



Cornell University  
ILR School  
Employment and Disability Institute

**Research Brief:**  
**Disability Inclusive Recruitment and Hiring  
Practices and Policies:  
Who Has Them and What Difference Does it  
Really Make?**

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Research presented at the  
Innovative Research on Employer Practices:  
Improving Employment for People with Disabilities

**STATE OF THE SCIENCE CONFERENCE**

**October 22-23, 2013  
Washington, D.C.**

**Sponsored by the Rehabilitation and Research Training Center on  
Employer Practices Related to Employment Outcomes among Individuals  
with Disabilities at Cornell University**



## Overview

The employment rate of individuals with disabilities is less than half the rate of individuals without disabilities. Employer policies and practices could have a very real impact on increasing the number of persons with disabilities in the workforce. This study examined the prevalence of inclusive practices and policies that are believed to increase recruitment and hiring of persons with disabilities.

Cornell University collaborated with the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) to survey human resource professionals. SHRM was the ideal collaborator, as the world's largest association devoted to HR management with more than a quarter of a million individual members worldwide, including one in five U.S. HR professionals (SHRM, 2012). –HR professionals were targeted as the people most knowledgeable about an organization's disability policies and practices as well as their hiring and recruitment strategies.

This brief explores variations in the implementation of disability-inclusive recruitment and hiring policies and practices by private employers in the U.S., to determine what types of organizations are implementing them and to see if these policies and practices are related to the actual hiring of individuals with disabilities.

## What practices were studied?

The survey asked HR professionals about specific recruitment and hiring practices. Respondents were asked whether their organization:

1. Actively recruits people with disabilities.
2. Has relationships with community organizations that promote the employment of people with disabilities.
3. Includes people with disabilities explicitly in its diversity and inclusion plan.
4. Has explicit organizational goals related to the recruitment or hiring of people with disabilities.
5. Includes progress toward recruitment or hiring goals for people with disabilities in the performance appraisals of senior management.
6. Participates in internships or similar programs that target people with disabilities.
7. Has senior management that demonstrates a strong commitment to disability recruitment and hiring
8. Regularly reviews the accessibility of its online application system to people with visual, hearing, finger dexterity, and cognitive impairments.

9. Provides advanced notice to job applicants that reasonable accommodations are provided during the job application process.

10. Evaluates pre-employment occupational screenings to ensure they are unbiased.

### **How frequently are these practices implemented? <sup>1</sup>**

This brief presents our analysis of the 339 responses that answered all of the organizational characteristics items (size, federal contractor status, industry and for-profit status) and the hiring questions. About three quarters of the organizations overall had implemented at least one of the ten policies/practices listed above. The practices most commonly implemented were forming a relationship with community organizations (53%) and including persons with disabilities in their organization's diversity and inclusion plan (54%). Surprisingly only about two in five (40%) said their organization actively recruited persons with disabilities. About a third (34%) reported having strong senior management commitment for hiring persons with disabilities.

### **Are certain types of organizations more likely to have these practices?**

Organizational size (number of employees) was found to have the greatest impact on the implementation of these policies.<sup>2</sup> Larger organizations, especially those with more than 500 employees were between about 3 and 7 times more likely to have implemented nearly all practices/policies than companies with fewer than 500 employees. It was interesting that there was no difference found in the implementation of the practices between the smallest companies (less than 100 employees) and those with 100-499 employees. Federal contractors were between 1.8 and 5.1 times more likely to have seven of these practices in place than organizations who were not federal contractors. Non-profits were about 2.5 times more likely to have the following practices in place: explicit organizational goals regarding PWDs and internships for PWDs than for-profits. Surprisingly, industry type had no impact on the likelihood that an employer had implemented one of the 10 policies.

Overall, the most significant predictors for disability-inclusive practices were:

- Larger organizations
- Federal contractors
- Non-profits

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<sup>1</sup> See our research brief for findings regarding other employer policies & practices including: accessibility & accommodation, training, retention & advancement and perceived barriers to employment: <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/edicollect/1327>

<sup>2</sup> A logistic regression approach was used to identify what organizational characteristics were related to having implemented each disability inclusive practice/policy while controlling for the other characteristics. More information about methodology can be found in: Erickson, W. A., von Schrader, S., Bruyère, M., VanLooy, S. A., & Matteson, S. (2014). Disability-Inclusive Employer Practices and Hiring of Individuals With Disabilities. *Rehabilitation Research, Policy, and Education*, 28(4), 309–328. doi:10.1891/2168-6653.28.4.309

## Do these practices & policies make a difference?

Companies who reported hiring a person with a disability were far more likely to report having each practice in place than those who hadn't. Further analysis showed that even after adjusting for organizational characteristics such as organization size, organizations that were using each of these practices were significantly more likely to hire persons with disabilities than organizations that did not have these practices in place. Organizations with these policies and practices in place were significantly more likely to have hired a person with a disability.

For example organizations with an internship program for persons with disabilities were 5.7 times more likely to have hired a person with a disability. See below for the adjusted odds ratio of each practice on the likelihood of hiring a person with a disability.

The practices found to have the greatest impact in our analysis were:

<b>Practice/policy:</b>	<b>Increased chance of hiring a PWD</b>
Internships for PWD	5.7 times more likely to hire
Strong senior management commitment	4.8
Explicit organizational goals regarding PWD	4.1
Actively Recruiting PWD	3.2
Including PWD in Diversity/Inclusion plans	3.2
Considering PWD goals in Management performance assessment	3.1
Relationships with community organizations	2.7

## Conclusion:

Nearly three quarters of organizations in this study had implemented at least one of the eight disability inclusive recruitment or hiring practices. Larger organizations, especially those with more than 500 employees, were far more likely to have implemented most of the practices. Federal contractors and non-profits were also more likely to have many of these practices in place. There is a clear relationship between an organization having each of these practices in place and the actual hiring of persons with disabilities, which strongly suggests that these practices do indeed make a difference. Finally the prevalence of these practices across the various organizations demonstrates that there is much work to be done – the majority of organizations do not currently have many of these practices in place. If these practices are implemented in more organizations it could have a real impact on the employment of persons with disabilities.

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This brief summarized the research article Erickson, W. A., von Schrader, S., Bruyère, M., VanLooy, S. A., & Matteson, S. (2014). Disability-Inclusive Employer Practices and Hiring of Individuals With Disabilities. *Rehabilitation Research, Policy, and Education*, 28(4), 309–328. doi:10.1891/2168-6653.28.4.309



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This state of the science conference and research is funded to Cornell University by the U.S. Department of Education National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) for a Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on Employer Practices Related to Employment Outcomes among Individuals with Disabilities (grant #H133B100017). The contents of this research brief do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government (Edgar, 75.620 (b)).