



Research to Practice on Workplace Supports

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Employer Attitudes in the Post-ADA World: Results from VCU-RRTC's Charter Business Roundtable's National Study of Employers' Experiences with Workers with Disabilities

Researchers at VCU-RRTC on Workplace Supports completed a national study of employers' perceptions of workers with disabilities and their knowledge and utilization of workplace accommodations. The information was gathered from 46 human resource professionals and 255 supervisors of a specific employee with a disability in 43 large businesses. A brief discussion of several of the key findings follows.

Overall, employers view employees with disabilities as capable and productive employees.

- Supervisors reported satisfactory ratings of the work performance of employees with disabilities for all work performance measures. Measures of work performance included: timeliness of arrival and departure, punctuality, attendance, task consistency, and work speed.
- Employees with disabilities were rated the same or better than their non-disabled co-workers in almost all work performance areas, except work speed.

Employees with disabilities that are perceived as having work-related functional limitations received less favorable work performance ratings.

- When supervisors perceived employees with disabilities as needing assistance in caring for basic needs, communicating to and understanding others, or moving from place to place it did not effect supervisors' ratings of work performance.
- In contrast, when employees with disabilities were perceived as needing assistance in managing his or her work day, making decisions on the job, and performing the essential functions of the job, it negatively impacted supervisors' ratings of work performance.

Employers' believe they are most effective in retaining existing workers who acquire disabilities and arranging accommodations as opposed to hiring new workers with disabilities. They also rely exclusively on their own organizational resources in identifying and implementing accommodations.

- Employers identified a variety of internal organizational resources that are available to assist in the accommodation process.
- Employers have implemented several policies and procedures in an effort to implement the ADA and integrate persons with disabilities in their workforce.
- Supervisors are confident in their ability to identify/develop accommodations and indicated they have provided numerous low cost accommodations to workers with disabilities.

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- The most prevalent accommodations provided to employees with disabilities involved changing one's job duties or purchasing materials and equipment. Accommodations were most often required in the employment areas of employee scheduling and employee work areas. Accommodations were most often needed in these work areas to address limitations in work tolerance or work skills.
- Employers indicated they are doing a good job of retaining existing employees with disabilities and returning workers who are injured or become disabled back to work.

Employers have limited awareness of the variety of human service programs intended to promote the employment of persons with disabilities.

- While there is general awareness and familiarity with vocational rehabilitation, supported employment and welfare-to-work programs, these programs played virtually no role in recruitment, training, or technical assistance in the businesses interviewed.
- Employers have even less familiarity with government-funded training and technical assistance programs directly targeting business and industry, such as the Job Accommodation Network and the Disability Business and Technical Assistance Centers.
- In general, human resource professionals believe persons with disabilities lack the experience and prerequisite skills needed for many of the positions within their organizations. Therefore, they do not readily view applicants with disabilities as a viable source of labor in addressing their organizations' personnel needs.
- Employers do not believe that there are additional costs associated with employing persons with disabilities. The vast majority of human resource professionals indicated that the costs of accommodations, training employees with disabilities, or supervision of employees were not barriers to employment for persons with disabilities.

The costs of employing workers with disabilities were not viewed as a significant issue for employers in this study.

- Human resource professionals did not view the costs of accommodations, the costs of training, or the costs of additional supervision for employees with disabilities as barriers to employment for persons with disabilities.
- The vast majority of accommodations provided to employees in this study cost less than \$100.00.

A monograph, which further describes the research as well as elaborates on key findings, will be available October 1, 2001 from the VCU-RRTC on Workplace Supports. The monograph will contain several articles that summarize findings from human resource professionals and supervisors of employees with disabilities regarding their experiences with workers with disabilities and their knowledge and utilization of accommodations.

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