EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT
QUICK GUIDE

RESPONDING TO EMPLOYER OBJECTIONS: SUGGESTED RESPONSES

OVERVIEW

Businesses you speak with may have concerns about or objections to hiring job seekers with disabilities. Often, these concerns can be addressed, and fears alleviated if we are ready. Preparation helps you feel and sound more confident and it can help you to establish credibility in your discussions with potential employers.

The responses below are not comprehensive but rather a sample of the types of responses possible. When dealing with employers, please keep the following strategies in mind:

STRATEGIES

1. *Draw out employer concerns. Ask questions to learn more about their experiences.*
2. *Rephrase concerns/questions assuring understanding, showing empathy*
3. *Keep questions from becoming objections: answer honestly and completely*
4. *Establish credibility: let your success with other businesses speak for you*
5. *If pressed for a response, be prepared to address concerns..*

Important Note: This document is geared toward helping with employer outreach for work opportunities. However, it does not help with exploring opportunities for other ways to partner with the business such has work-based learning (WBL) experiences.

Remember: A reluctant business may have the potential to offer WBL experience to the people we support through company tours, informational interviews, job shadows, trial work experiences, etc. So, keep those opportunities in mind when talking with businesses and building your relationships.

HOW CAN I RESPOND TO COMMON EMPLOYER OBJECTIONS?

Common Objection: "We can't afford it"

Possible Responses:

- *"There is no cost for our services. Using us to help you find qualified candidates helps you save money on advertising and/or training."*
- *"If a candidate has any accommodation needs, it usually a minimal cost or no cost to fulfill their needs."*
- *"Tax incentives are available."*

Common Objection: "I worry about liability issues"

Possible Responses:

- *"This is a common myth. Research shows that people with disabilities don't have any more accidents on the job than employees without disabilities."*
- *"Workers' compensation is a function of accidents in a workplace, not a particular demographic group."*

Common Objection: "I don't have the time"

Possible Responses:

- *"My goals are to learn about your needs and to help match job candidates with you and your needs. By matching workers with your hiring needs, I will save you time in the long run."*
- *"The right person in your job should not require extra time from you."*
- *"If the candidate needs additional training, we could explore using our On-the-Job Training funds. These funds pay you the equivalent of a portion of the person's wages to offset training costs during the initial stages of employment."*
- *"We can provide ongoing support and resources to you, such as information about hiring people with disabilities, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and tax credits."*

Common Objection: "I had a bad experience before"

Possible Responses:

- *"I am sorry that happened. Can you tell me about that experience?"*
- *"It is so important to have a good worker/job match, just as with any employee. I have access to a larger pool of job seekers and can work to understand your needs so that I can introduce you to good candidates."*

Common Objection: "I tried doing this one time, and it did not work out"

Possible Responses:

- *"I am sorry you had a bad experience. I'd like to learn a bit more about what happened."*
- *You know that there are no guarantees when hiring. Our approach is to get to know businesses to meet their hiring needs. By doing so, we can make a good match of worker with the business.*

Common Objection: "Why should I hire them?"

Possible Responses:

- *"My job is to bring you good candidates for your jobs."*
- *"If you have hiring needs, I can be a resource to help you fill those needs."*
- *"We can provide support on the job that you won't get from traditional hiring."*

Use the employer's language to talk about specific skills as identified in a job description and how they could match the job seeker.

Common Objection: "These folks are not qualified"

Possible Responses:

- *"Can you clarify the specific qualifications candidates need?"*
- *"(Job seeker) has previous experiences where she has had to do (tasks/skills). These sound like similar skill sets to your needs".*

Discuss the idea of carving out or restructuring a job around the candidate's abilities if necessary.

If you have no good candidates, leave the door open in case future opportunities arise.

Common Objection: "You have to multi-task in the job"

Possible Responses:

Explain that many candidates you work with enjoy positions that require multi-tasking.

Explain that your candidate can perform complex tasks despite their disability.

Discuss the option of job restructuring.

Common Objection: "Our space isn't wheelchair accessible"

Possible Responses:

- *"My agency has a large pool of candidates, most of whom do not use wheelchairs."*
- *"This candidate does not require a wheelchair on the job."*
- *"If the accessibility of your space concerns you, I'd be happy to connect you with people who can evaluate your space and make recommendations to help you avoid future potential problems with your customers, clients, or employees."*

Common Objection: "The person needs to have a driver's license"

Possible Responses:

- *"Is driving required to perform the essential functions of this job?"*
- *"Are there other positions that don't require a driver's license?"*
- *"The candidate has no difficulty getting to and from work without a license."*

Explore options such as carving out aspects of the job that could be done without driving (i.e., job restructure), job sharing, paratransit, ride share, and other options.

Common Objection: "The boss and management said no"

Possible Responses:

- *"Do you anticipate a similar position opening up in the future?"*

Acknowledge understanding that a specific job placement is not an option at this time. Ask if you could set up a meeting to speak with management/boss to address concerns and explain your services. Ask for the appropriate person's name and phone number.

Ask if the person has a sense of the boss/management's concerns.

Remind the employer that you can be resource for information about job accommodations, disability awareness, tax credits, and more.

Common Objection: "I don't make hiring decisions"

Possible Responses:

- *"While you don't make hiring decisions, I can offer you other helpful information about my services. Is there any information you would like to know about my services or my candidate?"*
- *Ask if you could set up a meeting to speak with management/boss to address concerns and explain your services. Ask for the appropriate person's name and phone number.*

Common Objection: "Call me later, I cannot talk now"

Possible Responses:

- *"I completely understand. When would be a good date/time for you?"*
- *"Perhaps we can find a time that works better for you."*

Common Objection: "We found someone more qualified"

Possible Responses:

- *"I am happy you have found the talent you need to do the job. That is great."*
- *"I am still interested in understanding your business better so that in the future I may be able to refer qualified candidates your way."*

Common Objection: "We have a rough crowd working here"

Possible Responses:

- *"We represent a wide range of job seekers. We may have candidates for you."*
- *"Can you speak more to me about what types of jobs you have? Are some more geared toward a rougher crowd?*

Common Objection: "Productivity rates are really important here"

Possible Responses:

- *"I understand. We have worked with other companies with productivity requirements. We will work with you and the job seeker to ensure a good match is made. We also help provide accommodations, if necessary."*
- *"Research has shown that the performance of workers with disabilities is comparable to others. Our agency strives to match candidates with business needs. We can look to identify job seekers with productivity capacity or potential to meet you needs."*
- *"Our agency can help our job seekers with training and/or support to help them develop the skills to meet your productivity needs."*
- *"I know you will be pleased with (job seeker)'s performance. They are a conscientious worker who focuses on getting their job done. There is no reason that they could not perform at the rate of any of their coworkers."*

Common Objection: "There is not enough work right now to hire"

Possible Responses:

- *"I am glad that you are fully staffed right now. That is a great relief to all businesses. I am interested in understanding your business and hiring needs for the future, so when you have an opening, you know that I can be a resource to refer you qualified candidates."*
- *"Are there busier times during the year when you need to hire extra help?"*
- *"You may be interested in exploring how to see the types of candidates we represent. Some businesses have provided job tours or allowed interested candidates to come in for job shadows or informational interviews to learn more about the workplace. This has introduced the business to possible future job candidates in a no-risk way."*

Common Objection: "Everyone needs to do everything here"

Possible Responses:

- *"I'd be happy to find a candidate with versatile job skills to make a good match."*
- *"You have some top-paid employees who are doing tasks that could be carved out to be done by another person in a new job. I would be happy to conduct a job analysis to examine job tasks and help create a job description for a new entry-level job."*

Common Objection: General obstinacy

Possible Responses:

- *"I am happy to share any information that will be helpful to you in meeting your hiring needs. I understand you have hesitations. It's a shame because (job seeker) has proven to be a great employee with long-term job retention."*
- *"I hope you find someone as qualified. If you change your mind, feel free to call." Bring up your testimonials/ success stories.*

Common Objection: "I think we can find someone much more qualified"

Possible Responses:

- *"I hope you are successful in meeting your hiring needs. Remember, hiring overqualified individuals can lead to decreased employee satisfaction and high turnover. It is really all about the match (i.e., do the skills match the job?)."*
- *"How about if we stay in contact if other opportunities arise?"*
- *"This candidate's dedication and strong work ethic enhances the likelihood of your satisfaction with hiring them."*

Common Objection: "They promise the job, but there is no follow through or start date"

Possible Responses:

- *"I realize you are busy and don't need to be burdened, but I believe this candidate you met can help your company. Can you follow up with a call to determine the issue?"*
- *"Are there any issues or concerns I can address that may be leading to the delays?"*
- *"Do you worry about hiring (job seeker) because of how he communicates? We can work with you and your staff to ease that learning curve."*
- *"You were very open to exploring this opportunity and I am glad you felt comfortable asking questions. Please keep us in mind if future opportunities arise and I'll be sure to stay in touch. I know (job seeker) has a lot to offer in the way of (specific job details)."*

Common Objection: Lost applications

Possible Responses

- *"I am happy to get you another copy of the resume. What's the best way to get this to you to proceed? I think we can meet your hiring needs."*
- *"Are there any issues or concerns I can address that may be leading to the delays?"*

Common Objection: "They need too much supervision"

Possible Responses:

- *"Our agency works to bring you candidates that match your business and hiring needs. A good match should not require additional time on your part."*
- *"If the candidates need additional support on the job, we can arrange for a professional to come in to provide some training or support at no cost to you. In addition, I am available anytime if you have questions."*
- *"Most businesses I work with find that they can pair coworkers with the new hire to mentor that person during their initial learning phase."*

Common Objection: Safety issues

Possible Responses:

- *"Can you describe areas of safety concern that you have? Are there areas in your workplace that are more dangerous than others? I'd like to understand the risk factors in working for your company." (make sure to address the concerns)*
- *"My goal is to match a job candidate with your business. Many of the job seekers I work with can work safely in this kind of environment."*

Common Objection: "We need to have a resume with no job gaps"

Possible Responses:

- *"Qualified candidates often do have gaps, particularly in today's economy. Fortunately, this candidate has just the skill set you are looking for."*
- *"Many of my job seekers have resumes with no job gaps. Some have gaps that reflect time off for training."*
- *"What concerns you specifically about job gaps?"*

Common Objection: "This person is too short to do the job"

Possible Responses:

- *"Can you explain areas of the workplace or job where height is a factor? How have you addressed it in the past?"*
- *"I'd be happy to discuss accommodations that will allow him to do the job. I can also have him demonstrate how he has handled this in past jobs."*

Common Objection: Union issues

Possible Responses:

- *"I am happy to speak with a union representative if that would be helpful."*
- *"Have you been able to identify issues they feel are of major concern?"*

Common Objection: "This will be disruptive to the workplace"

Possible Responses:

- *"I'd like to learn more about your specific concerns about what would be distracting or disruptive in the workplace. I have worked with businesses in the past who had this concern, but later they found the worker to be an asset to their team."*
- *(If the person has certain behaviors) "When she is focused on work, the behaviors subside. Working in a quiet environment allows her to be more productive."*

Common Objection: Payroll issues (workers' compensation, insurance)

Possible Responses:

- *"Research has shown that there is no increase in workers' comp claims for people with disabilities compared to the general public."*
- *"There are also some tax incentives that can save you money."*

Common Objection: "I can't hire for a part-time position"

Possible Responses:

- *"I represent candidates who seek full-time and part-time employment."*
- *"I'd like to explore what full-time positions you have that could be shared by two qualified candidates. This could help your current employees returning from family leave or those who are out for other reasons."*

Common Objection: High stress or fast paced environments

Possible Responses:

- *"I am interested in matching your job needs with my candidates. Let's talk more about the workplace. Perhaps you will allow me to observe the environment to understand how I can best match candidates to your business."*
- *"Many job seekers handle high stress environments well and often thrive in those settings. I would not refer someone who could not handle stress."*
- *"I would like to explore opportunities for restructuring or carving the job to match my candidate, given that you have had a hard time keeping someone in the job. I would also suggest we explore accommodations that could help."*
- *"This candidate can be very flexible with hours and may benefit from working during off-peak hours."*

Common Objection: "Coworkers would feel awkward"

Possible Responses:

- *"If it would be helpful, my agency could provide disability awareness training for your business."*
- *"This candidate is good at helping people feel relaxed about their disability."*

Common Objection: Image issues: Clothing

Possible Responses:

- *"Our goal is a good job match. This includes bringing candidates who can dress appropriately for your workplace. If this environment is new to the candidate, we can work with the individual on dressing according to the work culture."*

Common Objection: Paranoid about people with disabilities in general

Possible Responses:

- *"I understand that you have concerns. It can be intimidating to start something new such as this. We can provide some training on disability awareness and accommodations for your business."*

Common Objection: "There are no openings at this time" or "I already filled that position"

Possible Responses:

- *"That is good to know. I am more interested in learning about your company now so that in the future, I may be able to refer qualified candidates your way to meet your hiring needs."*
- *"When do you anticipate you will have positions opening up?"*

Common Objection: "We already have a person with a disability working here"

Possible Responses:

- *"That is great that you have an employee with disability as part of your workplace diversity. How is that working out?"*
- *"There are many qualified people who may have some sort of disability. Often employers have a few people with disabilities without realizing it. Many disabilities are non-apparent."*
- *"I am more interested in learning about your company now so that in the future, I may be able to refer qualified candidates your way to meet your hiring needs."*

Common Objection: "They may need to take too much time off"

Possible Responses:

- *"I appreciate your concern and have heard it from other businesses as well. However, research shows attendance rates of people with disabilities are comparable to those without disabilities."*
- *"I can refer candidates that match your hiring needs. I can help identify candidates with strong attendance records who are reliable and dedicated."*
- *"They can work a flexible schedule to adjust for any necessary time taken."*

Common Objection: "We can't have a job coach here"

Possible Responses:

- *"OK. Many of the candidates I refer won't need job coaches."*
- *"Some businesses say they want to train the new hire. That's great. We are happy to help support you if you have questions about the best ways to train or manage the person".*
- *"If you change your mind, we can offer a job trainer who will fit the environment."*

Common Objection: Language/communication barrier

Possible Responses:

- *"I understand, I thought it would be a challenge to communicate, too. There are a number of strategies I can share with you."*
- *"I am happy to provide support while you and your staff learn how to communicate with this person."*

Common Objection: "They won't fit in"

Possible Responses:

- *"Employers often underestimate the flexibility of their employees. I've found that in most cases, my candidates gain credibility as they perform their job well."*

Think about other employer objections that you have heard, or are worried about hearing. Spend time with your colleagues to brainstorm ideas about how to respond appropriately and to put the employers' concerns at ease. This is meant to be a living document, that continues to prepare you for your discussions with employers.

The contents of this PIRTEE training were developed under grant #H263C190012 from the U.S. Department of Education. The Department does not mandate or prescribe practices, models, or other activities described or discussed in this document. The contents of this presentation may contain examples of, adaptations of, and links to resources created and maintained by another public or private organization. The Department does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of this outside information. This content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department. This publication is not intended to represent the views or policy of or be an endorsement of any views expressed or materials provided by any Federal agency. (EDGAR 75.620)

ICI ExploreVR
INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION, UMASS BOSTON

The Program on Innovative Rehabilitation Training on Employer Engagement is a project of ExploreVR at the Institute for Community Inclusion, UMass Boston. ExploreVR offers VR agencies easy and convenient access to a range of VR research, related data, training and tools for planning, evaluation, and decision-making. Funding for this project is provided by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Grant #H263C190012.