to be more collaborative and empathetic. The cherry on top? A sense of belonging could mean productivity gains of \$52M per year! (BetterUp)



Deepen Inclusion Commitment

Here's the thing most inclusion plans forget: 1 in 4 adults in the U.S. lives with a disability (CDC). They're your employees. Your customers. Your neighbors. It shows that your company is invested in real equity, not just performative policy.



Broad Community Impact

This isn't just good business—it's good citizenship. Hiring individuals with IDD reduces reliance on public assistance and improves quality of life (Randall et al.).



The Inclusive Hiring Lifecycle as The Employer

CONSIDERATIONS & RESOURCES FOR SUCCESS



What to Expect From Chapter 1

This chapter examines inclusive hiring through the lens of the employer—the people doing the hiring, training, and leading. We broke down the hiring lifecycle into stages with guidance on best practices and where to get help when you need it.

Key Chapter Takeaways:

- ✦ Getting leadership on board is essential to program success and sustainability
- ✦ Flexibility and accessibility is the key to inclusive job role design
- ✦ Don't go on this journey alone – consider partnering with organizations and consult the experts

The Hiring Lifecycle Stages:

✦ Interest & Initiation:

In this stage, employers take their first steps towards kicking off inclusive hiring at their company – and bringing others along with them.

✦ Hiring Strategy & Process:

Next comes defining the jobs to be filled, the fulfillment strategy and the process for how it will be carried out.

✦ Interview:

Then comes time to recruit and interview candidates and hopefully extend an offer!

✦ Onboarding & Training:

It's time to introduce your new employee to their new role, new team, and everything your company has to offer.

✦ Retention:

Finally, it's essential to put support systems in place to retain your new talent and help them grow in their career.

✦ Scaling Inclusive Hiring:

Ready for something more permanent or further reaching? Let's talk sustaining and scaling.

Interest
& Initiation

Hiring Strategy
& Process

Interview

Onboarding
& Training

Retention

Scaling
Inclusive Hiring

Want to Understand Your Future Employee's Abilities? Talk About What They Love...

Everyone impacted by IDD brings something unique to the table. But sometimes, it doesn't show up neatly on a resumé. That's okay! A lot of people have trouble connecting their skills to "the workplace." That doesn't mean the skills aren't there. You just have to ask the right questions.

One expert suggests asking individuals about their skills in the context of their hobbies. For example, Special Olympics athletes have tons of translatable skills: teamwork, strategy, strong work ethic. These are workplace gold. They just learned them on the field instead of in a conference room.

Translating Skills From Field to Workplace

Camaraderie & teamwork	0 → X	Effective communication & interpersonal skills
Decision making during plays	0 → X	Insight and strategic thinking
Dedication to practice & improvement	0 → X	Discipline & strong work ethic
Navigating a competitive atmosphere	0 → X	Confidence in new tasks, handling pressure, persevering through setbacks

Source: Ability360

...And About What They Need

Accommodation Information by Role

[See more](#)

"JAN provides free and confidential consultation for employers of all sizes and types. This includes practical guidance on workplace accommodation solutions, accommodation process strategies, and the employment provisions (Title I) of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and related legislation."

Getting to know what your employees need to thrive is just good management. AskJAN.org is a great place to get started – they've got something for everyone. Then ask, what can your company already offer? This current state knowledge is helpful when kicking off a hiring initiative.



Pro tip: You don't need to have it all figured out—just be willing to ask, listen, and try!

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Discovering Possible Roles

Missed opportunities are likely hiding in plain sight

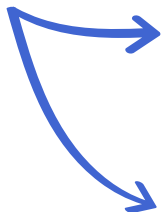
There are roles in your company right now that someone with IDD could crush. You just might not see it just yet. Many job descriptions contain non-essential information, or they assume a “standard way” of working that doesn’t leave room for flexibility, support, or creativity. That’s where we lose great talent before we even get started.

Additionally, biased assumptions on what people can and can’t do plague opportunity.

The Inclusive Workplaces Toolkit gives the example, “businesses hiring people with intellectual disabilities for the first time often assume that an employee with an intellectual disability is... capable of stocking shelves but not being part of a project management team. These incorrect assumptions result in businesses limiting the diversity of their applicants and denying themselves access to the unique skillsets of potential employees.” And for businesses skipping over customer-facing roles? They might be missing out on the best brand ambassadors they’ll ever hire.



Check out these tools!



Pro Tip: Non-profit Best Buddies Intl. says, “hire for potential”
“If they’ve got the skills and the right mindset for 75% of the job, give them a chance to grow into the last 25%!”

The Inclusive Workplaces Toolkit from Inclusion International

[View more](#)

A guide for employers about how to include people with intellectual disabilities in their workplaces that provides steps and sample materials.

Types of Jobs Well-Suited for People with IDD

[View more](#)

This article provides examples of roles that have proven to be successful and why.

Build Your Dream Team

Beginning the inclusive hiring journey can be daunting – like entering the doors of a grocery store the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. The good news is you don't have to do it alone! In fact, some of the largest, most successful inclusive hiring initiatives rely on partnerships to get educated, prepare for first steps, and execute their plan.

Here's who makes up the ecosystem:

Nonprofits and service providers (national and local)

- ✦ Reach out for information on how to get started depending on your stage
- ✦ Ask about supported employment services, programs, and job customization

State vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies

- ✦ Attend an employer info session
- ✦ Ask about hiring incentives, training, and local laws and policies

School transition programs and special education departments

- ✦ Contact transition coordinators at local high schools
- ✦ Offer internships or job-shadowing experiences through transition fairs

Job coaches and support coordinators

- ✦ Coordinate directly with the job coach during hiring and include them in the transition
- ✦ Keep open communication for feedback

Employee and Business Resource Groups (ERG/BRGs)

- ✦ Create internal groups to promote disability inclusion
- ✦ Learn from employees who may have family members with disabilities

Advocacy groups and disability rights organizations

- ✦ Join a local or national advocacy group's business network
- ✦ Attend conferences or training events

Other employers experienced in inclusive hiring

- ✦ Join a peer employer roundtable or inclusion council
- ✦ Request to learn more from a business experienced in disability inclusion
- ✦ Collaborate on job fairs or awareness events

Getting Leaders On Board

Inclusion takes a team. If you want this to work, you need leadership. You need operations. You need hiring managers who are ready to try something new—with support. Invite them to join. Educate them and proactively dispel myths. Help them understand the value of the vision. Then collaborate to create something meaningful together.

Get leadership to define the ambition with you—then map out a plan for how to get started and how to make it permanent. If it's seen as a side project or charity work, you're sunk before you start. When inclusive hiring is aligned with core strategy, it naturally attracts executive sponsorship and is less likely to be sidelined.

Walgreens' Commitment to Disability Inclusion

Recognized for the lasting success of its inclusive hiring model, Walgreens now shares with others through Walgreens Inclusion University. They've also taken leadership accountability to the next level by redesigning their annual bonus plan.

[Read more](#)

Start here

Unlocking Disability-Inclusive Leadership

[See more](#)

Valuable 500's study shares how disability-inclusive leaders are successfully transforming their organizations to improve outcomes for disabled consumers and employees alike, while catalyzing innovation and competitive advantage.

National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities

[See more](#)

Offers a variety of short-term, intensive leadership development experiences, a resource-rich website, an online community of practice, and best practices and innovations in disability leadership.

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Design Jobs with Flexibility

Too often, folks with IDD get funneled into the same narrow set of roles, not because that's what they're best at, but because those are the only options available. It's time to break out of that box!

Mix Up Job Structures

Different job structures or programs can be beneficial to expanding employment opportunities. For example, introductory gigs, like internships, give individuals with IDD hands-on experience in roles that have traditionally been out of reach. They're also a great way for employers to see, firsthand, the value of inclusive work.

Amazon's Supported Internship Program

In 2021, Amazon UK partnered with DFN Project SEARCH to launch the Supported Internship program which combines classroom education and work experience across different roles within Amazon. Many participants in this program have gone on to work full time roles with Amazon.

Source: (Amazon)

Match Responsibilities to Capabilities

One proven approach is job carving—take a standard job description, trim the fluff, and shape a role that plays to someone's strengths. Another? Keep a role as-is but bridge any skill gaps with the right tech or accommodations. It's all about creative customization and you'll want a partner to help you do it right. A job coach from an organization like Best Buddies or Easterseals can visit, watch how work really happens, talk with your team about tasks and the work environment, and then come back with a recommendation.

Job Customization in Manufacturing

[See more](#)

Page 15 shares how one Easterseals pro identified job roles hidden in plain sight and increased the entire team's productivity.

Flexible Working Accommodations

Transportation is one of the biggest barriers to work for people with IDD, making traditional 9-5 roles less attainable. So, offering remote options or flexible start times? That's not just thoughtful—it's game-changing.

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Building the Hiring Process



Designing your hiring process? Good news: you don't need to reinvent the wheel, and you don't have to do it alone.

Pre-hiring Checklist from Project Independence

- ☒ Review job descriptions
- ☒ Evaluate application process accessibility
- ☒ Train hiring managers (for free!)
- ☒ Create inclusive interview practices
- ☒ Prepare for accommodation requests
- ☒ Evaluate physical accessibility of hiring locations
- ☒ Engage with disability employment services
- ☒ Plan for inclusive onboarding

Source: (Project Independence)

Lean on Experienced Experts

Start by partnering with an expert. They can help your company assess and tailor your existing hiring process for accessibility or implement a different model entirely. Organizations like Best Buddies, Arc@Work, and Project SEARCH have helped employers build accessible hiring programs tailored to their business and strategies. They bring serious know-how to the table, grounded in real results. ThinkWork is another great resource. It's full of real examples of how people with IDD are thriving in different kinds of work.

Accessing Talent Pool

Ready to connect with talent? National and local nonprofits can help match you with qualified candidates. The U.S. Department of Labor's Workforce Recruitment Program is another solid tool for finding jobseekers with disabilities.

[See more](#)

Keep Recruitment Human

Applying for a Role

We've all experienced an online application process that was overwhelming and confusing. Now imagine someone who processes information differently doing that with limited support. A study of job seekers with disabilities found that 46% of respondents rated their last online application experience as "difficult to impossible." (EARN). The culprit? Common inaccessible features of eRecruiting tools.

[Learn more](#)

Smart Interview Prep

If you're bringing someone in (virtually or in-person), help them show up ready—not guessing. Whether you've opted for a traditional format or one more creative and task-based, send the scoop ahead of time. And don't forget to ask about accommodations in advance!

Try these to
break down
barriers!

Tips & Tricks

- ✓ Offer a simple form or short questionnaire instead of a lengthy app
- ✓ Encourage people to apply with the help of someone else
- ✓ Consider a short intro video or graphic that walks applicants through what to expect
- ✓ Interview details to send in advance:
 - ✦ Who they'll meet & how long it'll take
 - ✦ What the location and environment is like
 - ✦ How to request accommodations
 - ✦ What kinds of questions to expect
 - ✦ What to wear (what is "business casual" anyway?)
 - ✦ If it's online, how to log in and how to test

Conduct Better Interviews



When you design a process that works for people with IDD, you're not just being inclusive, you're building something that works better for everyone. With a few smart shifts—clear tasks, clearer questions, a little flexibility—you open the door to the best talent. And that's the goal, right?

Show Instead of Tell

Not every great hire excels at a verbal Q&A session. Consider alternative formats that focus on skills-based assessment such as job trials (short gigs to test the waters), working interviews like job shadowing, or portfolio reviews.



Be Accommodating

Directly invite people to disclose what they need. Examples include a short sensory break. A quiet room. The option to write answers instead of speaking off the cuff. A take-home assessment. A virtual interview. Invite an employee's job coach to join the process.

Interviewer Education

Don't let assumptions plague your interviewers. Get educated on appropriate language considerations for individuals with IDD and proper etiquette. Here's some tips:

- ✦ Avoid speaking unnaturally slow or loud, or over explaining. Treat adults like adults
- ✦ Lack of eye contact does NOT mean a candidate is disinterested
- ✦ Ask better questions. Consider transferable experience and rephrase questions to encourage expansion to draw out their stories.



A Skills-based Approach to Interviewing

[Read more here](#)

A large health system, in partnership with Project SEARCH, Easterseals, and other local organizations, created temporary work experiences to serve as interviews. Through this initiative, 34 team members were hired and they experienced a retention rate of 71% over five years.

Delivering Info in a Way that Works Best for Your New Employee

Everyone thrives when expectations are clear. Delivering information in a learning style that works best for your new employee will enable success. Consider revamping the way you communicate onboarding and training concepts.

☑ Do:

Provide simple job aides, visual cues, checklists, or videos with captions to give your employee the opportunity to digest information in their own unique way and review the information later in their journey.

✗ Don't:

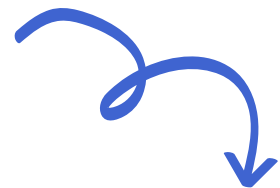
Communicate through heavy text, complex and cluttered diagrams, or content that exists only in a single modality.



Pro Tip: The “Curb-cut Effect”

The concept of how features designed for a specific group can aid a broader group. For example, making materials more accessible for one group using icons can lead to unexpected benefits for those where English is not their first language.

See Best Practices



Microsoft Inclusive Design

[See more](#)

Learn about inclusive design best practices and see examples in action.

Design with Accessibility in Mind

[See more](#)

Learn about the POUR Methodology for digital formats.

Disability Inclusive Communications Guidelines

[See more](#)

Do's and don'ts for creating accessible content (p. 23).

Integrate Your New Employee

Beginning a new job isn't just about filling out paperwork, it's also about building relationships. For many individuals with IDD, the social side of starting something new can feel like a huge hurdle. That's where you come in. Help them build their own natural support network at work. A few thoughtful moves go a long way and help your new hire feel like they belong from day one.

Companies with investment into disability ERGs:

11x More likely to promote people with disabilities

1.5x More likely to hire people with disabilities

1.3x Higher reported self-ID rates

Source: (NOD and Fair360)

Pair Up

Having a coworker in your corner makes a big difference. A professional buddy is that go-to person for questions, candid convos, and feeling a little more grounded in a new place. A mentor is there to give advice, share lessons learned, and aid in learning the role. Pairing strategies work. Mentors + buddies = better integration and stronger starts. It's a small move that delivers big returns.

Plug In

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) aren't just nice to have, they're powerful. For a new hire with IDD, ERGs can be a place to find like-minded people, feel connected, and build natural support at work. The bonus? They're good for everyone. ERGs boost satisfaction, strengthen culture, and help people stick around.

Disability: IN – ERG/BRG Toolkit

Disability:IN has a public ERG/BRG Toolkit that offers detailed information on how to establish an effective ERG. This tool is a great starting point for companies looking to start or grow their ERG practices.

[Check it out](#)

You Have a New Team Member! Make Day One Exciting, Not Confusing

The key to great onboarding? Be proactive. Talk with the employee before day one. Ask what accommodations they'll need and how they like to learn. Assume competence from the start. Different people learn in different ways, but no one is starting from scratch.

Gauging accommodation needs doesn't stop here. You won't see every need right away because some things only show up once the work begins. That's where a job coach or trainer makes a difference: spotting gaps and coming up with creative ways to fill them.

And don't forget your existing team. Give employees and managers training up front. Cover the basics: disability etiquette, spotting bias, and how to make the workplace inclusive from the start.



Accessible Onboarding Guide

[See more](#)

EARN breaks down the onboarding process to ensure accessibility is considered.

Onboarding Accessibility Checklist

- ☒ **Ensure Physical Accessibility of Workplace:**
In addition to ADA compliance, provide accommodating workstation furniture and tech, lighting options, and office amenities like kitchens and quiet rooms
- ☒ **Share 'Know Before You Go' Info:**
Provide an overview of what to expect in the coming weeks, and transparency about the work conditions
- ☒ **Talk about Flexibility:**
Remote work and flexible schedules aid accessibility. Consider providing transportation options as its often the biggest challenge

Resource: (Gevorkian)

Introduce your new employee to the company, its people, and their new benefits, but don't forget principles of universal design. If onboarding has to be completely reworked just to accommodate one person, maybe the system wasn't built right in the first place. Adjust the system, not the person. Everyone benefits from clear, flexible processes.



Training Everyone to Work Better Together

Hiring someone with IDD isn't just about preparing them. It's about preparing everyone: hiring managers, teammates, and especially supervisors. Set your team up to welcome new colleagues well. That means explaining expectations clearly, modeling inclusion from the top down, and giving people room to ask questions, learn, and grow together. Supervisors play a big role. They should be trained to recognize and support individual needs—like how someone learns best, or if they might need extra time due to transportation logistics.

REI's Training Initiative

In partnership with the National Organization on Disability, REI developed and deployed trainings for REI's leadership and staff about disability etiquette and awareness. "More than 30 regional managers and 120 staff members participated in the trainings, which 'took out a lot of the guess work, a lot of the mystery, and a lot of the mystique' of working with people with disabilities, according to Emily Garcia, an HR Generalist for REI."

[Check it out](#)



Pro tip: When training your team, normalize accommodations. Offering tools like flexible scheduling, visual job aids, or quiet workspaces to all employees removes the stigma and boosts productivity across the board.

Want to Keep Great People? Make it Easy to Stay



You hired someone awesome. Now the real magic is helping them stick around—and grow. It's all about being a good manager, a curious teammate, and a company that actually puts actions to words when it comes to inclusion.



Have Real Conversations

The first few weeks? That's your golden window. Check in often—not just to see if the work's getting done, but to build trust. And when it comes to feedback, just keep it real: say it in the moment, while it's fresh; avoid sugarcoating or vague compliments; ask how they prefer to receive feedback—some folks like it direct, others need time to process.



Talk About Growth

Your new employee has goals. So, ask them where they want to go—not just this month, but long-term. You're not locking in a career plan on day one. You're opening the door to possibility. When people feel like they're going somewhere, they stick around longer (Park and Park).

Providing Performance Feedback to Support Employees with Disabilities

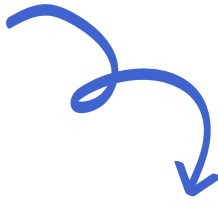
Authored by CCRW, this guide offers practical tips for giving feedback and helps managers make distinctions like poor performance versus disability-related challenges.

[Read here](#)



Pro Tip: Skip over-the-top praise. If you wouldn't applaud another employee for doing that thing, don't single this one out. Inclusion means equity.

Want to Keep Great People? Make it Easy to Stay: Continued



Culture Is Everyone's Job

People stay because they feel understood, supported, and respected. Workplace belonging leads to up to 50% lower turnover and up to 75% fewer sick days (BetterUp). So, support working relationships between people of all abilities. And stop treating inclusion like an “extra”—it’s the main course.



Have a Retention Plan

Retention works best when it’s not random. That means: a check-in rhythm; a record of what’s working (and what’s not); a plan to facilitate belonging; extra support during times of change. It doesn’t have to be complicated. But it does have to be consistent. Lean on your employee’s job coach for help.



Mentors: Your Secret Sauce

Not a babysitter. Not a supervisor. Just someone who’s been around the block. Retention rates are over 50% higher for employees with mentors than those without (Goodman). Set it up early. Check in regularly—with both the mentor and the employee. The right match = better belonging, more confidence, and a way lower chance of early burnout.

While every company is different with different needs, connect with other employers with established inclusive hiring initiatives to learn what’s worked for them. Ask your partner organizations about long-term supported employment resources to have all the bases covered.

Grow Inclusive Hiring Like a Pro

Scaling inclusive hiring takes structure, strategy, and momentum. Share wins loud and often. Collect data and market the heck out of it so you can grow opportunities. Remind leadership of the value and build further buy-in by sharing success stories. Genuine support for employees and positive experiences will naturally help spread the word in the community.

Check out this guide to developing inclusive stories and communications from the UN.

[See more](#)

Consider This:

- ☒ Include people with disabilities in leadership & decision-making positions [Read why](#)
- ☒ Make it a part of strategic planning and track KPIs - Data-driven insights reveal what's working and how to keep scaling
- ☒ Expand the scope of types of roles available
- ☒ Establish a COE, champions group or other method for advocacy and improvement
- ☒ Start small with pilot markets and then expand – replicate what works!
- ☒ Gather feedback from existing employees with IDD on what worked and what should be changed

Employer Case Studies from Leading Companies

Learn about what others have done for their workforce development efforts. Check out what others have done for their workforce development such as JPMorgan and Walgreens.

[Check it out](#)

Pilot to Scale at Jersey Mikes

Jersey Mikes partnered with Best Buddies to establish employment for people with IDD starting in a few locations, with roll-out of additional locations currently in progress. The secret? A bottom-up approach to education and training of existing employees at each franchise.

[Read more](#)

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Who to Engage at Your Stage

Ready to define a strategy and roadmap?

- Talk to the National Organization on Disability about their Disability Inclusion Blueprint.

[See more](#)

Ready to shape your hiring process and find candidates?

- Talk to Best Buddies about their Jobs Program and end-to-end support model.

[See more](#)

Ready to scale your existing initiative?

- Talk to those that have done it! Learn from Minnesota Diversified Industries (MDI) and Walgreens. Partner with Best Buddies.

[See more](#)

Ready to assess accommodations capabilities?

- Talk to the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), where they consult on workplace accommodation solutions and process strategies.

[See more](#)

Ready to train your staff on disability inclusion?

- Talk to the Center for Disability Inclusion about training opportunities for your team. Orgs like Best Buddies also offer trainings for free!

[See more](#)

Who to Engage at Your Stage: Continued

Ready to create a custom program?

- Talk to SourceAble and their consultative approach to building end-to-end program solutions.

[See more](#)

Ready to increase inclusion of employees with intellectual disabilities in leadership roles?

- Explore these how-to guides from “Listen Include Respect” on different leadership types.

[See more](#)

Ready to design more inclusive roles?

- Talk to your local Easterseals about job role customization and candidate matching.

[See more](#)

Ready to commit to advancing disability inclusion?

- Talk to Disability:IN, where 200+ CEOs have already made public commitments.

[See more](#)

Ready to host a proven supported employment program?

- Talk to Project SEARCH about being a host business for their Transition-to-Work Program.

[See more](#)



More Resources

+ Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Playbook

A step-by-step guide to help HR practitioners and business leaders build inclusive, equitable, empathetic and sustainable cultures and work environments.

+ Persons with Intellectual Disabilities in the Workplace and the ADA

Federal law for persons with disabilities.

+ The ILO Global Business & Disability Network Charter

The ten principles that offer a framework that enables enterprises to drive business success while fostering equal opportunities for people with disabilities.

+ EmployAbility Toolkit

A free toolkit offering step-by-step guidance for accessible recruitment, training, and retaining employees with IDD.

+ Exploring the Job Carving Process

Outlines why job carving can be an effective tool, the job design strategy, and also limitations.

+ Sourcing & Onboarding IDD Talent

Another good list of resources to support employers.

+ Factors Affecting Employment for Early Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: Influence of Supported Employment

Employer interviews reveal that task-level job adaptation yields stronger engagement, longer tenure, and higher-quality work.



Understanding & Supporting Your Future Employee

CONSIDERATIONS & RESOURCES TO LEND SUPPORT



What to Expect From Chapter 2

In Chapter 2, we explore the hiring lifecycle from the perspective of an individual with IDD who is starting a career. From this viewpoint, employers can better understand their future employee and provide support proactively. The tools and resources here are curated to be shareable with an employee with IDD and their personal support system.

Key Chapter Takeaways:

- ✦ Job coaches and familial support are the key to long-term success
- ✦ Transparency and routine build stability and ease the transition period
- ✦ There's room for career growth and making an impact on a company's inclusive employment efforts

The Hiring Lifecycle Stages for an Employee:

✦ Interest & Initiation:

A future employee begins the job search and gets their support system on board.

✦ Interview:

From the application process to job acceptance, they prepare and show up to the interview stage ready to go.

✦ Onboarding:

A new employee is introduced to the new role, new team, and everything the company has to offer.

✦ A New Daily Routine:

Outside of work hours, a lot can change in order to support a new schedule. Challenges managing transportation and benefits need to be addressed.

✦ Training & Retention:

Finally, support systems are essential for an employee to thrive and grow in their new career.

Breaking Job Role Stereotypes

There's myths out there—and they're overdue for a reality check

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) have often been boxed into roles that sell them short. Think repetitive tasks, back-of-house work, or jobs with no room to grow. But these people have real skills that can get overshadowed by assumptions. From sharp attention to detail to natural leadership instincts, with the right support, they can thrive in all kinds of roles. Tech, customer experience, operations, and yes, even leadership.

The problem? Many are never shown the full spectrum of career options. If you don't know something exists, how can you aim for it? Providing education and exposure is critical in unlocking potential and passion.

Use
these
tools!

Potential Job Role Options

[See more](#)

Brainstorm potential job options with this list of "Best Jobs" from Easterseals Arkansas.

ThinkWork Stories

[See more](#)

Read real stories about employment success and practices that supported the journey.



Nick's Sports Announcing Career

Nick grew up with a passion for sports, a secret talent for remembering game stats, and a knack for connecting with people. With help from his support system, he overcame traditional learning barriers, became a certified PA announcer, and now has a thriving career announcing for semi-pro and high school sports. Which sports you ask? Nick does them all – and he learns the rules for new sports by watching YouTube clips. He also goes the extra mile to pronounce each athlete's name correctly by preparing the phonetic spellings in his notes before each game. Nick manages his own portfolio of clients and game schedule and builds his daily routine around his work commitments. (Interview used with permission).



Career Entry Points

For many people with IDD, accessing non-traditional employment roles can be challenging. The good news? Initiatives geared towards mixing up ways of working are opening doors that were once closed.



Reverse Job Fairs

Imagine this: instead of applicants lining up to impress employers, the employers show up to meet candidates. People with IDD get to showcase their skills directly through conversations, portfolios, and demos. It helps hiring managers see the person, not just the resume.



Short-term Roles

Individuals with IDD have a chance to gain hands-on experience in roles that might otherwise be gatekept. They help participants build confidence, develop skills, and establish professional networks during a trial period. Think internships, work trials, and job shadowing.

Galt, a staffing firm, gives advice worth sharing: "Before you start applying for jobs, it's a good idea to find companies known for being inclusive. This will give you the support you need to succeed in your career."

Supported Job Search

The job hunt can be exhausting. Sometimes, the best route to finding the right job is to work with the right experts. There's tons of organizations committed to finding or creating meaningful employment opportunities for people with IDD. A VR agency can help point people in the right direction for their first steps.

- ✦ [Project SEARCH](#) challenges traditional expectations and empowers young adults with IDD to achieve competitive employment
- ✦ [CareerOneStop](#) provides resources for job seekers
- ✦ Orgs like [Michigan Career & Technical Institute](#) provide formal programming for prepping for and engaging in competitive integrated employment
- ✦ [MDI](#) offers job placement support and skill building
- ✦ [Best Buddies Jobs](#) program offers 1:1 coaching to build employee independence

Reid's Story

[See more](#)

Learn about Reid's internship experience with a large health company.

Family Matters for Long Term Success

Behind every big win, there's usually a team in the background offering support. For many people with IDD, that team often starts with family.

Families and close caregivers have a way of stepping up as advocates. They're there for job searches, daily routines, reminders, and celebrating every win, big or small. But their role doesn't end when the job begins. In fact, their continued support can be the key to long-term success in the workplace. So, bring them along from the beginning.



The Ultimate Supporters

A study by the AAIDD found that parental expectations and advocacy are key to whether adults with IDD pursue paid employment. Parents who value work for its benefits, like self-sufficiency and social engagement, are more likely to help create career opportunities. Their input is especially vital when communication challenges arise (Carter).

Knowing When to Lean In

Parents and allies play a crucial role in the employment pursuit. From time to time, what may be perceived as help may actually be causing friction at work. Sometimes the best help there is, is to support independent decision making and let the individual lead the way!

Check these out!



Why Employment Matters Toolkit

[See more](#)

The Arc provides a toolkit that is designed for families/self advocates that acts as a guide for those pursuing employment.

Parent Perspectives on Meaningful Work

[See more](#)

Check out this study to learn more on parents' perspectives of factors that lead to success in the workplace

Insights into Ongoing Support Needs

[See more](#)

This study done on a Project SEARCH program contains insights from participants and their family members on what's working and what's not after settling into a job.

Prep Like a Pro for **Recruitment**

For many job seekers, the application and interview process can be a lot to handle. Showcasing skills and talents in a way that clicks with employers? Not always simple. But here's the good news: there are plenty of resources out there to make the whole thing easier.



Lean on a Job Coach

Job coaches are seasoned pros who help an employee navigate the recruitment and job transition process. They're the ones who refine resumes, guide individuals through job applications, match them to jobs they could succeed in, get them prepped and ready for interviews, and beyond.



Get Questions Ahead of Time

Interviews don't have to feel like a guessing game. Knowing the questions ahead of time gives individuals the space to think through their answers and showcase their skills with confidence.

Mock Interviews

Mock interviews are a game-changer for job seekers. They don't just sharpen responses—they boost confidence. By practicing how to articulate their skills and experiences, candidates learn to present themselves in a way that truly showcases their strengths. That kind of preparation can be the key to landing the job.

Try these **resources!**

Best Buddies Jobs

[See more](#)

This program includes mock interview sessions to help individuals practice and refine their communication skills, increasing their chances of landing a job.

Project SEARCH

[See more](#)

As part of its employment readiness curriculum, Project SEARCH incorporates mock interviews to prepare participants for the workforce.

State Vocational Rehabilitation Services

[See more](#)

These services provide mock interviews, job readiness classes, and access to job coaches who offer ongoing support throughout the employment journey.

Level the Playing Field

Communicating interview accommodations

Speaking about accommodations can seem difficult, and an individual may not always know exactly what support they may need. However, knowing what's possible and beginning the conversation early allows the candidate and employer to be on the same page from the start.

Examples of Accommodation Requests

- ✦ Interview details in advance
- ✦ Permission to bring notes to the interview
- ✦ A job coach attending the interview
- ✦ Extra time provided for the interview
- ✦ A quiet, calm environment to minimize distractions
- ✦ Remote interview option
- ✦ Take-home assessments
- ✦ One-on-one interviews instead of panels
- ✦ Show a portfolio or a skill instead of talking about it
- ✦ Using a chat feature or writing answers instead of verbal Q&A

Asking for Accommodations

Kerry's Place provides a one-pager that covers accommodations, rights about diagnosis disclosure, and FAQs for people with disabilities that are interviewing.

[See more](#)

They Got the Job!

What's Next?

Identifying & requesting on-the-job accommodations

So, it's day one. This is the moment when a person steps into their new workplace ready to work, but also with one big question in mind: "Is this a place where I can actually succeed?"

Here's what makes a huge difference: knowing what supports are available and how to ask for them from the very beginning. Accommodations are not about giving someone an "easier" path. They're about giving people the right tools to do their best work. Sometimes that means using written checklists instead of verbal instructions. Other times, it might mean a quieter workspace, a mentor for the first few weeks, or a flexible start time. The key? Making sure people know they can ask.

**Support
starts
here**

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

Gives free expert guidance on what kinds of support exist and how to request them.

[See more](#)

Centers for Independent Living

Offer peer support and advocacy—sometimes, just having someone who's been there makes all the difference.

[See more](#)

Employment Outcomes & Challenges

This study highlights the outcomes and support needs of Project SEARCH graduates after transitioning to employment.

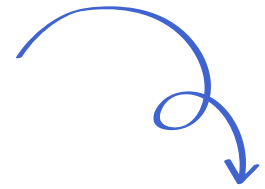
[See more](#)

Helping New Hires Speak Up and **Be Heard**

Not everyone walks into a job knowing how to explain what they need, and that's okay! For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), learning how to ask for support or share a career goal takes practice. The key? An environment where it's safe—and expected—to speak up.



Try these **resources!**



Growth Starts with Goals

"I'd like to grow into that role someday." That kind of statement shows intention and aspiration! Employees should feel encouraged to share their goals and supported in finding the words and tools to say it clearly.

Confidence Takes Coaching

Sometimes people don't speak up because they're still figuring out *what* to say. That's where support helps. The Arc and State Vocational Rehabilitation Services offer communication coaching and job readiness programs that teach how to advocate for accommodations and career growth.

Finding Your Voice at Work

[See more](#)

The Arc offers self-advocacy and communication training through local chapters.

Requesting Accommodations—For Free

[See more](#)

These state-run programs offer 1:1 job coaching, and soft skills training. Services include communication support and help with requesting accommodations.

New Place, New Pace:

Understanding the Rhythm of Work

Starting a new job can feel a bit like coming into a dance mid-song—except no one’s handed over the sheet music. Some workplaces follow a set rhythm: shifts, break times, team meetings, clock-in and out. Others? More like free jazz—flexible, fluid, and full of improvisation.

For people with IDD, not knowing what to expect can create stress. But when routines are made visible—daily flow, key contacts, where to find help—it’s easier to stay in step and build confidence fast.

Set the Rhythm: Give a Clear Roadmap

Every workplace has its own pace. For people with IDD, knowing that rhythm ahead of time—daily flow, break times, check-ins—helps reduce anxiety and build confidence.

Clear expectations create smoother transitions. Use visual schedules, checklists, or planning tools to show what to expect, who to contact, and when things happen.

Why Structure Matters

Structure is more than just schedules. It offers stability, supports independence, and helps reduce misunderstandings. It makes it easier for employees with IDD to focus on doing their best work—not figuring out the rules as they go.

Get Support That Works

Non-Profit organizations can help a new employee create a personalized success checklist—from tracking hours to arranging transportation – following along each step of the journey together. They know how to support people through change—and they’ve got tools that work.

State Vocation Rehabilitation Services

[See more](#)

Help assess accommodations and communicate directly with employers to put them in place.



Pro Tip: Don’t forget about local non-profits partners! A quick web search can reveal tons of helpful orgs in your area.

Why Company Benefits **Matter**—and How to Make Them Count

Benefits like health insurance, paid time off, and retirement savings aren't just perks. They're real tools. When understood and used well, they support better health, reduce stress, and help people plan. But here's the catch: Benefits only work if people know how to use them.

Connect people with IDD and their families to these resources early. The more they know, the more they can thrive.

Understanding Benefits & PTO

- ☒ How health insurance works and how to use it
- ☒ What to do when a sick day or break is needed
- ☒ How paid time off and time tracking work
- ☒ Who to ask when something's confusing
- ☒ Whether there's a way to save money through retirement plans

Go Further with a Partner

Benefits can be tricky—even for people who've been working for years. The acronyms, the paperwork, the "fine print"—it's a lot. Don't go at it alone.



Check these **out!**



Ticket to Work 'Find Help' Tool

[See more](#)

Use this tool to get free benefits counseling from an expert who explains how hours, pay, and health coverage work together.

A Resource for Figuring Out SSI

[See more](#)

DB101 lets you plug in wages and hours to see exactly how SSI/SSDI and health coverage change, offering state-specific guidance and plain-language tips.

The Power of Routine

A solid routine helps cut down on anxiety and builds independence – but how does one begin to build a new routine with a job in the mix? It's not about perfection; it's about creating a rhythm that works with the help of a support network and planning tools. When that rhythm clicks, it's a game-changer for productivity and peace of mind.

Need help getting started?

Routine Factory

[See more](#)

A daily planning software designed to help individuals with developmental disabilities manage their work tasks and schedules. It offers visual cues, task sequencing, and reminders to enhance task completion.

Thruday

[See more](#)

A free daily planning app designed for individuals with cognitive support needs, available on iOS, Android, and web platforms. It's currently used by over 10,000 people.

The Importance of Creating a Routine

[See more](#)

Check out this Heart to Heart article that discusses the impact that a routine can have on employment as well as everyday life.

Larry's Story

[Read more](#)

Larry found strength through routine on his path to independence. With the support of his VR counselor, he followed a steady weekly schedule to build job skills and confidence. That structure led him to a full-time position at The Mark Center, where his strong memory, planning abilities, and work ethic shine. Today, routine helps Larry manage his finances, commute on his own, and live with purpose and pride.

3 Keys to a Thriving Workplace

First, workplace structure and flexibility. It's about creating a balance: utilizing a framework that keeps things organized while allowing room for adaptability. Second, clear communication and support systems are non-negotiable. When expectations are transparent and help is accessible, it sets everyone up for success. Finally, task management resources are a must. The right tools make it easier to prioritize, stay on track, and get things done. Together, these elements create an environment with opportunity to thrive.



Pro Tip: Visual schedules or charts can help individuals understand and follow routines, providing a clear reference point.

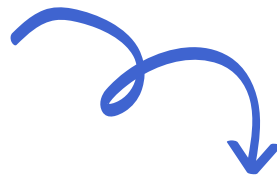


Tackling Transportation

Getting to and from work? Turns out it's not so simple. In a study by Project SEARCH, over 40% of caregivers felt that their loved one was not prepared to get to and from work independently, and transportation was cited as the biggest challenge faced during the transition-to-work program. It's important for families to work with job coaches and employers to find the most sustainable solution.

Employers can also think creatively—rideshare benefits, flexible hours to avoid peak transit times, or even remote work options can all play a role. The goal? Make getting to work less of a hurdle and more of a smooth ride.

Check these out!



Local Paratransit Services

Door-to-door transportation for people who can't use public transit. Some states allow Medicaid Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) to be used for employment-related transportation under certain waiver programs.

State VR Agencies

State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Agencies may provide or fund transportation to job training, interviews, and employment.

[See more](#)

Rideshare Services

Some local disability organizations partner with services like Uber, Lyft, or local taxi companies to provide subsidized rides for work. There's also programs that use state waiver dollars.

[See more](#)

Managing Government Benefits

For many people with IDD, getting a job raises big questions—not just about work, but about changes to benefits. Fear of losing benefits can limit opportunities. For example, some people stay part time because they are afraid to lose benefits, when they actually could and should be taking that step to full time work. Schools and systems often reinforce the idea that “less” is safer, keeping people stuck. What works? Informed choice. Consult organizations that equip individuals and families to make informed decisions and confidently navigate employment and support options.

Consult the Experts

✓ Consult Local Chapters

Many local chapters of The Arc, Easterseals, and Centers for Independent Living offer benefits counseling or can refer individuals to certified providers

✓ Disability Benefits at Work Scenario Tool

This collection of tools provides scenarios of how to blend SSI benefits with employment

✓ The ARC Center for Future Planning

Locate local resources and professionals for future planning

✓ Ticket to Work

Access to employment support services for social security disability beneficiaries who want to work

Advocate

Individuals with IDD have the right to pursue meaningful employment, receive support, and access long-term services without risking essential benefits.

* Protection & Advocacy (P&A) Organizations

These agencies provide legal support to traditionally unserved or underserved populations to help them navigate the legal system to achieve resolution and encourage systems change.

* National Disability Rights Network

Ensures that P&As/CAPs remain strong and effective by providing training and technical assistance, and advocates for laws protecting the civil and human rights of all people with disabilities.

Get Continuing Support!

Whether it's a mentor, a job coach, or a family member, having someone in their corner changes everything. These are the people who guide, sharpen skills, and step in with encouragement when it's needed most. With the right support, individuals don't just get by—they thrive.

Continue with a Job Coach

A job coach can be an employee's personal career guide even after they land the job. Think of them as the go-to for tackling challenges and building confidence. The payoff? Someone who's fully invested in their growth, helps to stay focused, and provides supports every step of the way.

Christina's Story

Christina works part-time at Bothwell Hospital as a dietary aide. When COVID-19 forced Christina's job coach to be remote, she was given an iPhone so that her job coach could provide on-demand remote support. Christina was able to continue working and master her tasks – so much so that she even helps with new employee training! The combo of an innovative tech support solution and trusted relationships resulted in long-term success.

Source: (ThinkWork)



Find a Mentor or Buddy

One of the smartest moves they can make to set themselves up for success is asking for a mentor or buddy. Someone who gets the role, the workplace, and/or their learning style can make all the difference. They're there to answer questions, decode those unspoken workplace norms, and make those early days smoother and more manageable.

Check these out!

State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies

[See more](#)

VR agencies can match individuals with job coaches who support job searches, interviews, training, and workplace accommodations—even after hiring.

Best Buddies Jobs

[See more](#)

This holistic program provides job coaches who can provide support during orientation and early training.

Get Involved, Create **Impact**

When it comes to creating better inclusive workplaces, what's better than asking people with lived experience to lead the effort? Having a voice that's backed by experience is powerful, and it can lead to real change.

Create a Community

Joining or starting an Employee Resource Group (ERG) focused on disability inclusion is a smart move. ERGs bring people with shared experiences together to push for change, offer support, and shape company policies. They're also a direct line to the decision-making table—and that's often where the real impact begins.

Check this **out!**

Rose's Story

[See more](#)

This article showcases the success story of Rose, a young woman with IDD who is thriving in the workforce.

Speak Up with Suggestions

Workplaces aren't perfect, and there's always room to make them better. Maybe onboarding moves too fast, training feels overwhelming, or schedules lack the flexibility people need. These are fixable.

It starts with sharing ideas: what worked, what didn't, and what could be better. When one person speaks up, it's very likely that others will benefit as well.

Lead the Change

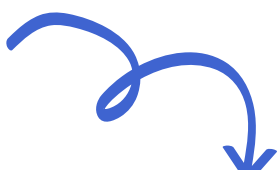
It's not just about suggesting change. It's about taking responsibility to lead it. Joining planning meetings, reviewing materials for accessibility, or jumping into a committee are all ways to make an impact. Leadership isn't reserved for those with fancy titles. It's for anyone with the vision, drive, and guts to speak up.

Career Growth

Landing a job is a big moment, but it doesn't have to be the end of the story. It can be the start of something bigger. For those curious about learning new skills or exploring a different role, the key is simple: speak up. Letting a manager know there's interest in growth or trying something new during performance reviews can make it easy to set goals and make a plan. One easy way to begin? Job shadowing. Spending time with someone in another role gives a glimpse into their day-to-day. It's low-pressure, straightforward, and a great way to figure out what sparks excitement.

Interested in a seat at the table? Make it known! In workplaces where inclusion is a priority, having people with diverse abilities and experiences in decision-making positions can help improve and scale existing inclusion initiatives and beyond (Changing Paces).

Use these tools!



Career Advancement Stories

ThinkWork provides real stories of how others have advanced in their careers.

[See more](#)

Ideas for Contributing to Inclusion Initiatives

Participate in interviews, be a mentor to new employees, and drive events – there's plenty of opportunities to make an impact.

[See more](#)

Bring Support to Performance Reviews

This article makes suggestions on how to navigate and advocate during performance reviews.

[See more](#)

Mental Health & Burnout Prevention

Did you know 39-52% of people with IDD have a co-occurring mental health condition? (Bradley). Let that sink in. Mental health support is a game-changer for long-term success in the workplace. When someone is having a difficult time, they should feel empowered to speak up. Whether it's to a manager, a job coach, or someone trusted, the goal isn't to solve everything at once—it's recognizing when things feel off and knowing it's okay to talk about it.

Organizations like The Arc make it possible. Take one example: in Texas, The Arc helped an employee access regular therapy. Over time, that support led to sharper focus, fewer missed days, and a stronger bond with their team.

Use these tools!

Inclusive Therapists

Offers mental health professionals who understand disability and how to provide truly inclusive care.

[See more](#)

Mental Health America

Has easy-to-use tools and resources to help you check in on your mental health and get connected to support early.

[See more](#)

The Arc

Can help you explore local mental health options, guide conversations with your employer, and advocate for inclusive wellness policies.

[See more](#)



More Resources

+ Financial Education & Empowerment

The National Disability Institute promotes financial wellness and provides many other resources around employment and advocacy.

+ Supporting Job Seekers Resources

Resources to inform career planning, job development, and employment support.

+ Helpful Tools for Workers with IDD

Focuses on self-advocacy, ADA rights in the workplace, and accommodation continuation strategies.

+ Center for Independent Living

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are community-based organizations that support people with disabilities in achieving greater independence and improving their quality of life.

+ Arc Guide to Self-Advocacy

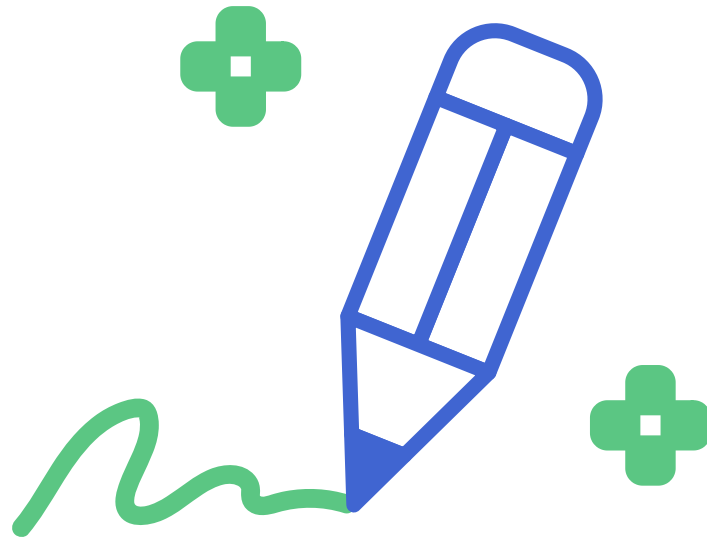
A short guide for those with IDD on self-advocacy and educating others to do the same.

+ Get Involved with Special Olympics

Become an athlete, volunteer at events or participate in initiatives focused on advancing inclusion.

+ Unified Work Academy

Free online courses for building the skills and confidence for success in a career.



Rights, Policy & Advocacy

CONSIDERATIONS & RESOURCES



What to Expect From Chapter 3



The push to increase inclusive hiring doesn't stop at your company's front door. There's more work to be done in the community. Stay informed on disability laws and policies and advocate for inclusive practices. Your leadership helps drive positive change in the workplace and beyond.

Key Chapter Takeaways:

- ✚ Check that inclusive hiring initiatives meet federal and state compliance requirements
- ✚ Your voice as an employer is powerful – advocate to advance inclusive hiring for persons with IDD

Get Educated on Laws & Policies

When you understand the rules and programs, the process becomes more efficient and informed.

Engage HR and explore what's available, ask questions, and work with the system.

Understand Anti-Discrimination & Accommodation Laws

All employers must follow federal law (ADA, Section 503, etc.), but states often have additional protections or tax incentives. Here's what to look for at the state level:

- ✦ State disability rights acts
- ✦ Reasonable accommodation policies
- ✦ State-specific wage laws (especially related to subminimum wage or supported employment)
- ✦ Local incentives for hiring people with disabilities

State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Agencies

State-specific policies, rules and regulations.

[Learn more](#)

State Disabilities Services

Each state has a department or office for programs and funds for people with disabilities.

[Learn more](#)

Look into "Employment First" Policies

Many states have adopted Employment First, a policy framework that prioritizes competitive, integrated employment for people with disabilities.

[Learn more](#)

Ask these questions to start exploring your state's policies:

1. What services are available for employers who want to hire people with IDD?
2. What funding or tax incentives are available?
3. What are my legal responsibilities when hiring a person with a disability?
4. Does the state support Employment First?

Drive Change Through Advocacy

As an employer, you have more influence than you think. When you work with groups focused on disability rights and inclusive employment policy, you're not just helping your company—you're driving real systemic change and showing that inclusion isn't just a box to be checked.

Your participation helps:

- ✦ Create a more inclusive labor market
- ✦ Influence funding and training programs
- ✦ Shape accessibility policies
- ✦ Ensure employer voices are heard

Pro Tip:

If public services aren't offered in your state, look to the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP). For example, if your state lacks transit services for those with a disability, the ODEP supports initiatives like the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility, which helps states develop coordinated transportation systems for people with disabilities.

Become a Corporate Partner or Sponsor

Many advocacy organizations offer partnership opportunities for businesses. Sponsorship benefits include brand exposure, event participation, and alignment with a respected national advocacy organization.

Join Advocacy Days

Participate in state or national advocacy days where employers, self-advocates, and families meet with legislators to discuss key issues. Check out events hosted by your local organizations.

Stay Informed

Keep up-to-date with the latest on policy updates, advocacy insights, and innovative practices. Connect with your local ARC chapter. Celebrate National Persons with Disabilities Employment Awareness Month in October!

[See more](#)



Don't Just Read the Playbook – Use It!

What it **IS** →

- ✓ A curated collection of resources for employing individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and key considerations from expert interviews
- ✓ For employers to begin or expand their inclusive hiring practices of individuals with IDD
- ✓ For employers to be able to provide tools and resources proactively to their employees with IDD
- ✓ A call to action for the expansion of employment of individuals with IDD

How it **SUPPORTS** →

- * Reference and educate teams on best-practices
- * Connect with the recommended, best-in-class partner organizations to take next steps
- * Network with mentioned employers to learn from their success stories
- * Be prepared to support your new employees with the shareable resources in Chapter 2

Only **18.5% of** people with IDD are employed to the level of their abilities – let's work together to change that.



Acknowledgements

Just like inclusive hiring initiatives, we couldn't do this alone

We'd like to thank the experts that partnered with us to concept, draft, and review this playbook. Your time and learned experiences were invaluable.

Reviewers

Emily Raich and Stephanie Rothery, Best Buddies International
Mike Wall, UnitedHealth Group (since retired)
Amy Clarke and Heather Malakowsky, Schwans
Jeanne Eglinton, MDI

Interviews with Subject Matter Advisors

Brightspot
Winning Abilities
Empower Inclusion
Arc Minnesota
Arc Indiana
World Wide Technology



Glossary

+ IDD (Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities):

A group of conditions that affect intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, typically present before age 22.

+ Reasonable Accommodation:

A modification or adjustment to a job or work environment that enables a person with a disability to perform essential job functions.

+ Job Carving:

The process of customizing a job by reassigning or modifying tasks to better fit an individual's strengths and abilities.

+ Natural Supports:

Support and encouragement that comes from coworkers and supervisors in the workplace, rather than outside job coaches.

+ Work Trials:

Short-term job experiences used to assess a candidate's fit for a role through hands-on tasks rather than traditional interviews.

+ Visual Schedule:

A tool that uses images or icons to outline daily routines or tasks, helping individuals with cognitive disabilities manage time and expectations.

+ Job Coach:

A professional who assists individuals with disabilities in learning and performing job tasks and adapting to the work environment.

+ Supported Employment:

A model that provides ongoing support to help individuals with disabilities obtain and maintain competitive, integrated employment.

+ Inclusive Hiring:

A recruitment and employment approach that actively removes barriers to hiring individuals from underrepresented or disadvantaged groups, including people with IDD.

+ Vocational Rehabilitation (VR):

A state-funded program that helps individuals with disabilities prepare for, find, and maintain employment.

+ Essential Job Functions:

The core duties of a job that an employee must be able to perform, with or without reasonable accommodation.

+ Person-Centered Planning:

A process that focuses on the individual's strengths, preferences, and goals when creating employment or support plans.

+ Mock Interview:

A practice interview session designed to help job seekers prepare for real interviews by simulating the experience and providing feedback.

+ Reverse Job Fair:

An event where job seekers, especially those with disabilities, showcase their skills and portfolios to employers, flipping the traditional job fair format.

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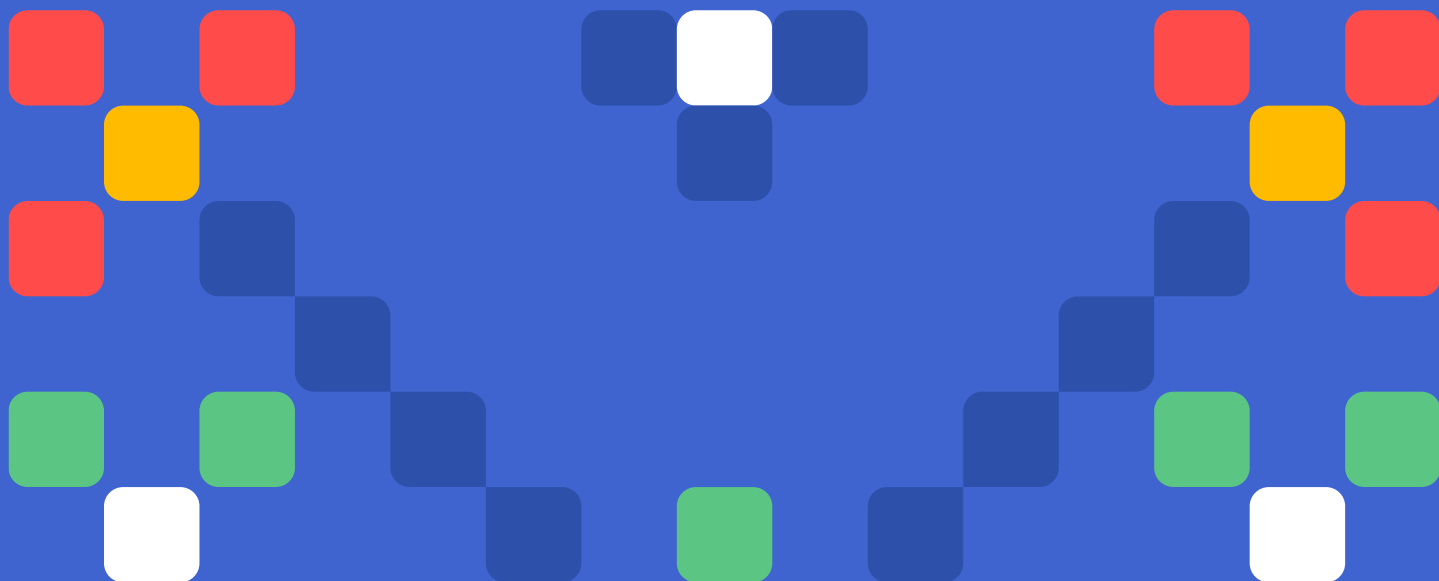
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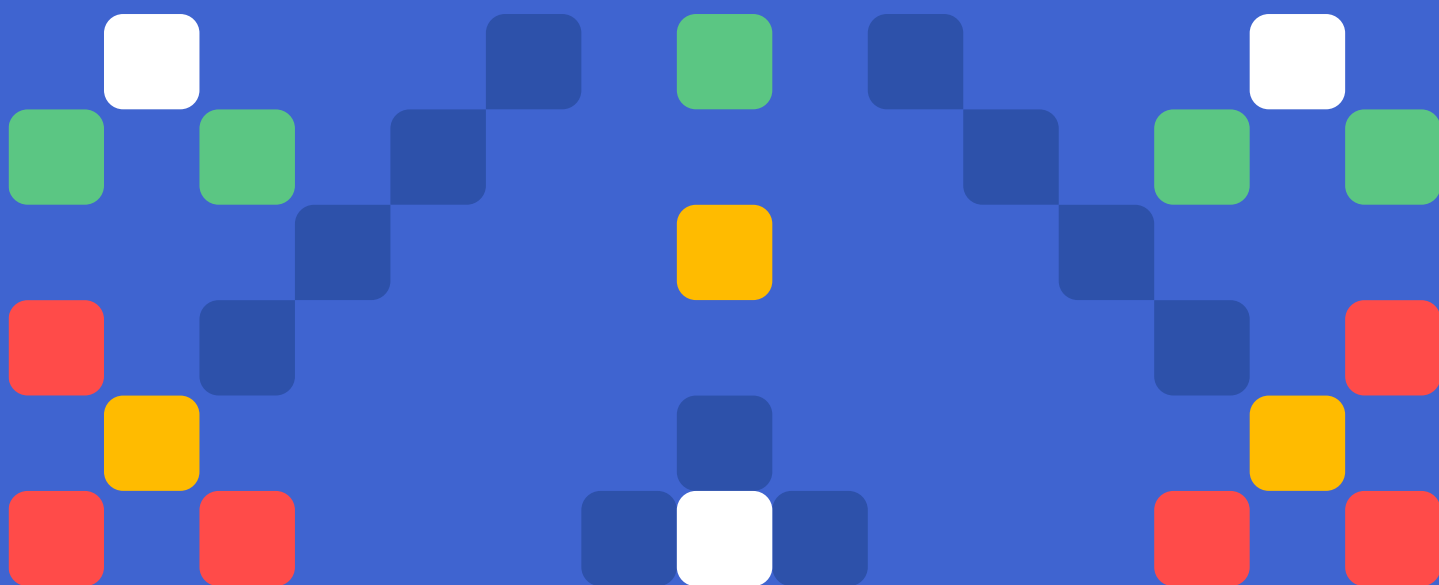
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Thank You!



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