



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Mentoring Disabilities

Employees with disabilities are like any other employees - they want to do a good job, appreciate constructive supervision, enjoy new challenges and aim to get ahead. Organizations that successfully recruit and retain qualified disabled employees maintain a competitive edge in the global marketplace. One way to retain such employees is to establish career development plans. Typical programs include team building, professional skills training and mentoring.

Disabled employees can benefit from the guidance of a more experienced employee. HR professionals should encourage employees with disabilities to find mentors, whether or not the mentor has a disability. Once these employees become more experienced, they should be encouraged to mentor other new employees, not necessarily disabled.

Mentors provide many benefits:

- Broadened perspectives about the transferability of skills and interests, as well as future career directions to consider
- Motivation to take calculated risks
- Advice on the politics of dealing with human relationships within the organization
- Honest and constructive feedback about problem areas
- Coaching on technical, interpersonal, and management skills
- Encouragement
- Networking contacts, references, and introductions

Employees with disabilities sometimes face barriers in their day-to-day employment activities. The mentoring process can help break down employment barriers by encouraging individual employees with disabilities to take a more active role in planning and pursuing their careers.

Mentoring programs provide employers access to new talent and an often under-utilized workforce. They also promote greater awareness and understanding of disability in the workplace.