

LARIMER COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

OCTOBER 12, 2016

UNTAPPED WORKFORCE DISCUSSION

Subject Matter Experts, Including Panelists:

- **Marilee Boylan**, ARC of Larimer County
- **Alan Cohen**, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- **Nate McCarty**, High Country Beverage
- **Joyce Shorthill**, Columbine Health Systems
- **Deb Spotts**, CSU Center for Community Partnerships
- **Sean Quass**, High Country Beverage

Untapped Workforce Overview

- People with disabilities are the largest minority group in the United States. It's the only minority group anyone can join at anytime. It's the most inclusive group with all ages, genders, religions, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic levels represented.
- Employees with disabilities have the same absentee and sick rates as people without disabilities.
- 51% of accommodation involve no cost. Accommodations are any change or adjustment to a job, the work environment, or the way things are usually done. Examples include: schedule flexibility, task list, assessable ramp, and screen reader software.
- The unemployment rate is higher for people with disabilities. 85% of people with intellectual disability are not working.
- There is assistance available! Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) offers a variety of services including:
 - Help recruiting qualified candidates
 - Job Coach/Employment Consultant assistance through job search to worksite assistance to training with new employee. Help fades over time but is available if job requirements change or new accommodations are needed.
 - Customized trainings and workshops on a variety of topics including accommodations and barriers
 - Assistance with employer incentives
 - Evaluations and diagnostic testing for individuals to obtain and maintain employment
 - Support services such as transportation and daycare services to ensure job
- When referring to people with disabilities use person first language. Instead of wheelchair bound you could say Mary uses a wheelchair. If it is immaterial, don't mention at all.

Panel on Hiring People with Challenges

Both Columbine Health Systems and High Country Beverage work with DVR. They talked about their experience in hiring people with disabilities, including challenges and benefits.

- One of our employees has grown into operating some machinery for us. It's very gratifying to see him gain new skills and become a more diverse employee.
- Culturally speaking our program has really grown and can be like family. For example they join other employees for social activities outside work.

- We gained impeccable attendance, near perfect safety, and awesome employees from hiring from the untapped workforce.
- We've had potential customers ask about our program and were so impressed they signed up for services.
- We hire for a variety of positions including dietary aide, housekeeping, pharmacy technician, and medical records technician. Disabilities vary from intellectual to physical, including one employee with a seizure disorder.
- The assistance of the Coach is so valuable. If I had a Coach for all employees we would be much more successful.

Summary, Discussion Items, and Potential Next Steps

Q. Small businesses have a cash flow issue and might struggle to hire an employee they weren't sure could be successful. Is there help for small businesses? A. Yes, Marilee does job development primarily with small to mid-size businesses. We understand it has to be a good fit and meet your business needs.

Q. Are the Job Coaches industry specific (healthcare, manufacturing)? A. No, the Employment Coaches are trained to go into any business and look at what the job functions are and might make suggestions on some changes based on the person's abilities or other factors.

Q. I could use some temporary help. Can you help me find people? A. Call DVR, we'd love to talk with you.

Q. What are you doing to encourage self-advocacy? A. We want people to be as self-sufficient in the workplace as possible. We encourage them to self-advocate based on their abilities.

- Not all jobs have to be 40 hours a week. Look at how a job can be performed or how you could hire part time employees.
- Keep in mind the jobs are diverse, we've been talking some about janitorial/cleaning jobs but there is a variety of people with disabilities with a variety of skill sets.
- There are a variety of disabilities, including hidden disabilities. It is acceptable to ask an employee if they need any accommodations to help them do their job.
- Keep in mind we're all only temporarily able.
- ***We know there is a shortage in the community, we complain we can't find people. I challenge WDB members, as employers, to work with DVR on hiring from the untapped workforce.***