



# The FORUM

A Newsletter for Illinois Corporate Partners

April 2010

## From the Director

In 2009 the Illinois Department of Human Services' Division of Rehabilitation Services provided services to Illinois residents with disabilities that resulted in 4,804 competitive closures. We applaud the work of the business community in these important outcomes for our customers.

While this number is a decline from past years, there are many reasons for the decline. The prominent cause, of course, being the struggling economy.

People with disabilities are not immune to the decline in the economy. For 2010 DRS is increasing our efforts in reaching out to employers to provide whatever services are necessary to increase the placement of people with disabilities in Illinois into meaningful employment. I am asking our Corporate Partners to join us in this critical effort. DRS staff will be making contact with you and will offer you the assistance that will allow you to seriously consider people with disabilities when making human resource commitments. DRS cannot be successful without the support of the business community and our Corporate Partners.

Our State Employer Conference will be September 30, 2010 at the Naperville campus of Northern Illinois University. We are pleased to announce that representatives from the Job Accommodation Network will be presenting at the conference. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Robert Kilbury, Rh.D.

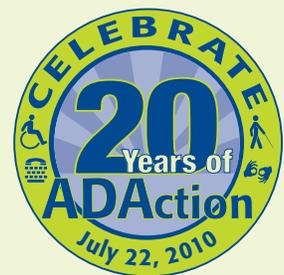
Director

Division of Rehabilitation Services



## DHS/DRS Mission

The Illinois Department of Human Services' Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) is the state's lead agency serving individuals with disabilities. DRS works in partnership with people with disabilities and their families to assist them in making informed choices to achieve full community participation through employment, education and independent living opportunities.



Join Us In Commemorating the  
20th Anniversary of the Signing of the  
Americans with Disabilities Act

Sponsored by the Illinois Department of Human Services in  
cooperation with numerous State Agencies and Councils

James R. Thompson Center  
100 West Randolph Street, Chicago  
(Between Lake and Randolph & Clark and LaSalle Streets)

July 22, 2010

10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

For more information call: 312-793-0034 (Voice)  
312-793-3597 (TTY) or 888-614-2385 (TTY)  
E-mail: DHS.ADACelebration@illinois.gov

## Illinois Corporate Partners Mission Statement

The mission of DRS' Illinois Corporate Partner initiative is to create a strong partnership between the Illinois business community and DRS to assist Illinois residents with disabilities at the local level in attaining stable employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency.

### Illinois Corporate Partners will:

- Lead the way in providing job opportunities in the marketplace for persons with disabilities.
- Invest in the untapped and unused labor resources provided by DRS.
- Re-invest in the community by providing an opportunity for Illinois residents to become productive and responsible taxpayers.
- Receive the benefits of qualified employees while providing career opportunities to those individuals with work abilities.
- Give serious consideration to hiring qualified persons with disabilities and encourage other businesses to tap into this pool of talented employees.

## Ten Things Every Employer Should Know About Job Accommodation

Rob McInnes- Diversity World – November 2009

Wrapped in a cloak of “duty to accommodate” and synonymous with unwanted government interference and legal risk/liability for their business, many employers despise and fear the notion of job accommodation. This is compounded by the erroneous perception that every employee with a disability requires an accommodation and the belief that the cost of every accommodation is exorbitant. Obviously, the easiest way to avoid job accommodation obligations (and their potential liability) is to avoid people with disabilities.

This is the “stuff” of many workplace attitudes that are encountered by people with disabilities as they seek to carve out their own careers and productive roles in our workforces. The welcoming smiles of recruiters and hiring managers are belied by the flustered paper shuffling, frenetic eye movements, and frequent watch-glancing that too often accompany them.

I would like to take this opportunity to clear the air and re-introduce employers to the notion of job accommodation. With the following ten points, I am attempting to outline a much more accurate accounting of the nature, frequency, cost, and benefits of effective job accommodations for people with disabilities.

### **1. Accommodations are productivity enhancers.**

Perspective is everything. The key to making effective accommodations is to understand them for what they really are - tools and working conditions that enable employees to give their best and to be their most productive on the job.

### **2. Most employees with disabilities do not require accommodations.**

Surveys show that many employers shy away from recruiting or hiring any people with disabilities because they fear the cost of possible accommodations. They assume that every person with a disability, or at least most of them, will require an accommodation. While numbers vary slightly, most studies indicate that the vast majority, somewhere between 70 - 80%, of employees with disabilities (roughly 3 out of 4) require no accommodation at all.

### **3. Even when accommodations are required, half of them cost nothing.**

According to the Job Accommodation Network's 2009 report, Workplace Accommodation: Low Cost. High Impact, when accommodations are needed, approximately 56% cost nothing. This figure, combined with estimates for employees who require no accommodations suggests that 9 out of 10 people with disabilities are employed with absolutely no associated job accommodation costs.

### **4. When accommodations do cost money, they are typically a minimal expense.**

Only one in ten employees with a disability needs an accommodation that is an expense to their employer and, again according to the Job Accommodation Network's 2009 report, Workplace Accommodation: Low Cost. High Impact, employers report a typical expense of only \$600.

### **5. People with disabilities who require job accommodation tools frequently come with their own.**

Particularly when it is an equipment need, many people with disabilities already own what they need or can have it provided through other sources (community organizations or government programs).

### **6. Accommodating an employee should be an ongoing process.**

Attention to accommodation strategies should be an ongoing process.

Circumstances constantly change and accommodations need to keep in step with them. Changes in the employee's environment, routines, job duties, and/or tools may require adjustments to accommodations previously in place. Changes in the employee's abilities may require different approaches or enhancements to existing accommodations. Because adaptive technology is constantly being invented and improved upon, it is only prudent to keep abreast of the latest developments.

**7. *Accommodations can have a positive impact on overall workplace productivity.***

Job accommodations often approach and/or organize job tasks in new ways – frequently introducing new tools and methods. These new approaches, when used by people without disabilities who are performing similar jobs, can sometimes increase the overall safety, and productivity in the workplace. In the Job Accommodation Network's 2009 report, Workplace Accommodation: Low Cost. High Impact, 57% of surveyed employers reported that making an accommodation for an employee with a disability had improved overall company productivity.

**8. *The best accommodations come from open and ongoing dialogue.***

Bearing in mind that the purpose of accommodations is to enhance a given employee's productivity, accommodation strategies need to be selected through open and productive dialogue between the employee and the employer. Care must be taken to be certain that the accommodation is the best "fit" with the employee's circumstance and preferences while still enabling them to fulfill the responsibilities of their job. Creativity, flexibility and honesty are the best ingredients for a selecting a successful accommodation.

**9. *Employees may be reluctant to bring up their accommodation needs.***

Companies need to foster a workplace culture that affirms the uniqueness of each employee and that welcomes suggestions that will sustain or enhance their productivity. Anything less will cause employees to hide their disabilities and not request needed accommodations. This will be true for new applicants, new employees, and existing employees who begin to acquire disabilities (think "aging workforce"). In those circumstances, companies will lose the productivity and spirit of employees who struggle to fulfill their responsibilities while masking their needs. Conversely, the productivity of each employee will be maximized by companies that are flexible, that openly value difference, and that respectfully welcome requests for accommodations.

**10. *There are many sources of expertise for determining, selecting and/or procuring any needed accommodations.***

They may be private consultants or staff of non-profit organizations, but you should be able to draw on the expertise of many folks in your local community who have proven expertise in various job accommodations. In addition, the Job Accommodation Network ([www.jan.wvu.edu](http://www.jan.wvu.edu)) has a wealth of information on its website and offers free nation-wide consultation through online chat, email, and telephone. The DBTAC Network ([www.dbtac.vcu.edu](http://www.dbtac.vcu.edu)) has a regional network of ADA centers that provide an array of free accommodation-related services.

Job accommodations for employees with disabilities are simply exciting ways of reconfiguring jobs, working environments and/or schedules in order to maximize the productive contribution that any given employee can make to their employer's business. Smart companies are already making similar adaptations for other employees – retuning their job descriptions to match their employees' unique personality types, elder care needs, parental responsibilities, etc. That kind of unique tuning is essentially what job accommodation for people with disabilities is all about – giving them the tools and circumstances that they need to thrive in their careers and to make their most valuable contribution to the company's success.

## DRS Employment Resource Specialists

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## Illinois Corporate Partners

Abbott Labs  
ADDUS Health Care  
American Vending Sales  
Aramark  
Centegra Health Systems  
City of Aurora  
City of Naperville  
City of Woodstock  
Comcast Cable  
Compass Euresit  
Crusader Community Health  
CVS  
Dreyer Clinic  
Eli's Cheesecake  
Elmhurst College  
FedEx  
Federal Signal  
Governor's State University  
Great Lakes ADA  
Harris Bank  
Heritage Enterprises  
Hilton O'Hare  
Hollywood Casino  
Illinois Tool Works  
Integrus  
Jewel-Osco  
Kane County D.E.E.  
Kohl's  
Kroger's  
Lowe's  
Monarch Landing  
Mc Donald's  
Mc Henry County  
Meijer  
National City  
National Louis University  
Office Max  
Palmer House  
Rockford YWCA  
Rock Island Arsenal  
Small Newspaper Group  
State Farm  
Target  
UIC  
UPS  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
US Dept. of Transportation  
Vonachen Services, Inc.  
Walgreen's  
Wal\*Mart Distribution Center  
Wal\*Mart- Stores  
Waste Management of Illinois  
Westwood College

## Who We Are

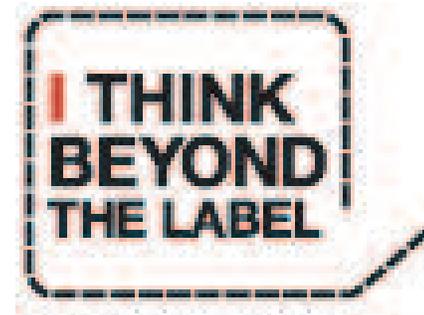
Think Beyond the Label™ is committed to making the business case for employing people with disabilities. We are a partnership of health and human service and employment agencies with federal grants, coming together to build a uniform national infrastructure and approach that connects businesses to qualified candidates with disabilities.

Our goal is simple: to raise awareness that hiring people with disabilities makes good business sense. Employees with disabilities have unique, competitively relevant knowledge and perspectives about work processes, bringing different perspectives to meeting work requirements and goals successfully. Hiring someone who “thinks outside the box” might be thinking too small when there’s an opportunity to hire someone who lives outside the box.

Health & Disability Advocates (HDA), a national nonprofit organization that promotes income security and improved health care access for children, people with disabilities, and low-income older adults, is spearheading the Think Beyond the Label campaign on behalf of more than 25 states and various national and regional organizations by serving as its fiscal agent. For more information about HDA or the collaborative, please email us at: [administrator@thinkbeyondthelabel.com](mailto:administrator@thinkbeyondthelabel.com)

This web site is Section 508-compliant, and is accessible to people with disabilities.

(Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy)



## Great Lakes Disability And Business Technical Assistance Center

The Great Lakes Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center (DBTAC) provides information, materials, technical assistance and training on the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Accessible Information Technology (IT). The ADA addresses all aspects of employment and the obligations of state and local governments and businesses to ensure that their programs and services are readily accessible to and useable by people with disabilities.

The six states, which comprise Region 5 are: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Each state has created an ADA Steering Committee representing the business community, government agencies, disability rights groups, and other interested parties.

*The Forum is a bi-monthly publication for the Illinois Corporate Partners. We welcome any news or suggestions for the newsletter. We also welcome photos in tif or jpg format. For more information contact Tom Lowery at: 309-798-6844 (V) 888-340-1004 (TTY) or email at [tom.lowery@illinois.gov](mailto:tom.lowery@illinois.gov)*

Programs, activities and employment opportunities in the Illinois Department of Human Services are open and accessible to any individual or group without regard to age, sex, race, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin or religion. The department is an equal opportunity employer and practices affirmative action and reasonable accommodation programs.