

Work Well Toolkit

A Resource for Employers



Work Well Program

San Diego's Work Well initiative is a Health and Human Services Agency and Behavioral Health Service initiative focused on reducing the stigma that surrounds mental illness and promotes mental health awareness in the workplace. Work Well brings together a strong network of experts in employment and behavioral health as an important resource for San Diego Job Seekers and Employers. The Work Well initiative is guided by a five year [Strategic Plan](#).



Employment Specialists and How They Can Help My Company

Employment Specialists work closely with individuals looking for support in successfully finding a job. An Employment Specialist's expertise is to identify potential employees who have a strong interest in various working environments and matching them with those employers. Working with an Employment Specialist will help to quickly identify potential employees who are a good fit for your company/business. To connect with an Employment Specialist, contact Mario Becerra, Program Specialist, at (619) 228-2902 or MarioBecerra@workforce.org.



Benefits of hiring someone with lived experience

Employers hire people with a "lived experience" of mental illness for a number of reasons. The primary reason is the same reason that they hire anyone else - in order to get the services of a good and reliable employee. Additionally, Employers may hire an individual with a mental illness because they utilize the consultation and support that an Employment Specialist and their team of mental health support staff offers, and/or because they believe it is the right thing to do. For more information, see the piece *Why Employers Hire People with Disabilities* elsewhere in this section.



Incentives in Hiring

Some of the greatest barriers that employers face are myths and fears about people with lived experience of mental illness. Oftentimes, Employers can access tax incentives and job subsidies to help recruit, hire, and retain employees through the San Diego Workforce Partnership (see *Hiring Incentives and Job Subsidies for Employers*).






Flexibility in Hiring and Staffing

There are a range of options and opportunities for hiring someone with lived experience, including providing internships/work experience placements for individuals with disabilities, as a means of increasing the "comfort level" of staff and the potential applicant.




Myths and Facts about Lived Experience

While most people have experienced a mental health or emotional problem, or know someone else who has had that experience (*in fact, one in five California adults report needing help at some time in their life with a mental health or emotional problem*), there are numerous myths about mental illness, particularly in the workplace:

Myths

-  Hiring employees with disabilities increases worker's compensation insurance rates.
-  Employees with disabilities have a higher absentee rate than employees without disabilities.
-  Considerable expense is necessary to accommodate workers with disabilities.

Facts

-  Insurance rates are based solely on the relative hazards of the operation and the organization's accident experience, not on whether workers have disabilities.
-  Studies by firms such as DuPont show that employees with disabilities are not absent any more than employees without disabilities.
-  Most workers with disabilities require no special accommodations and the cost for those who do is minimal or much lower than many Employers believe. Studies have shown that 58% of accommodations cost absolutely nothing, and most accommodations cost no more than \$500. In addition, a range of hiring incentives can be available to Employers.

Resources for Employers

The following additional resources are available for further information on hiring and retaining employees in the workplace:

- ✓ Accommodations and the Law
- ✓ Fair Hiring Practices
- ✓ Hiring Incentives and Job Subsidies for Employers
- ✓ Accessing Employment Programs/America's Job Center of California
- ✓ Employer's Checklist
- ✓ Employer Success Stories

Community Resources

The following groups provide expert information and support to Employers and Job Seekers, and are key resources in linking with people looking for work:

- ✓ [Work Well Committee](#)
- ✓ [San Diego Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities and the Disability Training Committee](#)
- ✓ [Job Accommodations Network](#)
- ✓ [San Diego Society Human Resource Management](#)
- ✓ [Department of Rehabilitation](#)

For more information on the Work Well Initiative, contact Mario Becerra, Program Specialist, at (619) 228-2902 or MarioBecerra@workforce.org.