



**INTERNET
FOR ALL**

Celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month with Digital Inclusion and Economic Opportunity

October 29, 2024



Housekeeping

Questions

- Type questions in the Q&A box on the right-hand side of the screen.

Presentation

- This slide deck, along with a recording of the webinar, will be available on the BroadbandUSA website under Events/Past Events.



PROGRAM



Welcome

FRANCELLA OCHILLO

Director, Office of Public Engagement, NTIA

Making Disability Employment & Awareness Part of Your Organizational Culture

BRYNA HELFER

*Director, Employment Supports and Innovative Partnerships,
Office of Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor*

Fostering Connections: Enhancing Accessibility in the Workplace for Deaf Employees

CHRISTINE FIRKINS, EdD

Account Executive, Convo Communications



BRYNA HELPER

*Director, Employment Supports
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**Office of Disability
Employment Policy, U.S.
Department of Labor**





U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)

- Held each October
- Celebrates the contributions of America's disabled workers
- Showcases supportive, inclusive policies and practices that benefit employees and employers alike
- NDEAM's purpose is to confirm our commitment to ensuring disabled workers have **access to good jobs, every month of every year.**



DOL.Gov/NDEAM



Disability Employment Statistics and Characteristics

September 2024 Disability Employment Statistics Ages 16 years and older

Labor Force Participation Rate

- People with disabilities: 40.8%
- People without disabilities: 77.9%

Unemployment Rate

- People with disabilities: 7.9%
- People without disabilities: 3.8%





U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Helping Workers with Disabilities Get Ahead Through Good Jobs: A Toolkit of Practical Strategies

- This DOL [toolkit](#) provides strategies and best practices to recruit, hire, retain, and advance workers with disabilities in good jobs in construction, manufacturing, and clean energy.
- The toolkit is organized into the following sections, each of which contains strategies and information relevant to disability inclusion in good jobs:
 - [Defining Disability](#)
 - [Planning to Include Disabled Workers](#)
 - [Recruiting and Hiring Disabled Workers](#)
 - [Retaining and Supporting Disabled Workers](#)
 - [Advancing Disabled Workers](#)
 - [Resources](#)
 - [Glossary](#)





Focused Recruitment and Addressing Barriers to Entry

Use inclusive language and images

Identify and focus on locations frequented by women and people with disabilities

Engage and empower women and people with disabilities to help with recruitment

Build strong partnerships

Provide comprehensive wraparound supportive services (childcare, transportation, technology)

Maintain flexibility in the recruiting process





Retaining People with Disabilities in your Workforce



- **Accessible Onboarding**. Orienting employee to new space; introduce employee to staff; sharing written policies and workplace culture.
- Help potential co-workers understand how to collaborate with workers with disabilities **through training**.
- **Change culture to allow for flexibility and inclusion.** For example, offer flexibility in time and place when possible. For example, a flexible band for lunch breaks would allow employees not just to eat, but also to take medication if needed.
- **Check in often.** Be sure to ask for feedback about whether new employees find the accommodations and support they receive to be helpful. Employers can use the information to make adjustments; for example, a worker may find that a different shift is easier for their public transit commute.



Comprehensive Wraparound Supportive Services

Childcare and
Other Caregiving
Supports

Accessible
Transportation

Legal Assistance

Mentorship

Mental Health
Counseling

Emergency Cash
Assistance

Substance Use
Treatment

Financial
Counseling

Provision of Work
Tools or Work
Clothes

Accessible
Housing

Accessible
Technology

Reasonable
Accommodations





Make the Intentional Choice to Build a Diverse Workforce

Build	Build inclusive local/regional partnerships.
Center	Intentionally center diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA).
Make	Make data-driven decisions.
Create	Create an intentional regional equity and diversity plan.
Foster	Foster the demand for a diverse workforce.





ODEP Technical Assistance Resources

- [Job Accommodation Network](#)
- [Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion](#)
- [Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology](#)
- [Campaign for Disability Employment](#)



CHRISTINE FIRKINS, EdD

Account Executive

Convo Communications





Fostering Connections: Enhancing Accessibility in the Workplace for Deaf Employees

Christine Firkins, EdD

About Convo

As a **Deaf-owned** company founded in 2009, Convo brings a unique perspective to fostering human connection, focusing on **tailored communication solutions**. In a world where technology often centers around spoken language, we provide accessible solutions that feels right for everyone.

Recognized as a leader in the Deaf-owned business space, Convo **empowers communities** in five countries through **specialized interpreting services**. We are committed to bridging the communication access gap between Deaf/hard of hearing individuals and companies, ensuring **meaningful and equitable interactions**.



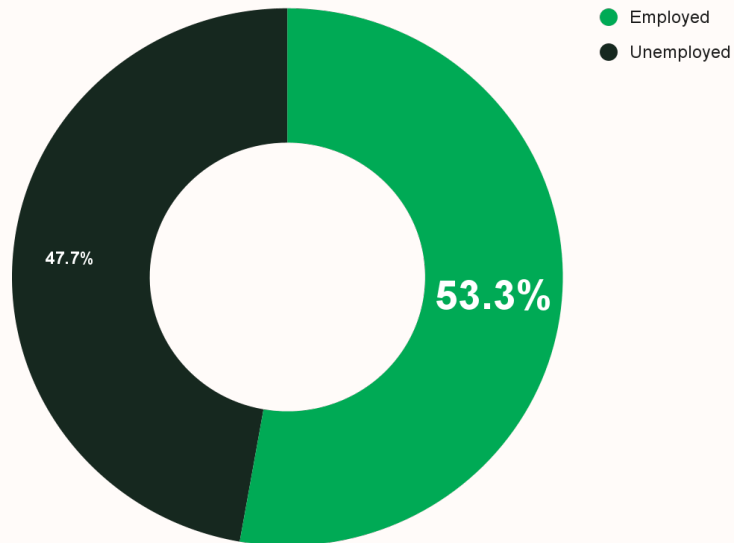
Key statistics on D/HH workplace accessibility

Employment rates

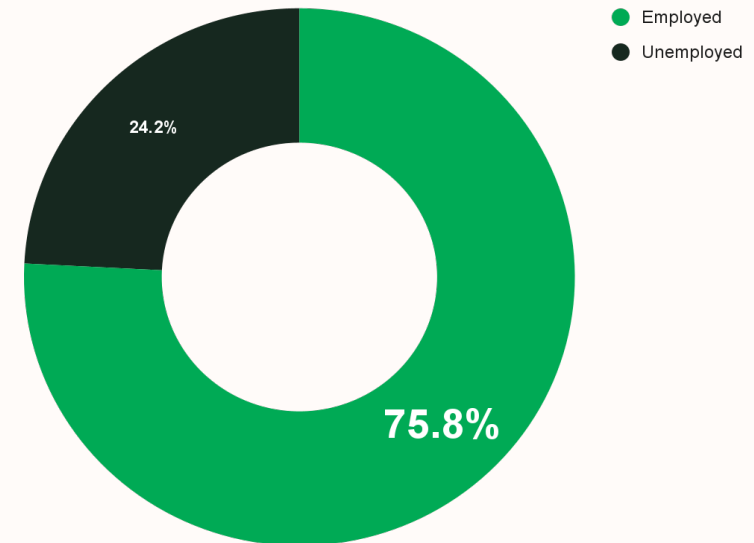
Workplace barriers

Job satisfaction & retention

53.3% of deaf individuals are employed vs. **75.8%** of hearing individuals.



Deaf individuals who are employed



Hearing individuals who are employed



Key statistics on D/HH workplace accessibility

Employment rates

Workplace barriers

Job satisfaction & retention

Do D/HH individuals face communication barriers at work?

70% — Yes

30% — No



Key statistics on D/HH workplace accessibility

Employment rates

Workplace barriers

Job satisfaction & retention

D/HH employees who receive appropriate accommodations report **greater job satisfaction and loyalty to their employers**. These accommodations not only enhance employee performance but also contribute to improved retention rates.



Ensuring Accessible Communication in the Workplace



On-demand Interpreting

Our app, Convo Now, offers **instant access** to a virtual interpreter for spontaneous workplace conversations, whether in-person or online. Whether you're meeting face-to-face or participating in a Zoom call, Convo Now ensures smooth and effective communication for all team members.



Pre-scheduled Interpreting

Convo Tailored is designed for **scheduled and specialized interpreting services** in the workplace. Whether it's an important meeting, presentation, or a specialized field like engineering, Convo Tailored connects you with an interpreter equipped with the relevant terminology and context, ensuring a seamless communication experience.



Ensuring Accessible Communication in the Workplace



[Jad talks with his supervisor via a sign language interpreter on the phone]



Inclusive Job Interviews for Deaf Applicants & Virtual Interpreting at No Cost for Interviews

We provide **seamless virtual interpreting** services for job interviews with Deaf applicants, ensuring effective communication and equal opportunities —**all at no cost to companies.** This initiative fosters an inclusive hiring environment and supports Deaf individuals in securing meaningful employment.

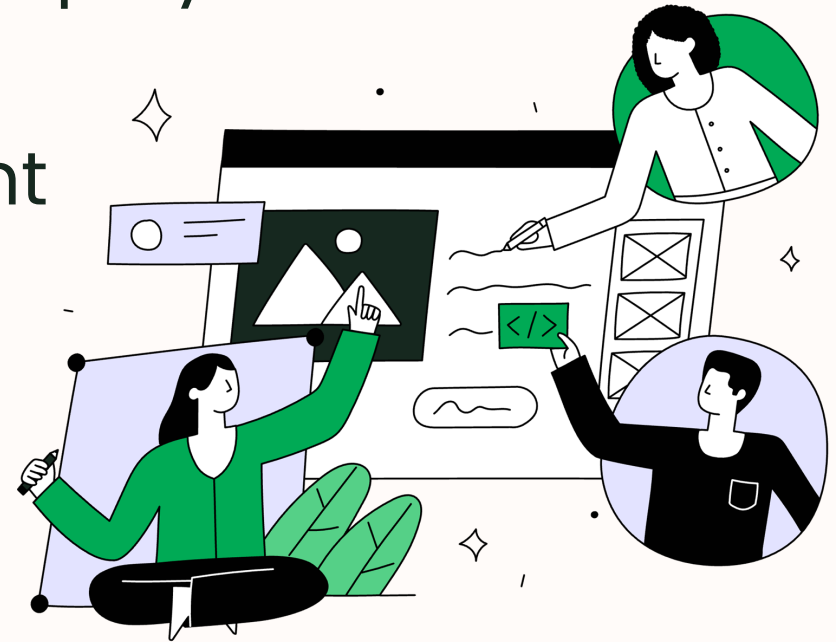


A report from the Return On Disability Group reveals a stark reality: **while 90% of companies claim to prioritize diversity, only 4% actively incorporate disability considerations into their diversity initiatives.** This highlights a significant gap in disability inclusion within corporate diversity strategies.



Action Steps for a More Inclusive Workplace

- Understand barriers in the job application process
- Prioritize accessibility throughout employment
- Foster an inclusive environment
- Commit to continuous improvement



Thank you



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Q & A
