Facilitating self-identification in federal contractor workplaces

Under Section 503 regulations that went into effect March 2014, employers who are federal contractors/sub-contractors must offer the opportunity to self-identify to applicants at pre-offer, post-offer, and to employees at least once every five years.

Self-identification was the most frequently mentioned challenge in implementing Section 503 regulations.

Data collection on disability is designed to support understanding of the effectiveness of outreach and recruitment efforts and progress toward the 7% utilization goal of people with disabilities across job groups. However, to get to accurate workforce statistics, individuals with disabilities must voluntarily report that they have a disability on the self-identification form. In a survey of federal contractor representatives conducted in 2017 by Cornell University, encouraging self-identification was the most frequently mentioned challenge in implementing Section 503 regulations for respondent organizations (n=235).

**SELF-IDENTIFICATION: WHAT SURVEY RESPONDENTS ARE DOING**

Among contractors using the OFFCP self-identification form:
- 34% indicated that 30% or fewer employees completed the form
- 15% had met the 7% utilization goal
- 48% of organizations report a self-identification rate of 2% or less
- 60% had reviewed self-identification data in the last six months

Common practices to encourage self-identification:
- 57% make self-identification form available when employees update personal information
- 52% annual communication to encourage self-identification
- 41% communication from leaders about self-identification’s purpose
- 28% conduct a self-identification campaign
- 19% spotlight successful employees with disabilities
- 16% make self-identification part of the open enrollment process

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