

Assessing Disability Inclusion Climate in the Workplace: A Brief Report

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■ A QUICK LOOK:

Individuals with disabilities have long been a marginalized group in the United States. This is especially true when it comes to the employment of people with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities have an employment participation rate three times lower than that of people who do not have a disability (19.6% versus 66%). Going hand in hand with that disparity, people with disabilities also have a higher poverty rate than people without a disability (28.5% versus 12.3%). What are the contributing factors to the underemployment of people with disabilities? And what type of disability inclusion measures can be taken to narrow this employment gap? The authors of this article aimed to assess the workplace climate of disability inclusion.

■ KEY FINDINGS:

To help measure disability inclusion and employer attitudes of people with disabilities, six focus groups were held and an online survey was conducted with 138 human resource managers, department managers, and project managers across various small and large businesses in a variety of industries. Here are some of the key discoveries:

- The use of disability inclusion training and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations has a significant relationship to positive disability inclusion in the workplace.
- 67% of U.S. organizations report the use of diversity training; however, the focus of many of those trainings is less on disabilities and more on gender, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity.
- 54% of the surveyed employers said they have had ADA training.
- According to the U.S. Department of Labor, only 19% of companies in the U.S. reported employing people with disabilities.

■ PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE:

- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies previously focused heavily on the supply-side of employment as opposed to the demand-side and the needs of the employers.
- Interventions from VR agencies can be implemented to increase employers' awareness and practices for disability inclusion.
- VR agencies can provide training for employers, organizations and companies to develop their understanding in ADA regulations and accommodations.
- Disability-centered diversity and sensitivity training can help employees and employers create a positive organizational climate that is favorable for people with disabilities to thrive in the workplace.

■ MORE ABOUT THIS ARTICLE

- As the VR agency and VR professional's focus shifts from the supply-side of employment to a more demand-side employment model, more research will be needed in the area of diversity inclusion in the workplace.
- Interventions and training offerings from VR agencies can assist employers in creating a more inclusive work environment for people with disabilities.

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