Recruiting People with Disabilities
**Why is it important to recruit and hire people with disabilities?**

Harvard University is committed to enabling a broad community to participate in its education and research missions. In accord with this commitment and with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, we work to ensure equal access and provide appropriate accommodations and assistance for people with disabilities.

Equally important, to access the widest pool of talent, we need to foster an inclusive and flexible work culture that considers the needs and potential of all employees and potential employees, including the more than one in ten Americans who have disabilities. By recruiting people with disabilities, we recognize that talent has no boundaries, that workforce diversity includes people of all kinds of abilities, and that those with disabilities are experienced problem solvers with a proven ability to adapt.

**How to recruit people with disabilities**

There is a wealth of resources available to help in recruiting people with disabilities. These include:

- **The Employment Assistance Referral Network (EARN)**, a program of the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor, [http://www.askearn.org/index.cfm](http://www.askearn.org/index.cfm) supports employers’ talent acquisition by assisting with recruiting, hiring, retaining and advancing qualified individuals with disabilities through comprehensive online resources and links to community-based organizations serving job seekers with disabilities. EARN, a national service, makes it simple to locate applicants with disabilities for any type of position. When EARN receives a call from an employer who wants to recruit qualified candidates with disabilities, their staff records the job description and then locates local agencies that have contact with appropriate job candidates. Once these providers are identified, EARN calls the employer back. The employer receives the appropriate contact information and may call the designated agencies to connect with applicants. The local agencies do not receive your contact information; this allows you to be in control of the process.

- **The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC)** [www.mass.gov/mrc](http://www.mass.gov/mrc) is a state and federally funded agency that provides vocational rehabilitation services in Massachusetts. MRC’s goals include helping local employers find qualified workers to meet job requirements. In addition to placement services, MRC helps with on-the-job training, and even provides assistance during a new worker’s adjustment period. (Phone: 1-800-245-6543).

- **The US Business Leadership Network® (USBLN®)** is the national disability organization that serves as the collective voice of over 60 Business Leadership Network (BLN) affiliates across North America. Our
state’s BLN is based right here at Harvard. Contact Harvard’s Disability Coordinator at Holyoke Center 935 for information and assistance (Phone: 617-495-1859/617-495-4801 TTY).

• **The National Employment Team** [www.rehabnetwork.org/busrel/](http://www.rehabnetwork.org/busrel/), operated by the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), provides employers with a single point of contact to qualified applicants with disabilities, and resources in the local, regional, and national marketplace. Vocational rehabilitation programs may also cover the costs of some employee accommodations.

**Bring recent college graduates with disabilities on board**

• **The Workforce Recruitment Program** [www.wrp.gov](http://www.wrp.gov), a recruitment and referral program under the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor, which connects employers and postsecondary students with disabilities for internship opportunities, and recent graduates with disabilities for permanent employment. This program is administered by EARN (see above), which assists in matching these pre-screened, highly qualified students with private and public sector jobs. If you have summer internship opportunities or entry-level positions available, please complete and submit the form at [http://askearn.org/form-wrp.cfm](http://askearn.org/form-wrp.cfm). EARN will provide you with resumes of qualified candidates within 3–4 business days.

• Colleges and universities have coordinators of services for students with disabilities who can be helpful in recruitment and in making accommodations.

**Recruit veterans with disabilities**

• To reach out to veterans with disabilities, contact the Service Officer or Service Employment Coordinator at our local Veterans Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Service [www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/emp_resources.htm](http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/emp_resources.htm). Call 1-855-ASK-EARN or e-mail earn@askEARN.org to find our local contact.

**Post to online job boards**

These online job boards are geared towards job seekers with disabilities:

• disABLED Person [http://www.disabledperson.com](http://www.disabledperson.com)

• GettingHired [http://www.gettinghired.com](http://www.gettinghired.com)

• Hire Disability Solutions [http://www.hireds.com](http://www.hireds.com)


• Ability Jobs. Ability Jobs provides searchable resume and job postings capabilities for employers interested in recruiting candidates with disabilities. The database includes the resumes of tens of thousands of job seekers with disabilities, from entry level candidates to those with Ph.D’s. [http://www.jobaccess.org](http://www.jobaccess.org)

• Disaboom Jobs [http://www.disaboomjobs.com](http://www.disaboomjobs.com)
• One More Way. One More Way is an ‘open source’ employment initiative that provides a no-fee job board and information regarding job seekers with disabilities, and the programs that support them. http://onemoreway.org

The following job boards are geared specifically towards veterans with disabilities:

• Job Opportunities for Disabled American Veterans http://www.jofdav.com
• Vet Success http://www.vetsuccess.gov

Selecting candidates for consideration: screening and interviewing

As you follow the general steps of selecting candidates for your open position, here are some tips to help include people with disabilities in your candidate pool and enhance your interviewing and selection process.

• **Recruit an inclusive interview team.** In selecting an interview team, consider including people who will bring diverse outlooks, and who are respectful of different cultures and characteristics. Recognize the potential to bring unintended biases to the process, and address this by having a clear and open discussion among team members before beginning the interview process.

• Ensure effective communication with, and equal opportunity for, all candidates. Contact the University Disability Services office for information on how to effectively accommodate a candidate with a disability: http://www.accessibility.harvard.edu. See also the Toolkit sections on *Etiquette in interacting with people with disabilities* and *Interview accommodations for people with disabilities* (page 26).

• **Use the screening process to include rather than exclude candidates,** to avoid missing strong candidates. In reviewing qualifications, consider how each applicant might enhance diversity in the department and university-wide.

• **Avoid making assumptions about a disabled candidate’s ability to “feel comfortable”** on your team or in the position. Focus first on the candidate’s similarities to, rather than differences from, the way your staff and their colleagues and constituents approach their work. Next, consider whether the candidate’s differences matter to the work he or she would do, and how those differences might actually enhance your team and its efforts.

• **Avoid prematurely labeling one or more of your candidates as the “most promising”** until all candidates have been considered. This will help ensure that all qualified candidates receive equal consideration.

• **Prepare yourself with answers for questions that candidates with disabilities are likely to ask.** Job candidates with disabilities often ask important questions aimed at helping them determine whether an organization is truly inclusive and supportive, and whether they will be comfortable in a position. Be prepared to answer these commonly-asked questions:
  
  › How many people with disabilities do you have in your department/the FAS?
  
  › What accommodations are available for people like me?
  
  › How many people like me are in middle and senior management positions?
› How many of the people like me are in professional or technical positions?
› What are my chances for progressing/advancing my career here?
› Do you have a formal mentoring program and/or career development programs for people like me and other diverse groups?
› What does the FAS/ Harvard do in terms of community outreach efforts to partner with diverse groups?
› Do you have employee affinity groups that focus on the needs of people like me and other groups?
› Are managers trained to communicate with and manage diverse employees, including those with disabilities?
› What initiatives has the FAS/ Harvard participated in regarding diversity?
› Does the FAS/ Harvard have formal diversity initiatives and programs in place?

Even if a candidate does not ask these questions, you may volunteer information that may help persuade the candidate of your—and Harvard’s—sincerity in welcoming diversity, including diversity of abilities. FAS Recruitment Services can help you to answer questions and offer information.

• **Prepare yourself by learning about the candidate’s disability and its effects.** Before calling or meeting with a candidate who has a disability, you can gain an understanding of his or her situation by reading about the disability as it relates to the workplace. The website of the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), a program of the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor, provides an A–Z overview of impairments [http://askjan.org/media/atoz.htm](http://askjan.org/media/atoz.htm) (from Addison’s Disease to Wheelchair Use), as well as accommodation ideas to help both you and the candidate feel comfortable.

**Etiquette in interacting with people with disabilities**

Many people worry about how to interact with people with disabilities, whether for fear of offending, ignorance of how to communicate, or other reasons. The JAN website includes a highly readable pamphlet on Disability Etiquette in the Workplace [http://askjan.org/topics/disetiq.htm](http://askjan.org/topics/disetiq.htm) which is useful at any time, but particularly when preparing to invite a disabled job candidate to come for an interview. The pamphlet offers tips on scheduling the interview, greeting the interviewee, and dealing with mobility, sensory, cognitive, and psychiatric impairments.

**Interview accommodations for people with disabilities**

Employers have an obligation to make reasonable accommodations to enable applicants with disabilities to participate in the interview process. Accommodations for interviews may include: an accessible interview location for people with mobility impairments, a sign language interpreter for a person who is deaf, a reader for a person who is visually impaired, and modified testing for a person with a learning disability. For more information about making the job interviews accessible, and to make arrangements for accessibility options, please contact the University Disability Coordinator, [disabilityservices@harvard.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@harvard.edu), 617-495-1859.

What medical or disability-related questions may be asked during job interviews?

In general, under the Americans with Disabilities Act, employers cannot ask disability-related questions before an offer is made. This means that employers cannot directly ask whether an applicant has a disability. It also means that employers cannot ask questions that are closely related to disability. However, you may do a wide variety of things to evaluate whether an applicant is qualified for the job, including asking about his or her ability to perform specific job functions, asking about non-medical qualifications and skills, and asking applicants to describe or demonstrate how they would perform job tasks. See Appendix E, Guide to Legally Permissible Interview Questions and Discussions, for some examples of permissible and impermissible pre-job offer questions.

For additional information, visit EEOC’s Pre-employment Disability-Related Inquiries and Medical Exams at http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/preemp.html.

Additional questions about hiring people with disabilities? Please don’t hesitate to call your HR Consultant.