

CREATING A DISABILITY INCLUSIVE WORK
ENVIRONMENT

AUGUST 20, 2020

11:00 A.M. CST

STOUT VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION INSTITUTE

Services Provided By:
Caption First, Inc.
P.O. Box 3066
Monument, CO 80132
800-825-5234
www.captionfirst.com

This text, document, or file is based on live transcription. Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART), captioning, and/or live transcription are provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings. This text, document, or file is not to be distributed or used in any way that may violate copyright law.

>> If you have any questions throughout, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. I'm going to start sharing video here and thank you all for joining us. One more thing, I almost forgot. We do have closed captioning available today. You will need to enable that on your screen. It can be found at the bottom of your Zoom window, and it says CC in a box. You need to select that if you would like to turn on closed captioning. Please keep in mind that our closed captioning may just take a couple minutes to get going. The person who is doing the captioning today is joining us right after finishing up a different webcast. Please bear with us and be patient as we get that set up.

>> I'm Zack Sneed, and I'm joined by Andrew Russo, we are employment specialists with VCURRTC. And today we will be covering key terms for employers.

Just a overview of what we will be looking at today, talking about person first language, disabilities, the job coaches role and terms they may use, working with people with disabilities, and types of employment. Let's move on to our first slide where Andrew will talk about person first language.

>> ANDREW RUSSO: Person first language describes individuality [inaudible] rather than defining people primarily by their disability, person first language emphasizes the fact that people with disabilities are first and foremost just that, people.

(audio is very cavernous).

This makes avoiding the person's disability the only thing that comes to mind and humanizes them. Say Stacy has autism, rather than Stacy is autistic, to emphasize that autism is only one part of who Stacy is.

>> ZACK SNEED: Thank you, Andrew. Now we are going to talk about disabilities. A disability is a mental condition, mental or physical condition that limits a person's movement, senses or activities. A physical disability can affect an individual's mobility, stamina or dexterity, some examples of these can be brain or spinal injuries, cerebral palsy, respiratory, visual or hearing disabilities. Intellectual disability can affect an individual's ability to think and understand, life skills that can be impacted include certain conceptual, social and practical skills. Examples of these are autism spectrum disorder, or ASD as it's referred to, Down Syndrome or developmental delay, and some of the side effects of these disabilities can be sensory sensitivity. Sensory sensitivity is when a person is extra sensitive to their sensory channels. This can take the form of a hearing sensitivity to loud or high pitch noises, brightness to light or even smells.

We are going to move to the next slide to hear about the job coach's role.

>> ANDREW RUSSO: A job coach is a person who helps a person obtain and maintain employment, job coaches help individuals find the right job, develop accommodations, and work to ensure the employer and the employee are satisfied. Job coaches sometimes have individuals complete situational assessments, which is where they perform certain tasks so everyone can better understand their strengths, their [inaudible] and interests. Job coaches help individuals find a job, develop necessary accommodations and help train them until they are able to do the job independently, as this develops job coaches will fade which means they will work with the individual less and less, until they are fully independent. Once independence is reached, the individual will enter what is called follow on, which is where job coaches provide check-ins to ensure everyone is satisfied rather than to provide training.

A reasonable workplace accommodation is a support that helps an individual with a disability perform their job effectively. I personally had an individual who performed janitorial work at a gym and used a motorized chair which made it difficult for her to clean certain places. One accommodation for her was an extendible dust buster that made it easier for her to clean certain areas. This is one example of how accommodations must be based on the specific person's needs and their job in order to ensure they are truly beneficial.

>> We are going to talk about things you the employer should know. When you are working with individuals with disabilities, there are important things to know. As we talked about in the previous slide about reasonable accommodations in the workplace, it should be noted that there are undue hardships, a undue hardships are accommodations that would place a substantial hardship on a business. A example of this can be buying expensive equipment or having to build a new entrance or area for the individual to gain access. Now that we are also talking about access, it's important to think about how accessible is your place of employment. Does it have a handicap accessible entrance to allow individuals with disabilities access? Ramps or automatic doorways. Some clients may have service animals to assist them with their daily functions, seeing-eye dogs are a great example of a service animal. It is important to recognize that the service animal is performing an essential duty and should not be treated as you would a average pet.

Next is going to be essential functions, and these are necessary tasks for a role that an accommodation can be developed, as we heard earlier from Andrew about accommodations for his client to perform her essential functions in the gym.

>> Next we are going to talk about different types of employment. Integrated employment is when people with disabilities work alongside people without disabilities. This difference from environments that are made specifically for people with disabilities. Next is competitive employment, which describes where a work with someone with a disability is paid the same amount as someone without a disability. This is essential in ensuring people with disabilities are given the same opportunities as anyone else.

Next is supported employment, which is a type of employment where a individual with a disability works with a job coach to find and maintain employment including developing accommodations to help them with their role. Lastly, customized employment involves modifying a role to meet the specific needs of a individual and the employer. Zak will give us an example of a situation where he customized a job.

>> I used to work with a client who was looking for flexible hours, that were in the afternoon, and late morning or early afternoon, and was also along the bus route that they could utilize. Using my connections, former connections in working in hospitality, I worked with a local hostel, and after meeting with the manager, I learned that the business was small enough that only the front desk was in charge of all functions within the hostel. The front desk was in charge of checking in guests and making reservations and also cleaning the hostel from top to bottom including changing beds, cleaning the rooms and doing

laundry. By working with the manager we were able to create a customized position that allowed my client the flexibility in schedule for them to come in and clean the common rooms and guest bedrooms as well as do the laundry. This would free up the front desk who had more time to work with checking in guests and making reservations, and helping them in general.

>> In closing, we hope this has been helpful and it's important to remember the following, that hiring people with disabilities can provide many benefits to your business, job coaches work to ensure the satisfaction of both the employee and the employer, and the way we talk about people with disabilities has a strong effect on them and the people around them. Thank you for listening and for more videos and training and other resources check out the VCURRTC website. Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> I'm Kristen, employment specialist at Rehabilitation Research and Training Center.

>> Hi, I'm Austin Miller, also a employment specialist with VCU's RRTC.

>> Today this webcast is for employers who wish to support more integrated work environment within their business. You will learn tips on how to coordinate with employment specialists and to aid in the more successful vocational experience for people with disabilities. Building partnerships and conducting inclusivity trainings, managers and staff will be given tools to incorporate supported employment practices within their work culture.

>> Understanding the needs of the client and their support network, during the intake process, we get the opportunity to know, to learn about our client as an individual, their past work experiences, their goals and most importantly their work preferences moving forward. The needs of the work preferences can include the importance of working full time versus part time, the amount of hours per week, which can vary due to a number of reasons, such as a medical condition, maybe current benefits they are receiving, their stamina and the travel time or distance to desired work location.

So it's important to have the input of their support network while discussing the importance of these work preferences, not only because many of our clients rely heavily on their support network, but also because we need them being the support network to have a buy-in to continue to foster the goal of independence and employment for our clients. Not every family has the same needs of job requirements or prioritizes them in the same way, which is why it's important to discuss all of this in the initial intake and to continue to discuss it as needs change.

>> Skill building through project search, so both clients

completed a transition program, called project search, it's a school to work transition program for young adults with disabilities. They completed the program at two separate times. However, when I worked with both clients, I was able to build rapport with them, understanding their strengths, and their challenges, and I got to know them and their personalities, and based off of that information I was able to place them in a internship site that I felt that they would thrive in.

Both interns completed a internship with materials management. They really enjoyed the routine systematic work that came with it. These skills that they learned throughout the internships and especially in the materials management department are transferable skills, and so ultimately, what we teach them in project search are these different skill sets that can be transferred to another community work site, as well as other skill sets such as appropriate work behavior, social skills and advocacy, learning how to advocate your needs and your wants, especially in a work environment.

Finding the right fit for employment, so after project search, I worked with both clients to look for the perfect employment fit for each of them, based on the skill sets that they now had acquired through project search, and based on their work preferences as we discussed before. It's important to find the right job fit, because we want to enhance the client's well-being, we want them to become as independent as possible, and then it's important to find the right fit because it aids in job retention. So with the first client, we had discussed her working in a warehouse setting. She first received employment in a mail sorting facility, and we discovered that after a couple months, that it really wasn't sufficing those needs that she had originally advocated for. The business wasn't able to accommodate those needs, and so we went back to the drawing board, and we went back and did job development, through going to open interviews and filling out job applications, the first client was then able to get a call back from the Vitamin Shoppe, and that is where Austin came in and assisted her with the interviewing process.

>> The Vitamin Shoppe conducts group interviews when looking to hire. This is effective method for the Vitamin Shoppe as a company, because they have multiple positions and the warehouse itself is very large, housing hundreds of employees. So it's an efficient way for the business to conduct large interviews, but for our clients it's not always the preferred way due to their various needs of our clients.

So one accommodation that the Vitamin Shoppe was willing to work with us was allowing us to do a site tour of the warehouse to learn about the different positions before we proceeded with

the actual onboarding process. This tour of the facility was really helpful, not only for our clients and ourselves but also for the Vitamin Shoppe, so everyone could get a better understanding of what the job would entail and to see if it would make sense for us to continue.

Another thing, another accommodation that Vitamin Shoppe and other businesses is helpful is conducting a working interview of where the client might go in beforehand to do some hands on learning and complete a variety of tasks to just give a real feel of what the position would entail. Many businesses, however, may not have experience working with job coaches or an understanding of what supported employment is. This is why it's important for us, the employment specialist, to provide them with that understanding of our model. We like to work closely with human resources and managers to educate them about reasonable accommodations that could potentially be implemented throughout the interviewing and onboarding process.

This is beneficial for those individuals with disabilities who go through it in the future.

Training to become a health enthusiast, management works with employment specialists to foster the success of our clients in a number of ways. It could be identifying a strong health enthusiast mentor, being flexible with the client in the training process, and being open to incorporating additional training techniques. For client one it was pretty clear that we were going to need to find somebody that our client could reach out to if she had questions. Typically, in the Vitamin Shoppe, a health enthusiast will get maybe one to two days to shadow another employee, and then they are sent to their work station to continue working.

We identified pretty early on that by having one person that client one could go and speak to, if she had questions or concerns, it would ultimately allow her to succeed in the position that she was hired for. I had suggested that client one have one to two weeks to work closely with this mentor, and then to slowly begin to build space and independence from one another, which ultimately allowed client one to get further away from her mentor and still instill the confidence she was gaining as she continued to work.

That was one reasonable accommodation that Vitamin Shoppe was willing to allow for us. Oftentimes, the accommodations are cost effective for them as a business, and the employment specialist will work with the employers to identify what those accommodations can be. Again having this mentor for client one, she was able to essentially learn her role and gain that confidence that would allow her to be independent.

>> Another accommodation that we like to advocate for is not

only having designating a mentor to be a go to person for our clients but also allowing additional training time to master these tasks and these job duties, so throughout that additional training time, we can come up with performance goals to ultimately meet productivity needs and requirements. However, what we were seeing with our second client is that the first job that he was placed in, which is what client one was doing, which is a very self-paced position and requires a lot of self-discipline and working more so by yourself as opposed to on a line with other individuals. We saw that he wasn't mastering this job, and then he wasn't as intrinsically motivated to master this particular position.

So another, beyond advocating for additional training time, we asked the business to be flexible with allowing us to cross train into another position, and allowing time to train in that new position to see if it's going to be a better fit for our clients, and in this case, it was the better fit for our second client. He was working now on a production line where the work comes to him. He stays pretty stationary alongside other health enthusiasts. We saw that working around other people motivated him, and because he is so high energy, that he was, this was a really good fit for him.

So again, just allowing us as employment specialists to exhaust all other options, and to train to see if a different type of work setting is going to be the best fit for our clients, because again, we want to foster independence and that is the goal, so just finding that right fit is important.

>> Integrating supported employment practices into the work culture, it was pretty evident after a couple of months, we had two clients working within the company, and they were showing signs of success, and their team as well as our team, we were pretty happy with the results of what we were seeing.

Human resources and management reached out to Kristen and myself to discuss the supported employment model, and ways to continue to incorporate those at the Vitamin Shoppe. Kristen and I were invited to do a inclusivity training with the staff, primarily the managers out in the warehouse, as well as some of the admin. managers in the HR setting. In these trainings, we were able to provide tools to best support individuals with disabilities in the workplace.

Some of the tips and tools included how to build rapport with clients, behavior management techniques, ways to work with a job coach, general disability etiquette and so on. The training, the initial training was so successful that Kristen and I were invited to come back and do a second one, and we have agreed to have a, if they would like us to continue to do additional trainings to reach out to us, and we would be more than happy to

provide that.

So helping to facilitate individualized trainings for those work side by side with our clients, which could include ways to specifically support that person, the team at the Vitamin Shoppe were appreciative and are continuing to discuss incorporating a segment on inclusivity in their general orientation as well for all new hires.

>> It's important to maintain open communication with both the business management team as well as human resources, and the client. We often say that the individual with the disability is our client, but it's important for the business to know that once they become part of our team and employing the individual with the disability, they become our client as well. It's really important to have an understanding of their needs, and making sure that we keep that open communication to ensure that we are maintaining and meeting those needs.

We also act as a liaison between the clients and the business, so it's important that if the business has any concerns or feedback for the client, and they feel more comfortable going through us to provide that feedback, then that is an option that we like to have available to them as well. So once the clients do become independent in their role as a health enthusiast, we start to fade our presence, and we rely on the management team, on those mentors to keep us updated on any concerns or even positive feedback that they have, because again it's important that we understand the needs of the business and that we are meeting those needs.

As we continue our partnership with Vitamin Shoppe, they rely on us to know the clients that we are bringing to them and have a good understanding of their abilities, and that they can meet those needs of the business. That is why we work closely with human resources and the management team to potentially bring this partnership together and bring more clients to them that have a desire to work in that type of setting. It's also important that we know the clients and that can fit well into their work culture.

We look forward to receiving any questions that you may have. Please post any questions to the web board. Thank you.

>> Welcome to today's webcast on how recruiters can include individuals with disabilities. I'm a career support specialist with the center on transition innovations at Virginia Commonwealth University, Rehabilitation Research and Training Center.

>> I'm the business liaison for the center on transition innovations, and we are excited to talk about how businesses can increase their diverse workforce by including individuals with disabilities in their recruitment process.

Diversity is a popular buzzword in today's labor market. We are seeing increased number of businesses implementing diversity initiatives and for good reason. Research and business testimonies promote the idea that hiring diverse candidates is good business, and along with that, there is legislation that promotes and pushes the hiring of a more diverse workforce. While many businesses are implementing diversity initiatives, some are still struggling to figure out how to include more diverse candidates in their recruitment.

The goal of today's webcast is to provide some concrete strategies and examples on how to recruit diverse candidates. Diversity is this term that includes many categories, but today we are going to specifically focus on the recruitment of individuals with disabilities.

Before we get into the how to increase recruitment, it is important to outline why businesses should care about hiring individuals with disabilities.

Individuals with disabilities are a untapped labor pool with around 13.5 million people actively seeking out employment. These are individuals that are traditionally overlooked in a labor market, but are eager to fill your unmet labor needs.

Many reasons exist to tap into this particular labor pool. First there is legislation that mandates the hiring of individuals with disabilities, the Americans with Disabilities Act or the ADA prohibits discrimination in the workforce based on disability. That includes discriminating in the recruitment and hiring process. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act was updated in 2013 to strengthen affirmative action for federal contractors to hire candidates with disabilities. So at least 7 percent of a federal contractor's workforce must include individuals with disabilities.

But complying with the laws surrounding hiring individuals with disabilities is not the only reason to recruit and retain this population.

There are many proven benefits that come with recruiting a diverse workforce. Businesses have reported that employees with disabilities have a higher retention rate, missed less days of work, and often provide a creative, out of the box thinking that leads to unique and productive solutions to today's business problems.

Studies have shown that people with disabilities perform and produce at a greater or equal rate compared to their peers. Businesses save money when they can produce at a higher rate. Qualifying businesses can also save money by participating in tax incentive programs.

Recruiting individuals with disabilities increases your bottom line. If you keep in mind that disability is the largest

diversity group, one in five individuals have a disability. By recognizing people with disabilities as a valuable workforce, you are learning how to make better products and reach more people. People with disabilities are consumers, and according to a recent business case, people with disabilities have a discretionary budget of \$200 billion, and they want to spend money in businesses that support and create products that meet their diverse needs.

We often know that people with and without disabilities are more likely to be loyal to companies that hire individuals with disabilities.

So increasing your diverse workforce can increase staff retention, productivity and increase your bottom line, so those are some of the reasons on why businesses should care about recruiting individuals with disabilities. Now let's talk a little bit about how you can do that, how do you increase your recruitment of individuals with disabilities?

Marketing your business and open positions can be an essential part of the recruitment process. Strategically marketing in a way that is inclusive of disabilities can increase the number of applicants that you have that have disabilities.

One strategy to bring more individuals with disabilities is to feature people with disabilities on your marketing materials. Promote your commitment to diversity on your website, on your social media, and other marketing materials. People want to hear from people that sound like them and they want to see people that look like them.

The message that we send on our marketing materials can be twofold. They can encourage people or they can discourage people to apply. To encourage people to apply, make sure that you are using language and information that is accessible and inclusive, for example, when using diversity language, explicitly say diversity or excuse me, disability in your marketing, talk about how your office accommodates different abilities, and how you encourage diverse thinking and experiences.

I work closely with businesses to connect them with qualified interns and employees. I really take notice of businesses and companies that have language like disability that feature people with disabilities, and have clear statements about diversity, disability and inclusion. Another way to reach more candidates with disabilities is to make sure that your materials, your on-line materials are accessible to all people. So you limit the number of people that come to your building if they physically cannot access your building. That is the same principle that applies to limiting your digital audience when

not everybody can access your on-line information.

Another strategy to recruit more individuals with disabilities is to connect to your community partners. One community partner that I strongly encourage you to make a connection with is your local vocational rehabilitation or VR office. VR is an agency that helps prepare, find and maintain employment for people with disabilities. Other community partners might be local high schools, local colleges and universities, connect with their courier centers, that their diversity support centers. Also I recommend getting involved with virtual and in-person career fairs that target individuals with disabilities.

Expanding your marketing to reflect the value of diversity, disability and inclusion in multiple formats is critical to increase access to a diverse pool of candidates.

>> Now that we have heard from Jaclyn and how to reach candidates with disabilities, let's talk about the application process. Every applicant is different, so the application process should be different as well. To have a accessible application process, offer more than one way to apply. What this does is honor diverse abilities and differences that exist regardless of disability status. Providing choice and options that are accessible to a multitude of applicants increases the pool of applicants. A applicant may hesitate from applications that demand a specific format such as handwritten applications. Expanding the pool means expanding the opportunity for creativity and diversity. For various reasons, an applicant may need a handprinted copy of the application, they may need to download it directly to their computer at home, or they might need to print it out and fill it out at home.

A person may be working with a job coach to fill out the application, and that might require quiet space such as the home, whereas someone else may need specific software that allows them to edit the form directly on the computer, and that might only be available at their home as well.

Oftentimes, a required document to turn in with the application is a resume'. This is another part of the application process where you can encourage accessibility. Resume's are expanding from the typical one pager that's dominated the business world in the past, allowing different formats of resume's honors the individuality and creativity that an applicant has.

Examples of alternative resume's include video resume's, a portfolio, personalized website or a infographic. A student of mine wanted to work in the marketing field, he wanted to showcase his talents so a way that we honored this was by videotaping him responding to some questions and talking about

his experiences in the field. Included in this video was a link to a personalized website that he created that included photos that he had taken as well as some of his own graphics that he had created. We talked about his college experiences and all other types of jobs that he had ever had.

This website had samples of his designs and also was an exact product of the skills and showcased some of his talents. Another student of mine was interested in working in a mechanical field, to supplement the paper resume' of the job description and duration of the job, we decided to videotape specific tasks. A one sentence change bike tires pales in comparison with the multi step sequenced process of changing a bike tire. We looked at the video footage as proof of the abilities to follow directions, problem solve and work efficiently. Think about how beneficial it would be if you had authentic examples of performing tasks instead of uniformed manicured pieces of paper.

The application process can be the door that lets people in, or it can be what discourages them from applying. We don't want to discourage someone from applying simply because they can't access the application.

Encouraging different mediums of applying communicates your dedication to a diverse pool of applicants. Before posting a position, ask yourself, if someone wants to apply, can they?

Now on to the interviewing part of the application process. When we think of interviewing, we want to think of practices that are good for all candidates, the interview is for showcasing skills, so let's give people the opportunity to do that. An example of a adjustment you can use for interviews is to break down questions, or to rephrase them. Rephrasing can create room to give more accurate answers, that better show the knowledge and the skills of the applicant.

In an interview, you want to determine what key skills the applicant possesses, how you evaluate these skills needs to be adjusted to best suit the applicant's needs and to best suit their communication style. A applicant may prefer to have a job coach with them during the interview. They may ask for a video call instead of a phone call. Or they may ask for a working interview, or ask for a combination of these accommodations.

A term you might not be familiar with is a working interview. A working interview is when an individual the given the opportunity to perform the tasks on the site, instead of doing a face-to-face typical interview. This showcases abilities and strengths and the employer is able to determine what tasks they want to observe. This is a dynamic and communicative process that happens between the job coach, the employer, and the applicant.

This may include customer service skills, ability to follow instructions, or any other tasks that are usually assessed in an interview. The question the employer should ask themselves is, what skills are necessary to observe to decide if a candidate is a good fit for this job?

To get more information on working interviews, you can access an additional webcast included at the bottom of this page and the additional resources listed. An example of using an accommodation in an interview is when a student of mine was interviewing for a position at a day care. We contacted the employer to request the interview questions ahead of time, because the applicant needs more time to process the questions. Then when in the interview, the applicant was able to have the questions directly in front of her, and use them as a way to guide her throughout the interview.

Sometimes during the interview, the employer would ask questions that were sometimes double questions, so as the job coach, I would break down these questions into two parts, so the applicant could answer one question at a time. Rephrasing and breaking down questions as well as getting the questions ahead of times are two accommodations that gave the opportunity to construct ideas and examples in a normal fashion.

Providing people with rephrasing and breaking down questions is best practice for all interviews, and it makes the answers reflective and the questions, giving the interviewers a better idea of skills and knowledge.

>> Now that we have reviewed the why and how of diverse recruitment through marketing the application, the interview process, let's hear from Scott, a general manager and employer well-versed in recruitment of a diverse workforce on how he has benefited from recruiting individuals with disabilities in some ways that he has done this effectively.

>> What benefits has your business experienced in recruiting individuals with disabilities?

>> First of all, we all need phenomenal employees. We all would wish for a person that wants to show up to work every day with a huge smile on their face and feel good about the fact that they have a job, they want to do a great job at work. Not only with customers, but with their fellow employees.

To start off with, looking for good employees and that mind-set often is found or can be found with a person who has a disability, because they are given opportunity, and something you don't always find in the general employment market, if you will, people that apply. What happens is you start with a need. On some occasions we feel like it's the right thing to do. But in this occasion it's simply racks up to the fact that we get good employees. We start to filter employees and the fact is,

we create jobs or job fit if you will, customized employment for really everyone in our building. In this case it happens to be on some occasions people that have a disability. We feature that from the perspective of fine-tuning if you will and a unexpected thing happens. You have this internal effect that it raises the every day comradery, it raises the every day feel good within the hotel, and with something else you recognize is the customers see this as well.

>> How do you market the hotel as a business that is inclusive to diverse staff?

>> So often, that comes very naturally in conversation with board meetings, advisory meetings, it can be talking to a customer, on your property, or talking to the [inaudible] about how we are successful.

>> How do you connect and partner with the community to recruit individuals with disabilities?

>> First of all, one thing leads to another. We have a person that is doing a great job and you say I want some more of that, because again it goes back to I need good employees. I'll dig in a little deeper, find out what are the services, how many other individuals have needs as far as needing jobs, so whether it's through VCU, whether it's through transitions group, whether it's through the state Virginia Board of Education, whether it's through the advisory board for the individuals with visual disabilities, I've got many different, Virginia Tourism Board, there are several people that sit on the board with me that represent people with disabilities. There's other individuals with business opportunities for the blind, and it's always from a grass-roots scenario. And quite frankly, from a grass-roots perspective, often my employees will bring in individuals, maybe family members, maybe it's other local business that is try to help people with disabilities. Internally you advertise throughout.

>> Thank you, everyone, for joining us today at our webcast on how recruiters can include individuals with disabilities. I want to say a special thank you to Scott Jones for providing valuable insight into your business and how it can help other businesses. We showed a shortened version of the interview for time, but the interview is available in its entirety at the link on the bottom of this webcast page. If you are interested in more information on recruiting, hiring or training individuals with disabilities, please visit our website, at WWW.centerontransition.org or the WWW.VCURRTC.org. If you have any additional questions, you can post your question on the web board. Thank you.

>> Hello. Welcome to our webcast, the importance of disability specific etiquette awareness. I'm Kristen Hamilton,

employment specialist for VCU's Rehabilitation Research and Training Center.

>> Hi, my name is Bethany and I'm employment specialist for VCU's rehab research and training center.

>> In our previous webcast, we discussed the fundamentals of disability etiquette, and the importance they serve as a guide for demonstrating disability etiquette when serving others or working around individuals with disabilities. It's important to be aware that not every individual with a disability requires the same level or same type of support.

It's also important to consider that some populations of individuals with disabilities have specific considerations that are unique to their disability. In this webcast, we will be covering various populations of disabilities and touching on those specific considerations.

>> First we will be discussing individuals with visual impairments or vision loss. Some individuals may have limited sight, distorted sight or may not be able to see at all. There are varying degrees of visual impairments. Some individuals cannot afford glasses or contact lenses and have a visual impairment as a result. Visual impairments are those which cannot be corrected with the use of glasses or contact lenses.

There are two types of impairments, loss of central vision, loss of peripheral vision, as well as several more. Blurred vision, generalized [inaudible] extreme light sensitivity, light blindness, partial blindness, complete blindness, distance vision impairment and mild to moderate blindness. Some of these individuals will need written information, in large print, Braille or some form of audio.

Near visual impairment presenting [inaudible] with existing correction and you can read more about that if you are interested in knowing.

Visual impairments and visual loss or vision loss, some other important things to remember, introduce yourself upon entering the room. Speak directly to the person and not to their companion. Going back to introducing yourself, avoid saying, do you know who this is? Do not shout when you speak. People with vision loss can often still hear. Include details when describing things to someone with vision loss. You can describe colors, texture, shapes and landmarks are helpful. An example might be the analog talk analogy, it is okay to use phrases like nice to see you, because it is still nice to see someone even if they have vision loss.

We want to remember if a person has a guide dog present, do not distract it in any way.

Now we are going to talk about individuals with auditory disabilities or deafness. Individuals with a auditory

disability may not be able to hear at all, while others may be able to hear a small amount. Hearing loss can affect one or both ears. Hearing loss can range from mild to severe. According to the World Health Organization, hearing loss may result from genetic causes, complications at birth, certain infectious diseases, chronic ear infections, the use of particular drugs, exposure to excessive noises and aging.

Some individuals use the term hard-of-hearing, to describe a person who communicates through spoken language and may use hearing aids or have cochlear implants. Deaf people can hear very little to not at all, deaf people often use sign language to communicate.

If you see two people signing with one another, do not stare. They may be having a private conversation. According to the World Health Organization -- sorry about that. Make eye contact and look at the person you are communicating with rather than to the translator. Greetings, wave casually, not frantically and wave in the person's peripheral vision field. If you do know sign language, it is appropriate to use, during introductions, sign your name using the alphabet. In the deaf community, people will create sign names, but if you are not a person with auditory disability or deafness, do not make up your own sign name.

Next we will be discussing mobility disability and impairments. A mobility disability also referred to as a physical disability, describes a individual's inability to use one or more extremities. Mobility impairments can be conditions present at birth or the result of a injury or illness. There are two types of severe mobility impairments which include quadriplegia which refers to paralysis of all four limbs and often central or trunk part of the body. Paraplegia refers to the loss of function to the lower limbs and extremities. A lack of strength needed to walk, grasp objects or lift items is often characteristic of a mobility disability. A individual with a mobility impairment may use a wheelchair, crutches or a walker to assist with mobility.

When working with someone with a mobility disability, avoid touching or leaning on a individual's wheelchair. Keep ramps and wheelchair accessible doors unlocked and unblocked. If the counter of your business is too high, walk around the counter and provide direct assistance that way. Avoid peering over the counter. Be aware of people's reach limits. Place items within reach and ensure there is a clear path to travel. People with respiratory or heart conditions may have mobility needs. Therefore, avoid assuming that all mobility impairments are visible.

>> Verbal expression disability, some individuals with a

verbal expression disability may have difficulty speaking, communicating their thoughts accordingly and/or their speech may be difficult to understand. These challenges could be related to a cognitive impairment and/or the physical production of those sounds. Sometimes it's difficult for these individuals to find the appropriate words that fit within the context of what they are trying to say.

It's important to consider that not every individual that has difficulty with expressing language also experiences difficulty with receptive language or language comprehension. In other words, just because they might have difficulty with being understood, or physically speaking, does not mean that they can't understand what people are saying. It's always important to speak to an individual with a verbal expression disability the same way you would other people, unless otherwise specified.

Some important considerations to note would be, to concentrate on what the individual is saying. Make sure that you have their full attention, and you are providing your full attention to them as well and your body language is showcasing that, and that you are focusing on what they are trying to say. Indicate when you do not understand what the individual is trying to communicate. It's good to have that feedback for them, so that they can work on having the opportunity to express what they are trying to say.

It's important to provide wait time for the individual to finish or repeat what they are saying, so allowing time for comprehension of what you had said to them, and allowing wait time for them to generate a response and to say their response. It's important not to finish their sentences for them, just again being patient and allowing that wait time.

It's also important, if you are having difficulty with understanding, after offering to, allowing them to repeat themselves, offer another method of communication. So having them either write it down or text it, in a text box, or have them physically show you what they are trying to, the message they are trying to convey.

Now we are going to look at developmental disabilities, and sometimes it's intellectual or cognitive disabilities. These individuals, the disability is usually present at birth or diagnosed later in life. Individuals with developmental disability may be impacted in a variety of ways, at different levels of severity. Not every individual that shares a diagnosis shares the same experiences. Not everyone experiences the same symptoms or the same level of symptoms. Also individuals with a developmental disability may experience an impact on their physical, mental or emotional development, the learning and processing of new information may be challenging

and repetition may be helpful. Creating routines and creating structures is beneficial for this population of individuals.

Now looking at some important considerations when working with individuals with developmental disability would be to provide information that is clear, simple wording and to use concrete concepts opposed to abstract concepts. Avoid using idioms or figures of speech. It is helpful to break down complex or lengthy instructions into smaller steps, or possibly chunking information together, and allowing time to process that information.

Going into allowing wait time for processing of information and for that individual to generate a response as well, and also ensure that the individual has a understanding of the information discussed by asking them to summarize. After you provided instruction or a question, just making sure that they understand what the expectation is of them, so asking them, can you repeat back what I said or can you summarize what we just talked about. Then also, it is helpful to, if there is a lack of understanding, it's helpful to offer to rephrase a question or instruction of some sort.

Executive functioning abilities could be impaired for this specific population of individuals. So the use of lists and schedules are often very helpful. It's important to discuss the strategies that best work for them, and it is helpful to discuss any changes to the work routine if at all possible in advance. It's shown that it helps, allow them to process the change, and adjust accordingly.

Now we are going to look at mental health disabilities. A individual with a mental health disability can include a broad range of diagnoses. The symptoms that are exhibited from one person to another can vary. Individuals with a mental health disability may have difficulty coping with the tasks and/or interactions of everyday life. The disability may interfere with a individual's ability to feel, think, or relate to others.

Mental health disability is often commonly referred to as a invisible disability. It's common that it goes unnoticed, and that there is not real, it is not as evident as maybe a physical disability might be, and it's also important to note that we want to allow the person to disclose if they feel comfortable. So we never really want to ask about that. We want to respect everybody's privacy and confidentiality and allow them to disclose should they choose to.

Some important notes to consider, it is so important to build good rapport and trust within a working relationship with an individual with mental health disability, having an identified support network in the workplace is very beneficial. Also having a open line of communication between you and the

individual, so providing frequent wellness check-ins, maybe weekly or daily, that is something that can be communicated between you and the individual. Also it's important to be aware that if the individual appears to be confused or upset, they could be overwhelmed or anxious. Be mindful of the way that a individual, what they are saying, their tone of voice, their body language, speak in a calm tone and offer to repeat information if necessary or break down any instructions or tasks step by step.

Lastly, employers and human resource personnel should be familiar with available resources. This could include the business's EAP program, employee assistance program, or as well as the local crisis intervention numbers and other helping personnel that work with individuals with mental health disabilities.

The importance of disability specific etiquette awareness and how it impacts businesses and communities is overall, it will help to improve customer service and employee relations as well as help to establish a successful relationship between stakeholders. Successful businesses and organizations often strive to continuously improve customer service and employee relations. When the customer or employee that has a disability, having this fundamental knowledge of disability specific etiquette can really help the business and the employer to establish a successful relationship. Also the ability to identify a reasonable workplace accommodations is so important, when working with a employee that has a disability, that can be done in collaboration with the employee as well as any support persons they might have, like a employment specialist or vocational rehabilitation counselor.

Lastly, the availability of those reasonable workplace accommodations means that people with all types of disabilities will feel more welcome and valued within the workplace.

>> I hope you enjoyed this webcast, and if you have any additional questions or comments, please leave them on the discussion board. If you would like more information, please visit our website at VCURRTC.org. Thank you.

>> That concludes the video portion of our webcast. I will now move into the live Q&A. I'll toss it to Heidi and Kristen.

>> Hi, everybody. I'm Heidi, I work at SVRI with Beth. I'll be asking the questions that you have given us in the question and answer panel, and I'd like to go ahead and invite you to ask any more questions that you have in the box. We will start with the questions we have, one I think Kristen Hamilton from Virginia Commonwealth University, she was one of the presenters in two of the webinars, and she will be here to answer questions today. Kristen, thank you so much for joining us today. I'm

really excited to have you here.

>> Hi, thank you so much for having me. I'm really excited to be a part of this and excited to hopefully answer some of these questions that you all may have based on the videos that you have just watched.

>> Super. The first question that we have, this one is in regards to the second video of the four. James asks are not most integrated employers also competitive employers? James says he hasn't seen integrated and competitive teased out. Do you have any comments about that?

>> Yeah, absolutely. First, I want to remind everyone that these videos or webcasts were recorded to target employers and businesses, so oftentimes what I've faced when working in the community with businesses, they don't have a lot of knowledge about working with individuals with disabilities. They may not understand exactly what competitive and integrated employment is. They might understand that they should hire individuals with disabilities, but they might not be aware of the fact that they should be paid the same wage, minimum wage or if not more that matches the same type of work that they are doing, that also other individuals without disabilities are getting paid in that same position. So when we were looking at the second video, I believe that is the integrated competitive employment video that I had done, we also wanted to discuss that integrated work culture, so to me it's different than just hiring a individual with a disability and that being bad, we really want businesses and employers to learn more about what it is and how to support individuals with disabilities in their workplace. That is also teaching their other employees how to best work with individuals with employees, and how to be coworkers and how to support them, so that is really what we wanted to target, is that overall, work culture of integrating individuals with disabilities among those employees without disabilities.

So I hope that helped to answer that question.

>> That makes sense, Kristen. I'm afraid that not everybody understands that when you are hiring someone with a disability, like you said, they ought not to get paid any differently than their abled coworkers. So competitive and integrated, they go together and James, I'm glad it's an assumption that employers wouldn't know, but we have to make sure that when we are working with employers, we make them feel as comfortable as possible, and if they don't know that they are supposed to be paying the same, that can sometimes create a lot of discomfort, and sometimes when you are working with an employer, making them comfortable is going to be the difference between them hiring someone with a disability or not. I think people don't always understand, again, like some of the etiquette, and if people

aren't sure, they sometimes just don't at all.

So we decided to show this series of webinars so that folks would know how to work with employers, and would know sometimes what the employers don't understand. In this field, we know a lot about folks with disabilities, but employers often don't. So in order for VR practitioners to help employers, it's good to know what the employers probably don't know. You can't say that about every single employer, but it's probably good to have this in your toolbox, rather than not. James, thanks so much for the question.

The next one we have is from Phyllis, and that too is from the working with employment specialists to create a more integrated work environment, and she asks, who identifies the mentor? Does the employer designate one? Or does the employment specialist identify an employee who they think is a good fit?

>> This is a great question. In my experience it's honestly been a collaboration of the two, so the employers, the on the floor managers know their employees best and their personalities best. Of course, we want an individual who will step up to the job of being that mentor, and being the trainer, to assist with the employee with the disability. It's initially a discussion with the manager and the employee whether or not they feel comfortable, because I'll come in and explain the expectation so they don't feel like there is all this pressure on them.

(distorted audio).

Like I said before, it's a collaboration between the manager identifying potential employee and then me possibly speaking with them, and also reassuring them that I'll be alongside the two of them to help learn the job skills as well, and to help bridge any gaps, and also model how I would provide instruction, so that they understand, we are trying to teach a certain skill set or tasks within a position, but we are also trying to foster some autonomy and independence. So usually, I've never had an issue with anybody not wanting to do it. But like I said, we want to make sure that they, it's something that they want to be a part of. So, and sometimes I've worked on a job site where I've told a manager, I observed this employee of yours, they seem like a great trainer, they have a great personality, they are always willing to come help us. Do you mind if I approach them and ask if they would be that natural support for my client. It can be a conversation that can go either way.

>> For the most part, people like to help, and especially if there is that ongoing or that outgoing type of person, they like to be approached because they are extroverted and they like to work with other folks, and that is something that often they can help with.

We have our next question from Rolf, in most medium to large companies who are you contacting, so for instance would you contact HR or operations? Is there anybody in particular that you might be able to throw out there as a general answer to cover that.

>> In large companies, I usually contact human resources because they are the first line, in a sense, they are the gatekeepers if you will. They have the working knowledge of the operations of the company and also the hiring needs, and those sorts of things. Usually once you can work with human resource personnel or recruiters to understand the role of a job coach or a employment specialist, it makes the hiring process a little easier, or the onboarding process as well a little easier. I would first probably target human resource personnel.

However, if you are having difficulties with that, maybe ask for a hiring manager, and maybe that hiring manager can help be the liaison and connect you with a HR personnel.

>> Super. That sounds like a great general advice. Your mileage may vary so it might be different from company to company.

>> Correct.

>> Our next question is from Paula, and she says some employers are uncomfortable with job coaches. How do you work around that, particularly if they say it is a security issue?

>> That is a great question. I've come across some businesses that have said that they have had policies where they don't work with job coaches, I'm not sure how that works in Virginia since we are employment first state, but typically, I explain my role. I explain the length of time I anticipate being on the job site, or I'll ask very specifically, what are their concerns, what are the safety concerns with me being on site. Is there a particular place, perhaps I can't be physically next to the employee working, but perhaps I can be in like the break room, and I could still be there to help address any specific concerns or things that may come up during the training process.

Just asking more specific questions, you know, trying to figure out alternative ways of providing support, or you know, getting creative really with it. I've had, I'm currently working with an individual who works in a warehouse and they are very specific with their safety and security, people that can go in and out. They have a certain system where they typically only want one job coach and they want to know who it would be in advance. That is no problem to communicate that ahead of time.

>> Again, it sounds like an employer comfort issue, making sure that you help them bridge any concerns that they may have, and make it easier for them, because if they are made

comfortable ahead of time, it's better for the relationships of everybody involved.

Our next question is from Wednesday, can you talk about a time you had challenges with a business understanding accommodations or not wanting to provide them, and what did you do about that?

>> So, I've had some challenges in that one warehouse that I just mentioned, one of my clients likes to use visual supports, and I discussed with management, is it a possibility to hang like a laminated visual support somewhere and they told us no because of safety reasons. Then we got creative, had the client wear a lanyard and had it on their lanyard.

Another time with a certain accommodations, where, I think it depends on what the accommodation is, and who you are asking. If it's an accommodation of a modified work schedule, sometimes the employers can do that or they can't. Maybe you look at other options, or other positions within the same business, that can help meet those needs a little bit better. But really, if they are truly unwilling to work with a person and to help abide by any accommodations or help to support any accommodations that aren't putting hardship on them, then maybe we need to re-evaluate whether or not that is the best work environment for that individual. It's very situation specific. So perhaps it's [inaudible] team meeting, to say hey, we understand that there is this concern, or this, you know, having a bit of a hang-up, you know, what are some other options or what are some other avenues that you are most comfortable with as a business or employer. Again, just getting more open communication to address any employer concerns and to make them more comfortable as possible.

>> Definitely. Asking them for input on how to solve the problem did a way for them to have more buy in sometimes. Brenda has a question for us.

>> Correct.

>> As an employment specialist, we do not find a lot of employers who are willing to provide natural supports from a coworker to a person who is living with disabilities. Without having an employment specialist working continually with the employee who is hired, there is often not another option. What are your thoughts on that, Kristen?

>> So, we do not find a lot of employers -- if that's the case, if there is not a lot of just a designated one natural support, one mentor, then what I would try to do is help build rapport among the individual and the rest of the employees, and as well as the manager, so just for me personally, a lot of the clients I've worked with, they don't initiate any social conversations, and they are kind of aloof or they are

standoffish just because they do have difficulty initiating and navigating social situations.

So helping to build rapport between the individual and their other coworkers helps to create that natural support environment anyways, even if there is not that one designated individual, you can still help to be the liaison and create these important relationships among everybody else. Then also, I'll get to know the employees, the other employees, the coworkers myself, so that they have a little more buy-in, of who I am and who the client is and what we are here for. Like I had said before, in my answer to the previous mentor question, it can be intimidating. It can be a lot of people that are working, they are working hard, they might see it as another burden almost. We want to alleviate that feeling. We want it to be fun, we want it to be reinforcing. So making it lighter can be helpful in that way. I hope I answered that question.

>> Um-hmm. Again, talking about building the environments, nobody wants to have anything extra put on their plate. You are right, we are all pretty busy. But working with a team sometimes helps take that pressure off too. So it can be as much of a benefit as a burden, I think it depends on if you build the relationships well with the employer and the team and the folks that you are helping.

So, let's see, I have a question from Laura. What considerations are being made to support the growing trend of virtual platform job interviews, or even the request of a prerecorded job interview, for people with disabilities that affect access to technology. I think that we are moving toward a lot more virtual interviews. So I think what Laura wants to know, if you know anything in the field that has kind of addressed this growing need and especially accelerated growing need because of current circumstances, any thoughts on that?

>> Definitely. There is a lot of businesses, you know, preCOVID that were doing the prerecorded interview questions. So that can be difficult to generate a response and say your response in three to five minutes, all of it while being recorded. I think my, when working with young adults with disabilities that are looking for employment in the community moving forward, what I plan to do is to practice with them, recording them, using an iPad or their phone, and that way they can review it and see what adjustments can be made, and that way they can also get comfortable with being recorded. I know it's not the most comfortable to do these things virtually or use technology, period. But I think we are in a technology age where that is just the way things are going. We have got to learn to adapt to that as well. So just providing opportunities, in classroom or for those that are employment

specialists, whether it's you meeting one on one through Google chats or Zoom and practicing with your clients that way, could be a great way to create those opportunities to get used to it a little bit more, and also generating some practice in interview questions. Then as far as having access to technology, I don't know about the rest of the United States, in their different phases, but I know here in Richmond, Virginia, we are getting closer to having more public areas such as libraries and having access to that a little bit more. So I think it's really about getting creative, and if you feel comfortable meeting one on one while wearing a mask with someone, I'm not sure what different agencies are allowing personnel to do at this time, but that is also an option to perhaps go ahead and prerecord some things, and then maybe ask the human resource person if it's okay, like Aliza did in that one video, submit that instead of going on camera with the recruiter.

>> Sure. This webinar, a 90 minute webinar, we can't solve the digital divide, but we can certainly help people access some resources that might help work around that. Isn't that kind of what it's all about, is thinking outside of the box and finding workarounds, and things that will work for everybody involved. We are right up at 12:29 by my clock. Perfect amount of questions. Thanks everyone in the audience for asking them. A little bit of cleanup at the very end of this webinar, we are having a miniseries next week on the 27th, it's regarding people with mental health issues and how VR practitioners can help them. In the morning we will have a general session on helping folks with mental health issues. In the afternoon, it will be specific to people who are veterans, who are dealing with mental health issues. Those will be shown at 11 in the morning, so same bat time, same bat channel. The afternoon one will be at 2:00 p.m. central time.

So we welcome anyone to join us on that webinar. We have more details on our project E3 page under the webcasts tab. But thank you so much for Kristen, Kristen for being here, for the Q&A, and I'd like to thank Meeghan and Melissa, our interpreters for doing a great job and for helping us out today, and thanks so much, everybody. And we hope to see you next time. Bye.

>> Thank you, bye.

(end of webcast at 12:30 p.m. CST)

This text, document, or file is based on live transcription. Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART), captioning, and/or live transcription are provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings. This text, document, or file is not

to be distributed or used in any way that may violate copyright
law.
