

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:**

# **Partners for Work Project**

### ***What is a developmental disability?***

This term is used to describe disabilities that affect a person's development before age 18, whether physical, social, intellectual or a combination of the three. Developmental disabilities include: Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, cognitive disability and autism. Individuals with developmental disabilities have a wide range of skills and abilities that make them strong candidates for employment.

### ***What should I expect from an employee with a developmental disability?***

Like anyone else, people with developmental disabilities have strengths and weaknesses, talents and abilities. These talents could potentially include things you find beneficial to your workplace such as customer service skills, team-work, strong motivation for work, or direct experience and interest in your line of work. There could be someone in your community with a developmental disability who has some or all of the specific skills you are looking for to enhance your business.

### ***What do I have to offer?***

You may think at first that there are no jobs at your workplace for someone with a developmental disability. Take a look around. Ask your managers to list the things that they need done and do not have time to do, or that take time away from more skilled employees. The possibilities are endless. You don't have to work this out alone, either. If you're not sure how a person with a developmental disability can fit into your business, see the contact information below to speak with a member of the PFW committee and a trained specialist (Employment Consultant) can be assigned to answer your questions. An Employment Consultant can come out to your place of business, observe the work environment, learn about your specific business needs, and potentially offer suggestions.

### ***I can't offer a full time job – does that mean I can't hire someone?***

Not at all. Many people with developmental disabilities are interested in working part-time. In fact, part-time employment may be the best way for an employee to train and master the skills they need for your business.

### ***How will this affect my other employees?***

Many co-workers report that working alongside a person with a developmental disability has enhanced their teamwork and their work culture. If your employees are initially uncertain about the concept, it's usually because they have no idea what to expect. An Employment Consultant can help you address this issue in several ways. A site visit can

be arranged to develop a better understanding of your business. The Employment Consultant can individually meet with staff to help answer any questions or address concerns that may exist. In some cases, an employer may be eligible to receive diversity and/or co-worker trainings that are tailored to your specific business needs. As business needs and personnel are always changing, technical support can be provided to help you meet these challenges.

#### ***What about accommodating special needs?***

If you think about it, you are accommodating the individual needs of employees all the time. This may range from providing hand rests for staff using computers, to flex time programs, to providing task lists, to simply helping a co-worker with physical tasks that they are not strong enough to do. Most of the time, making accommodations for someone is simple and does not cost your business anything at all. If necessary, there are grants available for workplace modifications or assistive technologies. An Employment Consultant can provide you with more information.

#### ***Will I have support?***

Absolutely! If you decide to hire someone with a developmental disability, an Employment Consultant is available to help you or your staff train the person. As your new employee learns the skills they need to do the job, the consultant fades out of the picture. If you need help teaching your employee new skills later on, a phone call may be all it takes to bring the consultant back to the worksite. Whether it's two weeks, two months or two years later, this resource can assist you.

#### ***What about liability?***

As a responsible employer, you are already providing a healthy and safe workplace, and your business has Workers Compensation and general insurance coverage. Hiring someone with a developmental disability does not increase your liability.

Rotary Partners for Work promotes open and honest communication between employers and employees. If there is a medical condition or anything else that could affect health and safety on the job, then you need to know about it, just as you would with any other employee.

#### ***What about wages?***

Employees with developmental disabilities earn minimum wage or above depending on the assigned job duties and the employer's pay scale.

#### ***How will this benefit my business?***

Many employers are finding it hard to find reliable, long-term, entry-level employees. People with developmental disabilities are a labor source that is vastly under utilized by most industries and businesses. Many employers report that hiring someone with a developmental disability is not only great for the business community, but cost-effective toward their bottom line.

***What should I do now if I am interested?***

To learn more about **Partners for Work (PFW)**, contact:

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