



Business Matters

Encouraging Diversity in the Workplace • Promoting a Positive Environment for Business Growth

Spring 2003

For your Benefit:



Disability Tax Credits Businesses Should Know

Tax season is almost over! Don't forget to take advantage of the following tax benefits available to businesses who hire and accommodate persons with disabilities in the workplace:

✓ **Work Opportunity Tax Credit:** Allows employers to take a tax credit of up to 40 percent of the first \$6,000, or up to \$2,400, in wages paid during the first 12 months for each hire.

✓ **Disabled Access Credit (IRS Code Section 44):** Allows eligible small businesses a tax credit in the amount of 50 percent of eligible expenditures that exceed \$250, but do not exceed \$10,250 for a taxable year.

✓ **Architectural/Transportation Tax Deduction (IRS Code Section 190, Barrier Removal):** Allows businesses an annual deduction of up to \$15,000 for expenses incurred to remove physical, structural, and transportation barriers for persons with disabilities at the workplace.

Explanations of the tax benefits can be found at the following website: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/ek97/tax.htm>.

Work Trends Survey Finds Misconceptions About Hiring Workers with Disabilities Linger among Nation's Employers

Rutgers University's John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development released its findings of a new survey in their Work Trends series addressing misconceptions among the nation's employers about hiring workers with disabilities.

Based on surveys of over 500 companies, 25% cited 'employer attitudes' as the biggest employment barrier to people with disabilities. In addition, 32% believed that people with disabilities are unable to do the kind of jobs that their employees perform, and 40% believed that it is difficult or costly to accommodate employees with disabilities. The majority of employers who have hired workers with disabilities, however, report that accommodation costs were often less than or same as expected, and rated more favorable to working with persons with disabilities. Such misconceptions of costs, inexperience with working with people with disabilities and general attitudinal issues that still linger in the workplace reflect a need for stronger policies promoting disability awareness and increased opportunities for individuals with disabilities in the workplace. To read the full article, go to <http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/>.



Do you have an innovative culture that is unique? Do you focus on developing your employees? Are you an employer with strong ties to the community and committed to the value di-


versity brings to your organization? The *All Star Awards*, hosted by the Richmond Human Resource Management Association and Workforce One, recognize Richmond-area employers that are truly committed to their employees and have programs in place to demonstrate that commitment. The **ALL STAR New Freedom Initiative Award**, sponsored by the Virginia Business Leadership Network, seeks to recognize businesses that are making proactive efforts and act as a role model for business excellence in hiring, accommodating and serving persons with disabilities. For more information about this award, please go to <http://www.rhrma.org/allstarawards.asp>. The nominations deadline has been extended to May 5th.



Participate in Disability Mentoring Day!

Volunteer your company to be a Workplace Mentor for Disability Mentoring Day, Oct 15, 2003. Provide students and job seekers with disabilities the chance to discover career opportunities and build relationships which may lead to future jobs or internships with your company! Contact the VA Business Leadership Network today at 1-866-624-3502 or email bln@suntrust.com.

BUSINESS APPRECIATION WEEK
Success Starts Here



MAY 11-17, 2003

Coordinated by the Virginia Department of Business Assistance, Business Appreciation Week is a time when the state and its localities gratefully acknowledge the benefits brought to the people of Virginia by the businesses that continue to operate here year after year.

DRS proudly recognizes Virginia's Disability-Friendly businesses who have contributed to the advancement of people with disabilities in the workplace and to the community. Thank you for all your efforts!!

Personal Assistance Services in the Workplace

Personal Assistance Services (PAS) can be defined as people or devices that assist a person with a physical, sensory, mental, or cognitive disability with tasks that the person would perform for himself/herself if he or she did not have a disability. In general, these may include assistance in daily living such as eating, dressing, or bathing.

In the workplace, however, Personal Assistance Services are provided as a reasonable accommodation to enable an employee to perform the functions of their job. The employer's responsibility for providing reasonable accommodations begins when the employee reaches the job site and concludes when the workday ends. PAS in the workplace does not include skilled medical care.

Work-related PAS might include filing, retrieving work materials that are out of reach or providing travel assistance for an employee with a mobility impairment; helping an employee with a cognitive disability with planning or decision-making; reading handwritten mail to an employee with a visual impairment; or ensuring that a sign language interpreter is present during staff meetings to accommodate an employee with a hearing impairment. Each person with a disability has different needs and may require a unique combination of PAS.

What Personal Assistance Services have been provided in the Workplace?

The following examples of PAS were drawn from the database of the Office of Disability Employment Policy's Job Accommodation Network (JAN) and represent only a sampling of the many forms that PAS can take in the workplace:

- A state agency maintenance mechanic with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, had difficulties climbing stairs and carrying materials. The job was restructured so that this individual always worked in a team with another mechanic. The co-worker was easily able to carry the equipment and do the required lifting on the job while this worker performed other necessary tasks. Because the facility had no elevator, the worker was assigned only to jobs on the first floor.

- A college professor with physical limitations resulting from a stroke was assigned a student worker to assist with transport of materials to and from classes. The cost was minimal as the worker was already assigned to the department and performed other duties, as well. This task took approximately five hours per week of the student worker's time.
- A proofreader in a publishing company who uses a wheelchair was not able to transport materials from an inaccessible location to her workstation. She was provided a low file cabinet and drawer unit that she could access and some necessary materials were placed within reach. This area was periodically stocked for her by co-workers. Other materials that needed to be housed elsewhere were brought to her on a daily basis by her co-workers, who were also obtaining their own materials.
- A health care service case manager who is blind was provided a driver to assist in making home visits. The same driver was also used for other driving needs of the health care facility. As often as possible, trips were scheduled so that the driver was transporting this individual and meeting other needs of the agency at the same time.

To learn more about PAS, please visit the Job Accommodation Network at <http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu/>

**Source: Job Training and Placement Report, Workplace Connection, 03/03*

HELP US, HELP YOU!

Do you have a success story you would like to feature in this Newsletter? Do you have suggestions on certain disability-employment topics that you want us to cover? We want to hear from you!!! Please send your suggestions, comments, or articles to marketing@drs.state.va.us. THANK YOU!!!