



CT AHEAD

Connecticut Association on
Higher Education and Disability

Meeting Minutes - February 5th, 2021

CT AHEAD – Students with Disabilities Entering the Workforce

Kristen called the meeting to order at 9:45am (27 in attendance)

- Kristen introduced the topic and speaker
 - Tom Cosker from Disability Rights Connecticut (DRCT)
 - Disability Rights Advocate
 - Parent of two children with disabilities
 - DRCT is a federally funded, legal rights, non-profit organization located in Hartford, serving all of Connecticut
 - DRCT's mission is to advocate, educate, investigate and pursue legal, administrative, and other appropriate remedies to advance and protect the civil rights of individuals with disabilities to participate equally and fully in all facets of community life in Connecticut.
 - [There is a handout Tom created for CT AHEAD](#)
- [The recording is available to watch as well](#)

Understand the basics of employment accommodations for people with disabilities

- The ADA is a wide-ranging act, and sometimes misunderstood as a “workplace” law
 - Within employment, it covers individuals throughout the entire job searching process (applying, hiring, training, any conditions of employment, etc.)
 - It applies to ALL work settings (interns, paid, full-time, part-time, etc.)
 - Volunteer work is more nuanced
 - Individual must be “otherwise qualified” – be able to perform the essential functions of the job, with or without, accommodations
 - Employers cannot ask applicants disability related questions, but can ask if the individual is able to complete the essential functions of the job with or without accommodations, and can ask if accommodations are needed
 - After job offer is provided, employers can ask some disability related questions (and require a medical exam if appropriate), as long as this is the same for ALL individuals
- Individuals with disabilities have a right to ask for accommodations
 - The employee and employer must both act in good faith
 - There should be an interactive process which identifies the limitation and reasonable accommodation(s)
 - It is generally the responsibility of the applicant/employee to make the request
 - A disability does NOT need to be disclosed unless an accommodation request is needed
- A reasonable accommodation is any change in the employment process or work which allows the individual with a disability (who is otherwise qualified) to perform the essential functions and enjoy equal employment benefits, such as access to same facilities (lunch room, gym, etc.)
 - Accommodations cannot pose an undue hardship
 - Asking “what is reasonable based on the nature and cost of the accommodation, based on the resources of the facility, the impact to the operation of the company
 - Cannot disrupt or fundamentally alter the nature of the business
 - Cost needs to consider the OVERALL resources of the entire company (for example, resources would consider parent companies and not just the local branch)

- Based on the interactive process, the accommodation received may not be exactly what was asked for, but does need to be effective
- How to make a request?
 - Ask – preferably in writing, but not required
 - Best practice is that the individual themselves ask, but can be from others
 - The employer may have a formal request form, but it is not required
 - If the need for accommodation is not apparent, the employer can ask for documentation which indicates the nature, severity, and duration of the disability, activities which are limited, and how the disability is related to the accommodation(s)
- Answers to participant questions
 - Temporary accommodations can be made while permanent accommodations are being put in place, the employee may choose to take FMLA leave while accommodations are being made (a ramp installed, for example), the employer must make a best effort to the employee does not lose work time/payment in the meantime
 - There is no “steadfast” time for how long an employer has to make the accommodation after the request, however, there has been rulings and other guidance provided through ADA... the timing has to be “reasonable”

Understand the basics of dealing with disability discrimination

- What to do if there is workplace discrimination
 - Education – sometimes coworkers and supervisors are not aware
 - Work with HR
 - Contact DRCT for assistance – NOT legal advice; informational and can provide resources
- Individuals have a right to file a discrimination claim
 - Can be done at any stage of the employment process
 - There are time limits to when a complaint can be filed after incident occurred
 - File through the [Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities](#) or the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#)

Resources to provide to students regarding employment and reasonable accommodations.

- Ask JAN – [Job Accommodation Network](#)
- [Getting Hired](#)
- [Hire Disability Solutions](#)
- [abilityJOBS](#) and [abilityEntertainment](#)
- [American Job Centers](#)
- [Job Corps](#)
- [Bureau of Rehabilitation Services](#) and [Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind](#)
- [See additional resources on the information sheet!](#)

Contact Information

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Presentation ended 10:45am

Respectively Submitted,
Crystal Rose Hill, CT AHEAD Secretary