

October is National Disabilities Employment Awareness Month;

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Easterseals NJ is educating NJ businesses about how and why to hire people with disabilities; NJ employee success stories

Looking for a job is never easy, but those challenges multiply for the one-in-four Americans living with a disability, as reflected by the high rate of unemployment within this group. People with disabilities are both unemployed and under-employed. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, not even one in five people with a disability was employed in 2019, while in the same year, two-thirds of people without a disability had jobs. When COVID hit, things only got worse.

That's why Easterseals NJ, a champion of rights for people with disabilities and the largest disability services not for-profit in New Jersey, has created a guide to help more employers hire more people with disabilities. An educational tool and reference handbook, Easterseals NJ's Inclusive Hiring Guide raises awareness of the broad set of disabilities people have, including many that may not be readily apparent. It gives detailed guidance for recruiting, interviewing, and onboarding workers who will bring talent and diversity to the workplace.

"Companies of all types and sizes need to become informed and motivated to actively recruit people with disabilities. We're jumpstarting the process by showing the real benefits and breaking down the barriers," said Easterseals NJ CEO and President Brian Fitzgerald. "We know that employers across New Jersey have good intentions to hire people with disabilities, but too many still aren't doing it. We want to help turn their good intentions into action."

Studies show that companies that champion people with disabilities outperform others, driving profitability and shareholder returns. In some instances, revenues were 28% higher, net income 200% higher, and profit margins 30% higher. In addition to improved profitability, research shows organizations that employ people with disabilities have greater retention, reliability and punctuality, employee loyalty, inclusive work culture, and enhanced company image.

"It's important that all businesses do their part to hire individuals with disabilities," said NJ Senate President Steve Sweeney (D- Gloucester/Salem/Cumberland), who recently met with several local New Jersey Chambers of Commerce on this topic. "Easterseals New Jersey's new Inclusive Hiring Guide is an invaluable resource for firms that are striving to do their part by implementing more inclusive hiring practices. I look forward to working with Easterseals New Jersey to ensure that all workers, regardless of their ability, have an equal opportunity to succeed."

In addition to incorporating the guide's principles and strategies into their own recruitment efforts, Easterseals NJ provides help to companies who would benefit from working directly with a disabilities services organization. This is particularly relevant as COVID-19 restrictions have altered many companies' abilities to create and sustain their own internal accommodations and services.

About Easterseals NJ

For over 70 years, Easterseals New Jersey has helped individuals and families with disabilities or special needs live, learn, work and play in their communities with equality, dignity and independence. Annually, over 5,000 people in New Jersey with developmental disabilities receive services in programs designed to help them achieve independence and full community-integration. For more information on Easterseals New Jersey and its statewide disability services, visit <http://www.eastersealsnj.org>

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