

Exploring Misperceptions, Pay Gaps, and Lingering Disparities During National Disability Employment Awareness Month

This Disability Employment Awareness Month, we're discussing the challenges of working with a disability and how employers/disability advocates can help.

DETROIT, MICHIGAN, UNITED STATES, October 18, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In recognition of

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Steve Locke

National Disability Employment Awareness Month, we're here to discuss the challenges of working with a disability and how employers and disability advocates can help.

First, some key statistics: in 2021, just 31% of people with disabilities were currently employed compared with roughly 73% of people without disabilities of working age. In addition, people with disabilities make, on average, just [68 cents for every dollar earned by people without disabilities](#), and women with disabilities earn just 72 cents

per dollar made by a man with a disability. Finally, the poverty rate for people with disabilities is roughly twice that of people without disabilities, at 27% vs. 12%. [One in nine working-age adults](#) has a disability, and disability status alone is correlated with poor economic and employment outcomes.

While the ADA provides vital workplace protections, changing our culture and dispelling falsehoods are key to reducing disparities. Ableism in the workplace can keep employers from fully utilizing the talents of candidates with disabilities and can also cause workers with disabilities to adopt unsustainable practices to [“prove their worth.”](#) Employers must create workplace cultures that value employees as people, maximize their skills and competencies, and welcome and integrate everyone effectively.

Creating these inclusive cultures involves educating people about disability, ableism, and inherent bias so they are able to view their workplaces more critically. Then, reviewing current policies and practices to identify those that may negatively impact employees with disabilities or prevent certain candidates from being hired in the first place. Organizations like the Centers for Independent Living provide training and consulting resources to make workplaces more accessible and inclusive and other state-level resources or nonprofits offer support to specific disability subpopulations.

Tackling pay disparities is another critical aspect of making workplaces more equitable. Employees who are qualified and achieve performance goals should receive the same pay regardless of disability status, and the ADA prohibits employers from paying people with disabilities less because they require accommodations. In addition, recent legislation is taking aim at a clause in the Fair Labor Standards Act that permits some employers to pay people with disabilities a “subminimum wage” calculated based on their performance or skill level. Policies and legislation may be the most effective ways to reduce pay disparities for good, but employers can promote equity today by evaluating individual performance and ensuring that there are not large differences in pay for any employees performing the same work. Resources like the CILs or whatcanyoudocampaign.org can help employers harness the talents of people with disabilities effectively and ethically.

People with disabilities are bringing critical talents and perspectives to our workplaces, and they must all have the same opportunity as others to seek meaningful, sustainable employment. MiSILC and the CILs are proud to work alongside employers to help create more inclusive and accessible workplaces where all employees can achieve their full potential. To learn more about training opportunities and services for employers, connect with your local CIL at <https://dnmichigan.org/cils/>.

Tori Sullivan-Cortez
Michigan Statewide Independent Living Council
+1 313-644-2048
[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[Facebook](#)
[Instagram](#)
[TikTok](#)

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