



Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition

Expanding Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities: **Suggested Steps for Congregations**

Many congregations are interested in promoting employment of persons with disabilities. Some of these congregations and many organizations have signed a Statement of Solidarity Around the Employment of People with Disabilities, developed by the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition (IDAC), a project of the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD). Endorsing organizations pledge to promote the full employment of people with disabilities. The strategies outlined below are suggested for congregations that would like to be intentional about carrying out that pledge. For a copy of the Statement of Solidarity, or to sign-on, visit: www.aapd.com/what-we-do/interfaith

Appoint a Job Support Group to develop a proposal for how the congregation supports people seeking employment. This activity could also be part of the mandate of an existing group such as a Disability Inclusion Committee or Disability Awareness Committee. The group should include people who are passionate about this issue and people with disabilities, and, if possible, some people in the congregation who are connected to the employment arms of businesses and other organizations.

Start your work by identifying a small number of actions that would be helpful. Some of the actions this group might consider as they determine the focus of their initial work could include the following:



Develop a plan to offer support to people in the congregation who are out of work, including such things as the following:

- Identify people with disabilities within the congregation
- Organize a support group or team to work with an individual to determine their interests, gifts, passions, experience, and support needs
- Mentor people with disabilities to help prepare them to interview well and to be successful employees
- Supervise volunteer opportunities to help people prepare for work
- Provide assistance in preparing resumes
- Facilitate introductions to those who make hiring decisions
- Help people who might be underemployed
- Provide ongoing support and assistance as someone begins to work or volunteer

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For more on what you can do, visit: www.aapd.com.
Working together we can improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

The Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition seeks to mobilize the religious community to speak out and take action on disability policy issues with Congress, the President and Administration, and society at large. To learn more about the work of IDAC, visit: <http://www.aapd.com/what-we-do/interfaith/>

Communicate to the members and visitors in the congregation the need to support an initiative to hire more people with disabilities:

- Utilize the bulletin insert prepared by IDAC available at: <http://www.aapd.com/what-we-do/interfaith/>
- Encourage the religious leaders to support this need in various ways
- Organize educational opportunities
- Once a support group knows the interests and gifts of an individual, ask the whole congregation for connections that might provide opportunities related to that person's interest and gifts

Encourage employers who are members of the congregation and within the community to hire qualified people with disabilities by:

- Meeting with them to communicate the urgency of this issue
- Encouraging them to develop and implement a plan for hiring qualified people with disabilities within their organizations
- Putting them in touch with employment programs in their local world of disability services who can assist businesses and organizations. For example, supported employment programs can help assess the kinds of supports or accommodations that may be needed for an individual and/or help a business assess their employment needs and ways that people with disabilities might be excellent candidates for those roles

Encourage local organizations that have job assistance programs to include a component that will assist persons with disabilities to find employment

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