

Helpful Suggestions from the ASSET* AmeriCorps Program

Top five considerations for inclusive recruitment

1. Include welcoming and inclusive language in job descriptions, presentations, and program literature. Examples include:
 - “We encourage people with disabilities and others to apply.”
 - “We provide reasonable accommodations as needed to people with disabilities.”
 - “Sign language interpreters available upon request.”
 - “Our facilities are wheelchair-accessible.”
 - “Our program materials are available in alternative formats.”
2. Promote Disability Inclusion as an organizational value
 - Convey the message that your organization values diversity and inclusion.
 - Insert a non-discrimination clause in all of your written materials.
 - Provide training for awareness and sensitivity within your organization.
 - Include pictures and stories of people with disabilities on your website, printed material, and newsletters.
3. Know where to target your recruitment efforts. Recruit people with disabilities from:
 - Vocational Rehabilitation Centers and Independent Living Centers
 - Disability Organizations
 - College or University Office for Disability Services
 - Attend disability-related events or conferences where you can set up an exhibit table and/or make a presentation about your organization.
4. Budget for reasonable accommodations
 - Many organizations incorporate a "disability accommodation" line item into every project and administrative budget.
 - 3% of program costs is usually adequate.
 - State commissions should have funds for reasonable accommodations. The OneStar Foundation, for example has such funds for programs in Texas.
5. Collaborate with disability organizations to strengthen outreach and recruitment
 - Set up short, informal meetings with local disability organizations to explain your program and the goals of national and community service.
 - Coordinate a service day project with a disability organization to benefit the organization and/or its consumers.
 - Take advantage of social network platforms such as facebook or twitter to increase your visibility among consumers of disability related groups/pages.

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Top five considerations for inclusive interviewing

1. Before the interview takes place, make it clear that your program is able to provide reasonable accommodations for the interview
 - “We provide reasonable accommodations as needed to people with disabilities”-on all outreach materials
 - Ask if reasonable accommodations are required for the interview
 - Provide bus route information as necessary.
 - Be sure to use People First language while setting up your interviews
2. Make sure the interview location is accessible for people with various disabilities
 - Complete an accessibility check of your service location
 - Be adaptable, if the space where you usually hold interviews turns out to not work for a specific person, be willing to move to a more accessible location
3. Use the service description as a guide, essential functions are key
 - Do not ask questions about a person’s disability, instead ask about the individual’s ability to perform essential functions with or without an accommodation
 - Listen to what the applicant has to offer, before making assumptions about needs for accommodations
 - Ask questions that relate specifically to the duties of the position
4. Always ask the same questions of all applicants
 - While interviews differ from person to person, all applicants, those with and without disabilities, should receive the same questions
 - However, be sure not to ask questions like, “what is your t-shirt size?” as that can be construed as discriminatory
 - Be adaptable, if you have difficulty understanding someone with a speech impairment, do not pretend to understand, ask them to repeat or repeat back what you think they said
 - Don’t rush or skip questions in the interview
5. Always direct attention to person with a disability
 - Personal attendants or interpreters may be present during the interview, be sure not to focus attention on them
 - If a service animal is present, remember that it is working and should not be interacted with
 - Be respectful of adaptive equipment (recording devices, speech devices, any medical equipment)

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Top five considerations for reasonable accommodations

1. Develop written policies and procedures
 - Ensure employees are aware of the policies and procedures and there's consistency when processing accommodation request
 - Employers should decide who will be responsible for implementing and overseeing accommodation policies and procedures.
2. Learn how to recognize and respond to an accommodation request
 - During regular performance evaluation, when discussing performance challenges, work with member to think of ways to address challenges. Solutions may include reasonable accommodation
 - Develop a timeframe for when the accommodation will be provided
3. Ask why the member needs an accommodation
 - When trying to determine effective accommodation options, first determine why the accommodation is needed. Each disability is different, and what works for one person can be different for the next. Specifically, what 'service activity' or job function needs an accommodation
 - If you need further clarification, the member can ask their medical provider to explain why the accommodation is needed.
 - Document, document, document
4. Exploring options
 - Once it's determined why the accommodation is needed, you'll need to explore accommodation options.
 - There will most likely be a few options to go with, so discuss the pros and cons of a few of them with the member.
 - Again, the AmeriCorps member, or the AmeriCorps member's medical provider, is often the best starting point.
 - Allow the member to explore accommodation options. The organization is free to choose among accommodation options, but if the goal is to provide effective accommodations, it makes sense to try to provide the accommodation that the member prefers when possible.
5. Monitor and update accommodations
 - Once you have successfully determined and implemented an accommodation, some accommodations may need to be monitored and periodically updated; equipment may need periodic maintenance, software may need to be updated, methods may need to be modified as the workplace changes.
 - A good way to monitor accommodations is to keep the lines of communication open. Communication is important throughout the accommodation process, and members need to know that they can revisit an accommodation if needed before performance problems result.

Helpful Suggestions from the ASSET* AmeriCorps Program

Top five considerations for addressing performance challenges

1. Create systems for regularly checking performance of all members
 - Develop clear expectations
 - Weekly check-ins, evaluations, etc
 - Identify reasonable accommodations during performance evaluations
 - Administer system consistently for all AmeriCorps members
2. Create a supportive environment
 - Make sure teammates with and without disabilities feel they can ask each other for support-teamwork is key
 - Keep open lines of communication
3. Have policies/procedures in place for handling performance challenges
 - Defer to your policies/procedures when challenges arise
 - Do not assume a disability is the cause of an issue
 - If a disability is disclosed or determined to be the cause for performance issues, discuss accommodations that can be made to improve performance
4. Know the roles and boundaries of supports
 - Personal care attendants
 - Job coaches
 - If unsure how to proceed, ask for training and technical support

Helpful Suggestions from the ASSET* AmeriCorps Program

Top five considerations for planning inclusive service projects and trainings

1. Ensure training/project facilities are accessible to people with different disabilities
 - While hotels may claim to be 'handicap accessible' many hotel staff members do not know what that means. Complete an accessibility checklist of meeting space, hotel, and service project area. Meet with staff beforehand to discuss questions that may come up
 - Accessibility surveys of service sites are often if not always required
 - Make sure space are accessible by public transportation if possible
 - Remember that many people who use wheelchairs HATE table skirts!
2. In planning training/project, ensure that alternative formats are available upon request
 - Potential alternative formats: Braille, large print, digital files, audio files, etc
 - Sign language interpreters should be scheduled in advance
3. In planning training/project, ask participants for any accommodation needs
 - Dietary restrictions
 - Interpreters
 - Dog relief areas
 - Attendant care services (overnight trainings)
4. Vary training/project presentation methods for people with different learning styles
 - Remember there are different learning styles, Audio, Visual, Tactile
 - Educate all participants on different learning styles. Some training methods used with people with disabilities in mind can be useful to all members.
 - Ask what accommodations are required for full participation. Find volunteers or creative ways to accommodate
 - Let participants know what materials are available after the event, i.e. video, voice recording, handwritten notes, etc
5. Partner with "expert" organizations for additional support
 - When organizing a service project, think of ways to make it more inclusive, if more support is needed link with a disability organization for additional support
 - When planning trainings, contact organizations that coordinate trainings that typically include people with disabilities, good tips can be shared.
 - Provide list of Personal Care Attendant services for out of town guests. For additional support contact the Independent Living Center in your community.