

2022 Virtual TA Institute

Breakout Room Notes

Session Number: 2

Breakout Room Title: Hiring and Supporting Disabled Employees

Facilitator: Jerry Alliston

Attendees: Karan Burnette, Jesse Suter, Karen Ward, Ryan Groeneweg, Dana Fink (ACL), Brian Be, Melanie Fried-Oken, Kara Ayers

Notetaker: Katie Johnson

Notes:

Opportunities-

- OH- remote option has opened up the recruitment pool and allow for more creative and attuned to accommodations (eg. brought on project coordinator w/ disability from CA)
- MS- state mandated no hybrid work at universities
- OR-OHSU- people with vision or sound sensitives easier to be home, increased participation of disabled employees
- Increased participation in CAC meetings
- Remote option has been helpful to be competitive even when salaries aren't
- Accessibility improvements due to hybrid work
- Removes travel access issues and saves on budget when not traveling
- Cost savings in remote work
- Sending agenda in advance more commonplace for access- giving people time to prepare responses, especially AAC users, but benefit extends to most
- Connection opportunities for caregivers

Challenges-

- internet connectivity challenges and lacking technology to connect to hybrid work
- even if our staff is fully in person, others in our state are virtual so our work is hybrid
- social isolation and impact on climate
- various technological platforms difficult to navigate
- issue with boundaries and making time for breaks in between meetings
- lack of community- natural and unexpected connections



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- people who needed direct support to communicate and participate had challenges accessing that support and often dropped off the CAC or other opportunities to participate
- VT- university push-back to promoting hybrid options that are actually accessible and engaging; UCEDD trying to engage university
- Poor resource allocation (eg. people working from home still using personal technological equipment)
- Lacking supports for caregivers who are also working
- Challenging to provide technical support remotely
- AK- university doesn't like out of state remote employees and charge for additional costs related to out of state employees
 - Also creates pay equity issues based on cost of living
- Challenges to doing data collection virtually, has really impacted disabled researchers on their projects

What strategies, infrastructures, supports has your UCEDD used to better address the needs of employees with disabilities?

- Mask mandate was lifted at university- serious health and safety concern for disabled employees
 - UCEDD advocating for why mask friendliness can help some employees across their culture, even though they can't change the policy
- Some employees can't wear mask, so hybrid work has helped them since they can't go to office.
- "Return to work" has been really hard since so many people have found great advantages, but also others have drawbacks- hard to find a good policy that benefits everyone
 - People have been doing well remotely. Can we really defend requiring people to come back for some arbitrary time?
- AR- off campus program; able to downsize office to better meet staff preferences and allow for greater flexibility and has led to better work for employees
- OR-OHSU- not enough physical space
- VT- losing physical space/offices, have created shared spaces
- Using savings from travel budget to buy more technology for WFH employees



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Future TA Needs:

- Data to back up what we know to advocate for policies that are more flexible and equitable for disabled employees because one size solutions aren't going to work and resources, or things we can share as a best practice
- More information of accessibility for different technologies or softwares
- Survey of people with disabilities who have worked during the pandemic from home, what worked what didn't work, etc. get a larger data set to show that remote work really can be better; what are the issues with the technology; what did directors not do right



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