

# BBI BRIEFS

*A publication of the Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University*

## **Policies that Support the Inclusion of Employees with Disabilities**

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**Burton Blatt Institute**  
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## Overview

The Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University has undertaken a number of projects to study corporate practices and the employment of persons with disabilities. Exploration of these issues, through the development of scientifically rigorous and externally valid research standards, and company case studies derived from these standards, helps to address the gap in field research and strives to positively influence the employment of people with disabilities.

BBI researchers have been examining the employment of persons with disabilities and corporate culture for over 16 years, and have produced a body of scholarly articles investigating the different aspects of these issues, disseminated through a wide range of peer-reviewed publications, newspapers, and magazines.

Americans with disabilities have significantly lower levels of employment than their non-disabled peers. Prior study of employment rates among people with disabilities generally has relied on a “supply-side” approach, analyzing how personal characteristics predict employment and earnings. These models have not sufficiently analyzed variables related to employer demand (and the interaction of employer demand/supply and the environment) as predictors of employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Thus, there is a need to systematically understand demand characteristics for qualified workers with disabilities, particularly as work requirements change over time.

This project, funded by a five-year grant from the U.S Department of Education, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), sets out scientifically rigorous and evidence-based methods to develop, identify, and evaluate employment demand-side models. It generates new knowledge to better understand market-driven workforce trends: to improve employment outcomes and inform employment practices and policies to prepare individuals with disabilities for the changing needs and requirements of the present and future workforce.

The project weaves together a series of eight targeted and coordinated demand-side research projects, providing new data gathering, data analysis, hiring tools, partnership building, and experimental study, to inform comparison of the efficacy of demand- and supply-side models in understanding and improving employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Additionally, the sub-projects deal directly with issues of “corporate culture.” These include focus groups and town meetings to understand the nexus between disability and corporate culture, as well providing specialized trainings for senior management, department heads, and hiring personnel.

The partnership is an unprecedented nationwide collaboration of economists, statisticians, and leading experts in law, public and disability policy, corporate culture, applied life studies, technology, rehabilitation, and education. Project partners will translate findings into valid and practical tools for large and small businesses in different market sectors to improve employment outcomes for persons with disabilities.

To learn more go to [bbi.syr.edu](http://bbi.syr.edu)

## Policies that Support the Inclusion of Employees with Disabilities

Inclusive cultures extend beyond basic or token presence of workers who have disabilities. They encompass both formal and informal policies and practices, and involve several core values:

- **Representation:** The presence of people with disabilities across a range of employee roles and leadership positions<sup>1</sup>
- **Receptivity:** Respect for differences in working styles and flexibility in tailoring positions to the strengths and abilities of employees<sup>2</sup>
- **Fairness:** Equitable access to all resources, opportunities, networks, and decision-making processes<sup>3</sup>

Inclusive policies contain provisions and guidelines that support the full integration of all employees, including those with disabilities, into an equitably functioning workplace. An inclusive policy may be one that is specifically geared towards eliminating discrimination or facilitating diversity. Or it may be related to any kind of structural or personnel issue, such as workforce training, parking, employee benefits, communications, or work procedures. It may or may not include language about the inclusion of specific resources for people with disabilities.

The measure of whether a policy is inclusive is, essentially, its outcome – meaning that when the policy is implemented as intended, it helps to generate a work environment in which no employees are excluded, marginalized, treated unfairly, or prevented from accessing any resources, responsibilities, opportunities or benefits of employment.

In addition, workplace policies need to carefully plan for the provision of reasonable accommodations. When assessing the effectiveness of existing accommodations policies, employee experiences can be described based on two measures of equity. The first involves the perception of “procedural justice”, meaning that employees with disabilities perceive the policy as fair, accessible, and functional.<sup>4</sup> The second, “interactional justice,”<sup>5</sup> refers to the experience of feeling that the managers or colleagues with whom one is interacting are behaving fairly, reasonably, and respectfully.<sup>6</sup> For more information see our brief: **[Reasonable Accommodation Policies & Practices](#)**.

More tools and resources related to developing a positive and disability-inclusive workplace, including an **[Inclusive Culture Checklist](#)** and the **[“Inclusive Culture and the Workplace” webinar](#)** are available at the **[Demand-Side Employment Placement Models project website](#)**.

YOUR FEEDBACK IS IMPORTANT TO US!

You are invited to participate in a research study examining the benefits and impact for employers of the Employer Demand briefs and toolkit resources. [Learn more about the survey](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Disability Case Study Research Consortium, Conducting & Benchmarking Inclusive Employment Policies, Practices, and Culture (2008), [hereinafter Consortium]

2 Id. Work, Family & Health Network, University of Minnesota, Flexible Work & Well-Being, available at:

<http://www.kpchr.org/workfamilyhealthnetwork/public/ResearchersContent.aspx?pageid=51>

3 Work, Family & Health Network, supra note **Error! Bookmark not defined.** Riley, C., Disability & Business: Best Practices & Strategies for Inclusion (2006).

4 Consortium, supra note 1.

5 Id.

6 Id.

## Project Partners



**Center for Research on Collaboratories and  
Technology Enhanced Learning Communities**



**Program for Disability Research**



**Disability Research Institute**



**International Center for Disability Information**

**Disability  
Statistics  
Center**


**Disability Statistics Center**



**Law, Health Policy, & Disability Center**

The Demand-Side Employment Placement Models project is a comprehensive research and dissemination grant from the U.S. Department of Education, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), Grant No. H133A060033. Led by the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University, the project is generating a better understanding of market-driven workforce trends, and informing employment practices and policies to prepare individuals with disabilities for the changing needs and requirements of the present and future workforce.

**To learn more go to [bbi.syr.edu](http://bbi.syr.edu)**



**‘We can change the world.  
The first step is to change ourselves.’**

**- BURTON BLATT**

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