



People with Disabilities at Work

The Newsletter about Customized
Employment
For Persons with Disabilities

Sponsored by *Whatever It Takes*
A Project Funded by the US Department of Labor
Office of Disability Employment Policy



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Did you know that ... Of the 72.3 million families counted in the 2000 Census, nearly 28.9% of them (about 2 in every 7 families) reported having at least one member with a disability. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000)

What's New?

The Whatever It Takes (WIT) staff is pleased to announce the addition of 7 new customers receiving services through the WIT program. In addition to pre-employment and job development services more than half of our customers are utilizing the Individual Accounts system. Customers are able to purchase employment related items and services, such as: transportation to and from the job, interview attire, uniforms, assistive technology and interpreting services.

The WIT Program is Pleased to Welcome a New Team Member:

Cheryl Gootnick has joined Abilities, Inc. to work in the WIT Program as a Case Manager. Cheryl received her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Queens College in 2000 and subsequently worked for the Administration for Children's Services as a Child Protective Specialist, and for New York Presbyterian Hospital as an Intake Coordinator. She also volunteered as a Parent Advocate for the Committee for Pre-school Special Education in Queens. Cheryl looks forward to working with the customers, job developers, case managers, and job coaches to positively impact the customer's employment situations.



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Check These Dates

☑ **April 24, 2006:** Staff Training: "Issues and Concerns Protecting Adults from Abuse". Speaker: Chris Pawelski, Director, Global Institute, Abilities! 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm in the Smeal Learning Center at Abilities, Inc. in Albertson, NY.

☑ **May 5, 2006:** Listen and Learn Series: "Identify Theft and Credit Card Fraud". Speaker: Steven Schwimmer, Renaissance Merchant Processing. 2:15 pm - 3:15 pm in the Smeal Learning Center at Abilities, Inc. in Albertson, NY.

☑ **May 15, 2006:** Staff Training: "Status of Gangs and Interventions to Counteract Them". Speaker: Detective Deborah Berschaud, Police Department of Nassau County, Special Investigation Squad. 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm in the Smeal Learning Center at Abilities, Inc. in Albertson, NY.

☑ **May 19, 2006:** Listen and Learn Series: "Needs of Corporate America". Speaker: Joan McGovern, Vice President, Access Ability Resource Center, JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A. 2:15 pm - 3:15 pm in the Smeal Learning Center at Abilities, Inc. in Albertson, NY.

☑ **June 2, 2006:** Listen and Learn Series: "How to Integrate into the Workforce and Work Culture". Speakers: Fred Kaplan, Manager, Retail Employees Union and Andrea Ross, President, Ross Resources, Inc. 2:15 pm - 3:15 pm in the Smeal Learning Center at Abilities, Inc. in Albertson, NY.

☑ **June 26, 2006:** Staff Training: "Knowing the Difference between Rheumatoid and Osteoarthritis". Speaker: Nancy Simington, Program Director, Arthritis Foundation - Long Island Chapter. 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm in the Smeal Learning Center at Abilities, Inc. in Albertson, NY.



If you are interested in attending a training program, please contact Jennifer Sulmonte, Case Manager at (516) 465-1402 for a complete listing of the Abilities, Inc. 2006 training schedule.

Pre-Employment Workshops Help the Interview Process

In an effort to service customers more effectively, the WIT Staff conducts Pre-Employment Skills Workshops every other month. These Workshops are designed to help customers prepare for the job interview and provide a setting where they can share their job search experiences. The pre-employment workshops focus on strategies needed and used to ensure a successful interview.

The Workshops enhance each customer's ability to interview well and get the job! Two Workshops previously held were: "*How to Prepare for the Interview*" and "*Grooming and Personal Care*". The nuts

and bolts were reviewed in *"How to Prepare for the Interview"* along with some mock interview sessions to help customers with responses to frequently asked questions. The *"Grooming and Personal Care"* Workshop reviewed interview etiquette, some dos and don'ts, business attire, male/female personal care and good grooming tips. Each participant received a goody bag filled with soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, deodorant, and a comb/brush. Our most recent workshop held on April 5th reviewed the topics of *"Resumes and Cover Letters"*. The WIT staff presented tips on preparing the resume, cover letter, career choices, realistic jobs and where to search for job leads.

As a result of the Workshop activities, customers feel confident in the interview process; they like to share job search experience, appreciate the support team and enjoy working with the WIT staff. The Pre-employment Workshops provide an excellent opportunity for Case Managers, Job Developers, Job Coaches and Customers to work together to achieve a common goal—a *successful interview and job!*

~Lisa M. Harris
Coordinator Special Projects

There is a Link between Good Grooming and a Successful Job Search

Many of us object to being judged based solely on our appearance during the

interview process. We prefer to be hired because of our skills and abilities, not because of our dress and grooming. But like it or not, appearance is just as important. Your appearance sends a message about motivation and professionalism. Dress as though you want the job -- as though you already have the job. Consider researching the company before the interview, it may help you decide on the appropriate clothing to wear.

Personal grooming is just as important as what you wear. You may select the right clothes, but neglecting personal hygiene can ruin the image you wish to present. Review the following grooming checklist before meeting with an employer:

AREA/ITEM	GROOMING
Hair	Washed, cleaned, trimmed and neatly combed or arranged.
Facial Hair (men only)	Freshly shaved; mustache or beard neatly trimmed.
Fingernails	Neat, clean and trimmed. Polish conservative colors.
Teeth	Bushed and fresh breath.
Breath	Beware of foods which may leave breath order. Beware of tobacco, alcohol and coffee odor. Use a breath mint if needed.
Body	Freshly bathed/showered. Use deodorant.
Make-up (women only)	Use sparingly and be natural looking.
Perfumes/Colognes/ After-Shave	Use sparingly or none at all. Your scent should not linger after you leave.

The most important goals are (1) to feel good about the way you look and (2) to project a positive attitude. When you feel good about yourself, you naturally convey confidence and optimism. These nonverbal messages are as important during the interview as the verbal skills you use in selling you confidence.

~**Jennifer Sulmonte**

Senior Case Manager

What is the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) and Who does it Protect?

In 1990 the federal government passed the Americans With Disabilities Act that covers employers who have 15 or more employees including state and local governments and protects qualified persons with disabilities from being discriminated against in the workplace. Employers must provide reasonable accommodations for the physical or mental limitations of a qualified individual to enable him or her to perform the essential functions of a job.

The ADA defines an individual with a disability as a person who:

- has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (like sitting, standing or sleeping);
- has a record of such an impairment; or

- is regarded as having such an impairment.

Some examples of impairments are epilepsy, diabetes, HIV infection, loss of hearing, vision or limbs, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, severe forms of arthritis, para and quadriplegia, hypertension, carpal tunnel syndrome, bi-polar disorder, mental retardation and depression.

A qualified employee or applicant with a disability is an individual who, with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of his/her job. Reasonable accommodation may include, but is not limited to:

- Providing assistance in completing application forms, designating special parking spaces.
- Job restructuring, modifying work schedules, reassignment to a vacant position, job coaching, and job sharing.
- Acquiring or modifying equipment or devices, adjusting or modifying tests, training materials, or policies and providing qualified readers or interpreters.

An employer is required to make a reasonable accommodation to the known disability of a qualified applicant or employee if it would not impose an "undue hardship" on the operation of the employer's business. Undue hardship is defined as an action requiring significant difficulty or expense when special factors such as an employer's size, financial

What is the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) and Who does it Protect? (Cont'd)

resources and the nature and structure of its operation are considered.

An employer is not required to lower quality or production standards to make an accommodation; nor is an employer obligated to provide personal use items such as glasses or hearing aids or the services of a personal assistant.

In fiscal year 2005, Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC), the agency within the US Department of Labor responsible for enforcing the ADA, received 14,839 charges of disability discrimination. During that period, the EEOC resolved 15,357 charges and recovered \$44.8 million in monetary benefits for charging parties. This figure does not include monetary benefits that were obtained through litigation.

The ADA makes it unlawful to retaliate against an individual for opposing

employment practices that discriminate based on disability or for filing a discrimination charge, testifying, or participating in any way in an investigation, proceeding or litigation (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission).

For more specific information about ADA requirements affecting employment, contact:

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
P.O. Box 7033
Lawrence, KS 66044
(800) 669-4000 (voice)
(800) 669-6820 (TTY)
<http://www.eeoc.gov>

For more information regarding the ADA go to: www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahoml.htm

~Ivy Chang
Disability Program Navigator

