



Business matters



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

Summer 2010

From the Commissioner's Desk Get On Board a National Trend



In Virginia we are making progress complimenting a national effort that is making a huge difference in the lives of thousands of Americans with disabilities. The Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) has been successful in building relationships with national corporations interested in increasing their efforts in diversity and stabilizing their workforce.

The following is a list of some of the national businesses currently working with agencies like our own Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) to bring qualified workers with disabilities into their company:

- Best Buy
- CitiGroup
- CVS/ Caremark
- Delta
- Ernst & Young
- Food Lion
- H & R Block
- Hyatt
- IBM
- Lowes
- Manpower
- Microsoft
- Nordstrom
- Northrop Grumman
- OfficeMax
- Safeway
- Siemens
- Starbucks
- Walgreens
- Wells Fargo

As Commissioner of DRS, I invite you to *catch this wave* of successful businesses and take advantage of services that our agency has to offer. Our staff can help you with: staffing and recruitment efforts, job and worksite accessibility analysis, disability education training, and other resources that will enable you to hire and support people with disabilities in your workplace.

Workers with disabilities can make exceptional workers, and DRS stands ready to work with your business, big or small, to realize the same success of the corporate titans noted above. I leave you with this video clip from Walgreens Senior VP Randy Lewis, speaking at a warehouse industry conference, as he

describes how Walgreens changed their business culture by opening doors to people with disabilities.

<http://img.walgreens.com/walgreensoutreach/aboutus/videos.html>

Click on the link titled "Senior Vice President Randy Lewis speaking at a warehouse industry conference" near the end of the page to view the video.

Jim Rothrock
~Jim

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New Federal Contracts Open Employment Opportunities for Job Seekers with Disabilities in Hampton Roads Region

Professional Contract Services, Inc. (PCSI), a Texas-based organization that provides employment opportunities through federal contracts, has partnered with DRS and Didlake, Inc. of Manassas to recruit individuals with disabilities for as many as 215 new jobs at military sites in the Hampton Roads region. The jobs were created through two separate government contracts operating under the AbilityOne Program. DRS leads the pre-screening and referral process to fill these positions.

“This welcomed venture comes at a critical time of high unemployment for job seekers with disabilities,” says Commissioner Rothrock. “I am encouraged that our new partnership with PCSI, along with continued support from Didlake, Inc., will help secure well-paying, federal jobs for our clients.”



First crew of floor techs at Portsmouth Naval Medical Center

Professional Contract Services, Inc. (PCSI) is a non-profit organization headquartered in Austin, Texas, with 40 contracts in six states. PCSI obtains federal service contracts under the AbilityOne Program. AbilityOne encompasses a nationwide network of more than 600 nonprofit organizations that offer training and employment programs to people with significant disabilities, as well as quality goods and services to the federal government at a fair market price.

Since April, DRS has been working with PCSI to fill 175 positions at the Naval Medical Center of Portsmouth (NMCP). To date, all 42 clients referred to NMCP thus far have been hired full-time with benefits. PCSI secured an additional contract in June with 40 warehouse positions between the Naval Operations Base in Norfolk and Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia Beach. Although recruitment for the warehouse positions officially begins in August, DRS has already started pre-screening for these jobs. The warehouse contract includes positions with pay ranging from \$15 to \$22/hour with benefits.

“What has made this such a successful partnership with PCSI is the fact that their contract specialists work hand in hand with our vocational rehabilitation staff to ensure quality job matching,” said Lisa Zahralddin, DRS regional business development manager for Hampton Roads.

Rex Parr, president and chief executive officer, Didlake, Inc. added, “We are pleased to be able to help PCSI get their start in Virginia. Our strong ties with the AbilityOne Program and partnership with Department of Rehabilitative Services made us uniquely qualified to meet their workforce needs.”

“The community response has been nothing short of fantastic,” said Ace Burt, president and chief executive officer, PCSI. “We are honored to have this opportunity to serve the men and women in uniform, while fulfilling our mission of creating jobs for people with significant disabilities.”

What is Your Business 'Eye-Q'?

An estimated 10 million people in the United States are blind or visually impaired. Despite this fact, many employers do not understand the difference between vision change and vision impairment. However, recognizing the difference can help companies determine when workplace accommodations are necessary. Vision change is a natural, yet correctable deterioration of sight that occurs with age.

Vision impairment usually results from eye diseases such as macular degeneration, diabetes, cataracts, and glaucoma. Glasses cannot correct these impairments, often referred to as low vision. Effects do not have to be disabling. Vision-rehabilitation services can restore function and maintain quality of life.

The following is a quick quiz to determine if you or a co-worker are among the millions of Americans who may have a vision problem and would benefit from a complete eye exam. (If you wear glasses or contact lenses, answer these questions in terms of how well you see when wearing corrective lenses.)

Do you ever feel that problems with your vision make it difficult for you to do the things you'd like to do?

YES1 pt.
NO0 pts.

Can you see the large-print headlines in a newspaper?

YES0 pts.
NO1 pt.

Can you see the numbers in a phone directory?

YES0 pts.
NO1 pt.

Can you see the "walk" sign at street intersections, and signs with street names?

YES0 pts.
NO1 pt.

When crossing the street, do cars seem to appear very suddenly?

YES1 pt.
NO0 pts.

Does trouble with your vision make it difficult to watch TV, play cards, sew, or perform a similar activity?

YES1 pt.
NO0 pts.

Does trouble with your vision make it difficult to see labels on medicine bottles?

YES1 pt.
NO0 pts.

Does trouble with your vision make it difficult to read prices while shopping?

YES1 pt.
NO0 pts.

Does trouble with your vision make it difficult to read mail?

YES1 pt.
NO0 pts.

Does trouble with your vision make it difficult to read handwriting?

YES1 pt.
NO0 pts.

Can you recognize faces across from an average-sized room?

YES0 pts.
NO1 pt.

Do you have problems seeing in dim light?

YES1 pt.
NO0 pts.

Do you sit really close to the TV?

YES1 pt.
NO0 pts.

Has a doctor told you that nothing more can be done for your eyesight?

YES1 pt.
NO0 pts.

A total of **nine or more points** indicates the need for a complete eye exam by an optometrist or ophthalmologist.

Source: Lighthouse International®, (800) 829-0500.

This functional vision screening questionnaire is a publication of Lighthouse International®, funded in part by a grant from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U.S. Department of Education.

Working with Persons with Vision Impairment

Did the quiz on page three help you understand the difference between vision change and vision impairment? If you had nine or more points, greater awareness is needed at work and/or at home. Even if you had a lower score (than nine), you may benefit by better perceiving the difficulties faced by people with low vision. The following are some questions to help you consider if an accommodation is needed for a new or existing employee with low vision:

What type of vision loss is this individual experiencing?

- Does the individual benefit from magnification?
- Does the individual use corrective lenses or assistive devices?
- Is the person's condition stable or progressive?
- Does the individual read Braille?
- Does the individual use a cane, navigational aid, or service animal to assist with mobility?

What specific job-related tasks are difficult as a result of the vision impairment?

- Accessing information on a computer?
- Reading printed materials?
- Accessing a telephone?
- Traveling to and from work?
- Distinguishing colors?



Determining the Right Accommodations:

The next step is to determine what assistive technology (AT) would be needed as a job accommodation — or what types of AT are available. The following five-step process is usually effective in deciding what AT is needed. The Department of Rehabilitative Services is available to assist employers through this process.

1. Define the situation by determining the job tasks and the individual's limitations.
2. Consult with rehabilitation experts and with the employee for input on what best works for them.
3. Choose the AT by making an informed decision based on the resources you've reviewed.
4. Implement the AT accommodation(s) and determine if training is necessary.
5. Monitor accommodations to ensure that the AT is effective and working properly.

Sources: eSight Careers Network, Job Accommodation Network, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP).

New Tool Helps Small Businesses Understand Disability Laws

When it comes to having a workplace welcoming of all qualified individuals, most business owners want to do the right thing. But understanding responsibilities under nondiscrimination laws and regulations can be daunting, especially for small businesses without dedicated human resource or legal functions.

Fortunately, a new tool makes understanding disability nondiscrimination laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a lot easier. The online [Disability Nondiscrimination Law Advisor](#) helps employers of all sizes quickly determine which federal disability nondiscrimination laws apply to their business and their responsibilities under them.

To do this, the Advisor asks a few relevant questions, such as nature of business, size of staff and whether the business receives federal funds. Based on responses provided, it then generates a customized list of federal disability nondiscrimination laws that likely apply, along with easy-to-understand information about their requirements.

The Advisor can also help employees, job applicants, and people applying for or participating in federally funded programs learn more about their rights and responsibilities. In addition, it includes a Guide on Employing People with Disabilities that outlines resources available to help employers comply with disability nondiscrimination laws while also achieving their hiring and productivity goals.

The Disability Nondiscrimination Advisor is one of a series of elaws (Employment Laws Assistance for Workers and Small Businesses) Advisors developed by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to help employers and employees understand federal employment laws. To access it, visit the [elaws Web site](#).

Transportation to Work: A Toolkit for the Business Community

Today, fluctuating gasoline prices, increased environmental awareness and the economic downturn have all triggered an interest in alternatives to cars for daily transportation needs. By implementing job-related transit benefits and services, businesses both large and small can play an important role in advancing support for alternative transportation options. What's more, they can realize bottom line benefits through cost savings and an improved public image—all while opening doors to employment for a wider segment of their communities. For people with specialized transit needs, such as individuals with disabilities, transportation can be the link that makes employment possible.



Now, an online resource offers businesses practical information on how to build transportation programs that are easy to implement and inexpensive to maintain. The [Transportation to Work Toolkit for the Business Community](#) provides information on topics ranging from vanpools and shared ride programs to tax incentives and green transportation strategies. It also includes profiles of several companies that have successfully implemented transportation programs that benefit their employees, their communities and the environment—and make good business sense.

As a Matter of Fact:

Your business can claim up to \$230 per-month, per-employee as a normal business expense for work-related commute trips taken on bus, rail, subway, shuttle, and vanpool.

ADA Marks 20th Anniversary: US Census Bureau Facts and Figures

July 26, 2010 will mark the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which guarantees equal opportunity for people with disabilities in public accommodations, commercial facilities, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications. The U.S. Census Bureau offers a snapshot of facts and figures relating to the status of people with disabilities in various categories. Below are statistics in relation to employment of people with disabilities. This data, unless otherwise indicated, is from the Americans with Disabilities: 2005 report at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2008pubs/p70-117.pdf>.

- **13.3 million** people age 16 to 64 report difficulty finding a job or remaining employed because of a health condition.
- **46%** percent of people age 21 to 64 who have some type of disability were employed. The employment rate ranged from 75 percent of those with a non-severe disability to 31 percent with a severe disability. For those without a disability, the employment rate is 84 percent for the same period.
- **59%** percent of people age 21 to 64 with difficulty hearing were employed. The corresponding percentage for those with difficulty seeing was 41 percent.
- **48%** percent of people age 21 to 64 with a non-severe disability worked full-time. This compares with 63 percent without a disability and 16 percent with a severe disability.
- **6%** percent of disabled workers 16 and older use public transportation to commute to work. In addition, 69 percent of people with a disability drove alone, 13 percent carpooled, 4 percent walked and 3 percent used a taxicab, motorcycle, bicycle or other means. (Source: 2008 American Community Survey, <http://factfinder.census.gov>)
- **21%** percent of disabled workers age 16 and older worked in the educational services and health care and social assistance industries. (Source: 2008 American Community Survey, <http://factfinder.census.gov>)

Visit www.adaanniversary.org to access the 2010 ADA Anniversary Toolkit and other information related to the anniversary.

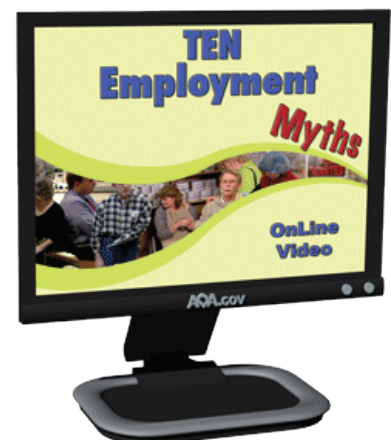
"Ten Employment Myths"

Many employers misunderstand the Americans with Disabilities Act and are reluctant to hire people with disabilities because of unfounded myths. This seventeen-minute video responds to concerns expressed by employers, explaining the ADA in common sense terms and dispelling myths about this often overlooked pool of well-qualified employees.

Most of the video coverage was taken on the Eastern Shore and features several of DRS' clients in the workplace. This has been a wonderful opportunity and partnership between DRS and the Department of Justice.

To watch the video, visit the ADA site:

http://www.ada.gov/videogallery.htm#10_employmentmyths_captioned



Lifting Safety—it's not just bending at the knee!

The summer season has just about arrived and it's usually accompanied by clean-up and maintenance activities both at home and at work. These activities increase the risk of injury to our backs; back pain affects millions of Americans and is the second leading cause of absenteeism from work according to the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. The leading back injury risk factors are shown below along with some tips on how to reduce your risk for each factor.

Improper body mechanics and poor posture:

- The term “body mechanics” refers to the way we move our body. Posture is an important component in body mechanics. Good posture generally means the spine is in a ‘neutral’ or ‘resting’ position.
- Your body is designed to move, bend and flex and your posture changes to fit the task. You want to assume a neutral posture.
- When sitting: keep your head balanced naturally over your shoulders—not protruding in front of your body; keep your shoulders relaxed-not hunched; keep your forearms and thighs parallel to the floor; sit back in your chair for support-not on the front edge; adjust the back of your chair for support; settle your feet on the floor or footrest.
- When standing: keep your spinal column aligned to its natural curves; prop one foot up on a stool to reduce stress in your lower back.
- Stretch often and shift positions.
- Listen to your body – feeling discomfort or pain is an indication that something is wrong; take more frequent mini-breaks before you become fatigued.

Jobs that require high energy and poor physical condition:

- A few simple stretches before beginning to perform a task will warm up your muscles and increase your ease of movements. Stretch again to cool down and decrease potential stiffness after completing the task.
- If you're doing a lot of heavy, repetitive lifting, take it slowly if you can. Allow yourself more recovery time between lifts, as well. Don't overdo it.
- Take frequent, short breaks especially if you've been working in the same position for a long time, to avoid stiffness and soreness.
- Sleep on a firm mattress. The best sleeping position for many people is either on the back with the knees slightly elevated (by a pillow), or on the side with knees slightly bent.
- Get in shape. Strengthen your stomach muscles, lose a little weight, increase your flexibility.

Incorrect lifting:

Assess the situation and ask yourself:

- Is the load big, bulky or heavy? Do I need help?
- Can I slide it by pushing rather than lifting it?
- Is the load height located inside my “safe lifting zone”? The safe lifting zone is between your knees and shoulders. If the load is below knee level, bend your knees and lift with your legs. If the load is above your shoulders, use a stool or ladder. If it is heavy, get help.
- Must you twist or stretch to get it?
- Do you need equipment to help move it?
- Have you cleared a pathway before you move the item?

June is National Safety Month and the National Safety Council encourages businesses to get involved and participate activities bring attention to critical safety issues. For more information about National Safety Month, and how your company or organization can plan activities, go to:

http://www.nsc.org/nsc_events/Nat_Safe_Month/Pages/home.aspx.

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