

# Best Buddies Jobs

## Creating a Culture of Inclusion

*Open communication with all employees is essential to ensuring the success of your disability employment and inclusion program. Use this information to develop a plan based on your desired outcome.*

### Cascading Communication

The “communication cascade” is an effective way of engaging internal audiences. In this model, your messages flow from the CEO/Champion to his or her leadership team/department leads. Department leads then share the same messages with their managers, and the managers are then responsible for communicating with their teams of front line employees. For this to be successful, it is essential that everyone uses the same set of talking points and understands that following the script is obligatory, not optional. The speaking points will outline your initiative, explain specific benefits for the company and employees, and cover etiquette when interacting with people with disabilities.

Champion

Department Leads

Managers

Front Line

### Self-Identification

A critical component of creating a culture of inclusion in the workplace is recognizing and supporting current employees who have disabilities. In the past, employers were discouraged from asking employees about disability status. However new amendments to Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 require federal contractors to invite employees to self-identify as an individual with a disability, which is truly a best practice that all companies should follow. Encouraging self-identification can be as simple as providing information about self-identification in regularly scheduled employee communications. It can also be an additional initiative in the form of a self-identification campaign. The Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) has developed a form which federal contractors use to invite employees or applicants to self-identify as an individual with a disability. Companies should take advantage of this resource and make this form readily available for employees to access regularly throughout the year.

### Inclusive Workplace Training

Before you start the process of interviewing and hiring people with disabilities, it is important to provide diversity and inclusion training to your current workforce. Investment in this training from the beginning will help foster that culture of inclusion you are aiming to achieve.

### Goals of this training include

- Providing a basic overview of the disability community and employment statistics
- Information to help all employees feel comfortable working with people with disabilities
- Improving communication techniques and skills, and reducing misunderstandings
- Providing workers with strategies to handle their own fears and anxieties related to disabilities