

PRIDE PROVIDER/PEER MENTOR: MODULE 8

WORKING WITH EMPLOYERS & CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE TO HIRE AND SUPPORT REFUGEES WITH DISABILITIES



MODULE OVERVIEW

- **Federal legislation that supports PRIDE's mission of supporting job-seeking refugees with disabilities**
- **Working with employers: Dispelling myths about employees with disabilities**
- **Working with employers: Presenting business arguments for hiring people with disabilities**
- **The role of chambers of commerce**
- **PRIDE partner: Rogers Park Chambers of Commerce**
- **Chicago Business Leadership Network (CBLN)**
- **Case examples**

FEDERAL LEGISLATION THAT SUPPORTS PRIDE'S MISSION

Employers should be made aware that hiring people with disabilities, including refugees, will help them comply with federal legislation.

- **Rehabilitation Act, 1973¹**

The “Rehab Act” prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs conducted by Federal agencies, in programs receiving Federal financial assistance, in Federal employment, and in the employment practices of Federal contractors.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION THAT SUPPORTS PRIDE'S MISSION (CONT'D)

- **The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 1990²**

The ADA prohibits discrimination in employment against qualified individuals with disabilities. The ADA also requires that employers provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities who are employees or job applicants.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION THAT SUPPORTS PRIDE'S MISSION (CONT'D)

- **The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), 2014³**

The WIOA was designed to:

- **Assist job seekers to access employment, education, training, and support services so that they can succeed in the labor market**
- **Match employers with skilled workers so that they can compete in global markets**

WHO ARE POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES WHO CAN HIRE REFUGEES WITH DISABILITIES?

- ✓ Businesses (e.g., small businesses, refugee-owned businesses, manufacturers, hospitality companies, large corporations)
- ✓ Non-profit organizations (e.g., refugee-serving agencies, youth agencies, social justice organizations)
- ✓ Educational institutions (e.g., K-12, community colleges, universities)
- ✓ Government agencies
- ✓ Arts and leisure institutions (e.g., museums, theaters, parks)
- ✓ Faith-based organizations

**WORKING WITH EMPLOYEES TO
SHIFT THINKING ABOUT PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES AS EMPLOYEES
AND CUSTOMERS**

EMPLOYER CONCERNS THAT SERVICE PROVIDERS CAN ADDRESS

- A growing number of employers are hiring refugees and people with disabilities and learning about the benefits of working with these populations.
- However, some employers are reluctant to hire people with disabilities due to concerns about:



Costs



Productivity



Liability

ADDRESSING EMPLOYER CONCERNS

- **This module provides information that service providers can use when working with employers to hire refugees with disabilities.**
- **Employer concerns can be addressed through dispelling myths about employees with disabilities, making business-based arguments for hiring these employees, and providing education on resources related to accommodations and the ADA.**

**DISPELLING FIVE COMMON MYTHS
THAT CREATE BARRIERS TO HIRING
JOB SEEKERS WITH DISABILITIES**

DISPELLING COMMON MYTHS

To foster employment of people with disabilities, an important first step is working with employers to dispel common myths about employees with disabilities⁴.



Myth 1: Employers should have lower productivity expectations and different job requirements for people with disabilities.

Talking Points to Dispel the Myth:

- Employers should have the same expectations of and requirements for employees with disabilities when they are given the appropriate supports.⁵

DISPELLING COMMON MYTHS (CONT'D)

- **Vocational rehabilitation (VR) and the Assistive Technology Unit (ATU) can provide the necessary supports for people with disabilities to meet employers' requirements. PRIDE can facilitate these connections between it partners, service providers, and employers.**
- **People with disabilities perform the same life tasks that other people do, including working, and they have the right to participate in the full range of human experiences, including success and failure on the job.⁶**

DISPELLING COMMON MYTHS (CONT'D)

 **Myth 2:** Considerable expense is needed to accommodate employees with disabilities.

Talking Points to Dispel the Myth:

- Research shows that not all employees with disabilities request accommodations. When requested, most accommodations cost under \$100. Employers can get a tax credit for accommodations.⁷

DISPELLING COMMON MYTHS (CONT'D)

- **Accommodations made for employees with disabilities (e.g., hand rails in restrooms) can benefit other employees with temporary health ailments and an aging workforce.⁷**
- **Employers are not responsible for providing transportation accommodations to employees with disabilities; other supports exist to ensure that these employees have accessible transportation to and from work.**
 - **For more information about transportation options and resources, please refer to PRIDE Provider Module #5.**

DISPELLING COMMON MYTHS (CONT'D)

 **Myth 3:** Employees with disabilities are unable to meet performance standards and are more likely to have accidents on the job.

Talking Points to Dispel the Myth:

- Industry research shows that, on average, employees with disabilities are more productive than their non-disabled colleagues.⁵
- Employees with disabilities also have an average or above average record in safety.⁷

DISPELLING COMMON MYTHS (CONT'D)

 **Myth 4:** Employees with disabilities miss more days of work and leave the job sooner than other employees.

Talking Points to Dispel the Myth:

- People with disabilities are not necessarily unhealthy or chronically ill.⁵
- According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Center for Workforce Preparation, employees with disabilities have better attendance and retention rates, and are more loyal, compared to their counterparts without disabilities.⁶

DISPELLING COMMON MYTHS (CONT'D)

 **Myth 5:** Hiring employees with disabilities increases Workers' Compensation insurance rates.

- Workers' Compensation provides financial and healthcare support to workers who acquire injuries or illnesses on the job.

Talking Points to Dispel the Myth:

- Workers' Compensation rates are not determined based on disability status of employees but depend on accident risk.⁶

DISPELLING COMMON MYTHS (CONT'D)

- **In fact, there is evidence showing that hiring employees with disabilities can reduce Workers' Compensation costs as incidents involving disabled employees tend to be less expensive.⁷**

**BUSINESS ARGUMENTS TO
SUPPORT HIRING REFUGEES WITH
DISABILITIES**

BUSINESS ARGUMENTS

In addition to dispelling myths, it is also important to convey business-based arguments for, i.e., benefits of, hiring employees with disabilities.⁴

Benefit 1: Hiring employees with disabilities can decrease the need for and costs associated with training new staff.

Talking Points:

- Compared with the general workforce, people with disabilities tend to be committed to their jobs.⁷
- Employers save millions of dollars each year on hiring and training costs.⁵
- Cost savings from reduced turnover can increase profit margins.

BUSINESS ARGUMENTS (CONT'D)

Benefit 2: By hiring employees with disabilities, employers can create a positive and diverse image.

Talking Points:

- Employers can demonstrate a commitment to non-discrimination and social responsibility.
- Employers can diversify their workforce.

BUSINESS ARGUMENTS (CONT'D)

- **Hiring people with disabilities can increase the workforce's capacity for problem-solving and innovation in decreasing environmental barriers for people with disabilities.**
- **Multiple surveys have shown that the vast majority of American consumers prefer to patronize companies hire people with disabilities.^{7,8}**
 - **Increase consumer loyalty**
 - **Broaden consumer base**

BUSINESS ARGUMENTS (CONT'D)

Benefit 3: There are financial and tax incentives for hiring employees with disabilities.

Talking Points:

- **The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) –** When employers hire people with disabilities who meet specific criteria (e.g. SSI beneficiaries, people referred through a Vocational Rehabilitation program), they become eligible for a tax credit of up to 40% of the qualified worker's first \$6,000 in wages paid during the first 12 months.⁷

BUSINESS ARGUMENTS (CONT'D)

- The Social Security Administration's (SSA) Ticket to Work Program also provides employers with financial incentives each time they hire a Social Security beneficiary with disabilities.⁷
- Many other tax and financial incentives are available.

**OTHER RESOURCES TO SUPPORT
EMPLOYERS IN HIRING PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES**

LOCAL CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE: RESOURCES FOR FOSTERING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- **Chambers of Commerce are networks of local businesses that offer business assistance and advocate for members' business interests.**
- **For example, members of the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce represent a diverse cross-section of the economy, including small and emerging businesses, mid-market companies, and large, multi-national corporations.⁹**

FEATURED PRIDE PARTNER: ROGERS PARK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Rogers Park Chamber of Commerce in Chicago

- **Mission statement:** To provide leadership and representation in order to benefit the members operating businesses in the Rogers Park community.
- **Vision statement:** To guide businesses, service organizations, institutions, and individuals to establish new businesses and promote existing businesses within the Rogers Park community. To create and stimulate an orderly economic growth, thereby enriching Rogers Park's diverse community.

ANOTHER PRIDE RESOURCE: CHICAGO BUSINESS LEADERSHIP NETWORK

- Chicago Business Leadership Network (CLBN)
 - A business-to-business organization supported by the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce Foundation and affiliated with the U.S. Business Leadership Network.¹⁰
- The purpose of the CBLN is to educate employer members about the skills and abilities of people with disabilities.¹⁰
- The CLBN also seeks to educate other employers in the community and helps employers overcome traditional barriers to hiring people with disabilities.¹⁰

HOW CAN REFUGEES WITH DISABILITIES AND CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND THE CBLN BENEFIT FROM WORKING WITH EACH OTHER?

- **Participate in events to inform and encourage employers to become disability- and refugee-friendly in partnership with PRIDE participants**
- **Recruit refugees with disabilities to provide input on their workforce needs and agendas**
- **Share local success stories about resettlement and employment of refugees with disabilities**

CONTACT INFORMATION

1. Chamber of Commerce of the United States of America

1615 H Street, NW

Washington, DC 20062-2000

Telephone: 202-659-6000

Customer Service: 1-800-638-6582

www.uschamber.com/

2. Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce and Chicagoland Business Leadership Network (CBLN)

The Wrigley Building

410 North Michigan Avenue, Suite 900

Chicago, IL 60611

Telephone: (312) 494 6700

E-mail: info@chicagolandchamber.org

www.chicagolandchamber.org

CONTACT INFORMATION

- 3. Rogers Park Chamber of Commerce**
7231 North Sheridan Road
Chicago, IL 60626
Telephone: (773)850-0049

CASE EXAMPLE 1: EMPLOYEES

Zeya, a refugee from Burma with a vision impairment, came to Chicago from Malaysia, where she was initially resettled. Burma was under military rule from 1962 until 2011 and has been known for human rights violations.

Zeya has been connected to a resettlement agency on Chicago's North Side, which has a large refugee population. There are many refugee-owned businesses in the area as well as employers that have longstanding relationships with the local resettlement agencies and have hired refugees without disabilities.

CASE EXAMPLE 1: EMPLOYEES (CONT'D)

Zeya speaks English proficiently. Heartland Human Care Services, a PRIDE partner, helped her connect with Heartland's Cross Cultural Interpreting Services, a company that provides medical interpretation and translation services and is working closely with PRIDE to hire bilingual and multilingual refugees with disabilities as trained interpreters. This organization connected Zeya to a medical interpreter training, and she is now employed as an interpreter and translator for Limited-English-Proficiency (LEP) Burmese speakers.

CASE EXAMPLE 2: CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

Akram, a refugee with a physical disability, arrived in Chicago a few months ago after fleeing unrest in Syria.

A resettlement agency helped Akram get employment in a local grocery store that is a member of the Rogers Park Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber informed the resettlement agency that the grocery store had previously hired refugees.

Akram's case manager presented business arguments for hiring people with disabilities to the grocery store manager. Based on these arguments, as well as Akram's past work experience and proficiency in English, the grocery store employed him as a counter clerk.

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<http://cdd.unm.edu/pfe/pdfs/making-the-business-case.pdf>

9. Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce

<https://www.chicagolandchamber.org/AboutUs.aspx>

10. Chicagoland Business Leadership Network

<http://www.chicagolandbln.org/>