



Home Again and Back to Work: The employment of veterans with disabilities

By Hannah Rudstam

NETAC

National Technical Assistance, Policy, and Research Center
for Employers on Employment of People with Disabilities

EARN

Employer Assistance and Resource Network

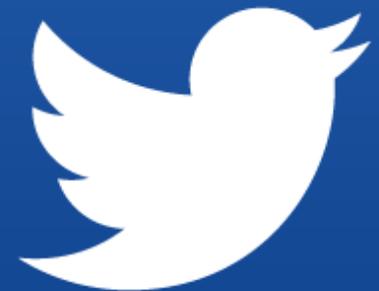


Northeast ADA Center

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Our Presenter

Hannah Rudstam is the Director of Training at the Northeast ADA Center at Cornell University. She has a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin—Madison and has experience designing tools for hiring, performance management, turnover prevention and employee development systems.



Her current work at Cornell focuses on the role of face-to-face leaders in disability inclusive workplaces and on preparing employers for a workforce that includes veterans with disabilities.



Cornell University
ILR School
Employment and Disability Institute



Northeast ADA Center

Goals for Session

- 1. Overview: Why this matters!**
- 2. Our Research**
- 3. Implications for Practice**



How many veterans are returning from recent engagements (Gulf War Era II Veterans)?

- Hard to predict!
- There are about 2.5 million Gulf War Era II vets
- More than a third were deployed more than once
- About 400,000 were deployed three or more times



How many veterans have disabilities?*

Using American Community Survey data:

- 29.6% (3.5 million) veterans ages 21-64 have a disability
- 12.4% (1,495,000) veterans have a service-connected disability
- 6.7% report both an ACS and a SC disability

Using National Center for Veterans data:

- 1996: About 2.2 million veterans report SC disability
- 2011: About 3.4 million veterans report SC disability

Using Bureau of Labor Statistics 2013 Report:

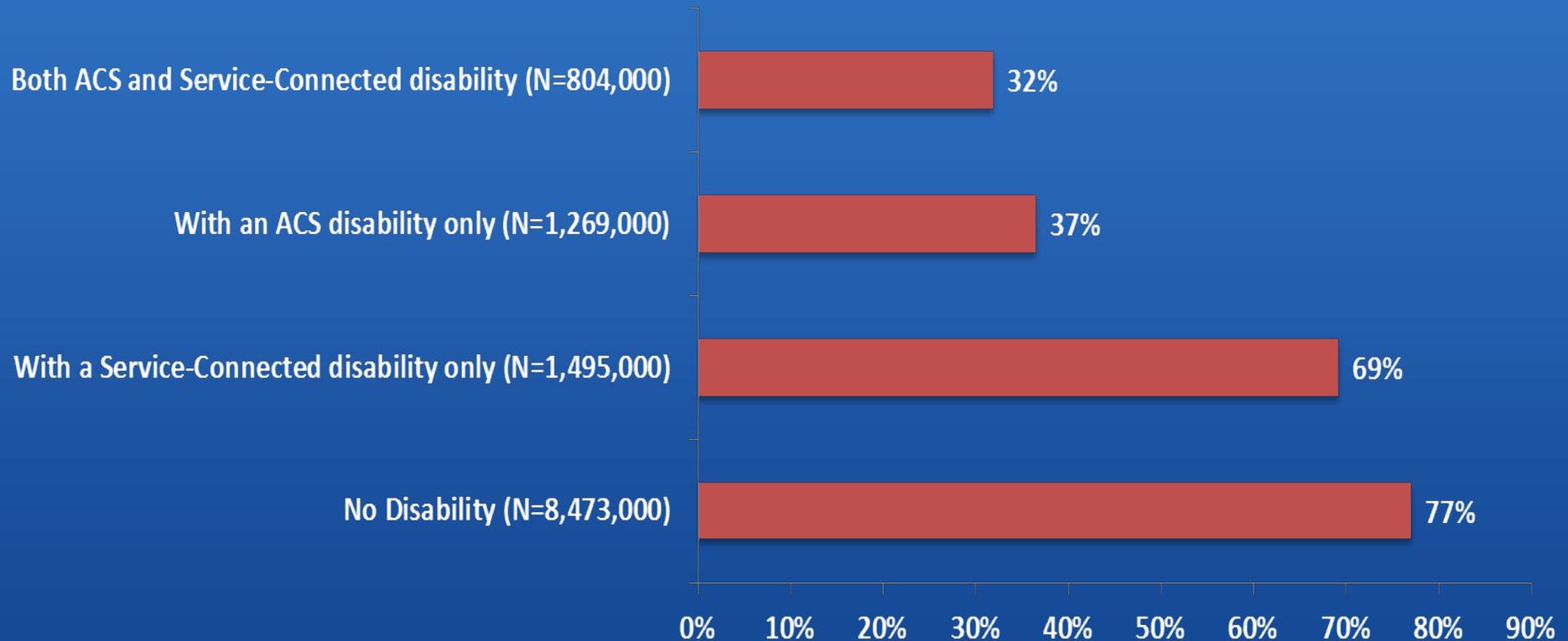
- 28% of Gulf War Era II veterans have a service-connected disability

Using Veterans Disability Claims data:

- As of 2012, 45% of veterans filed one or more disability claims

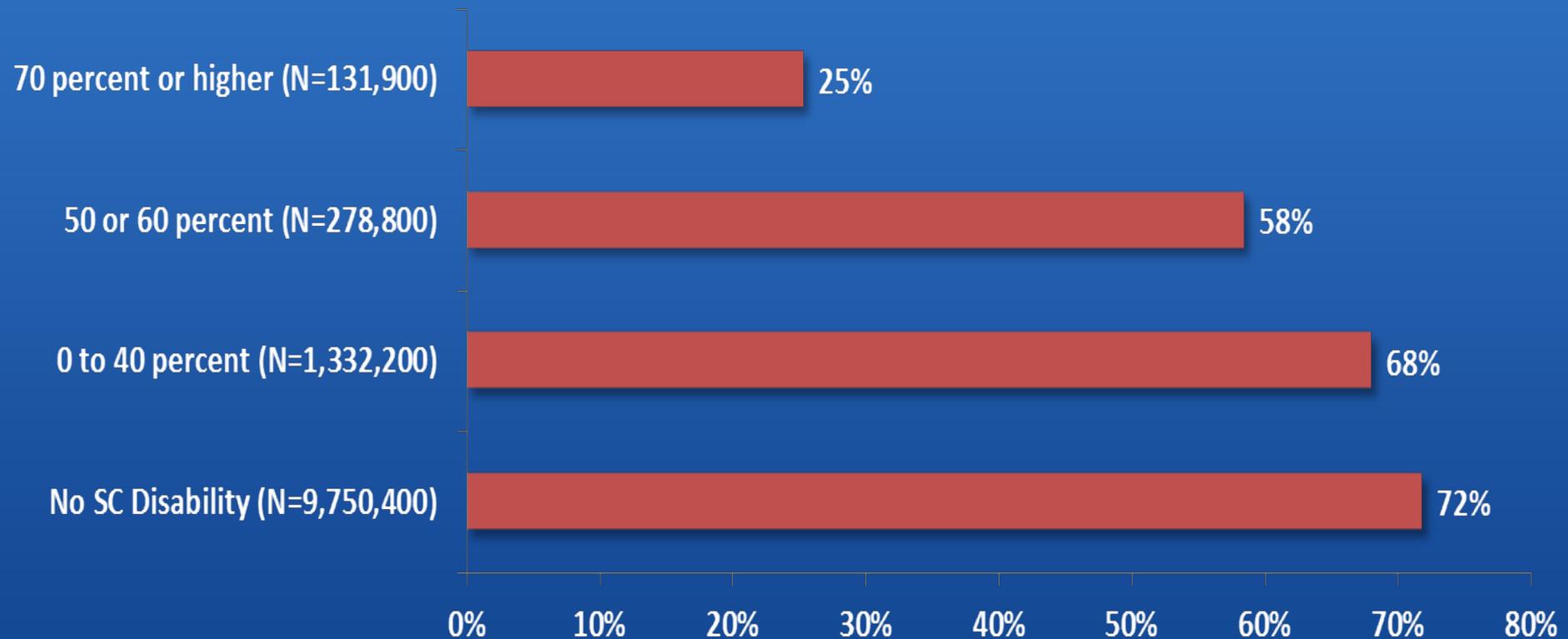
What is the employment rate of veterans as compared with veterans with disabilities?

Employment rate of civilian veterans by disability status (ages 21-64)



What is the employment rate of veterans as compared with veterans with disabilities?

Employment rate of civilian veterans by SC disability rating (ages 21-64)



What is the employment rate of veterans as compared with veterans with disabilities?

Some further highlights...

- 29.1% unemployment rate of young male Gulf War Era II Veterans
- Veterans have nearly the same levels of education as the overall population



About PTSD

- A critical review of the literature by Richardson, Frueh & Acierno (2010) places the rate of PTSD at **4% - 17%**
- Tanielan & Jaycox, though, place the rate of PTSD among returning veterans at **about 19%**



Richardson, L., Frueh, C., Acierno, R. (2010). Prevalence Estimates of Combat-Related PTSD: A Critical Review. *National Institutes of Health Public Access Manuscript*. Accessed at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2891773>.

Tanielan T, Jaycox, L, (Eds.) (2008). *Invisible wounds of war: Psychological and cognitive injuries, their consequences, and services to assist recovery*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Center for Military Health Policy. Accessed at <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG720.html>.

About TBI

- Tanielan & Jaycox (2008) found that about one-in-five returning veterans had TBI, the most common being a “pressure wave” close-head TBI
- Type of weaponry & combat result in increase of close-head TBI (US DoD, 2011)
- Total casualties: 54,509
- Largest reason code—
**WEAPONRY,
EXPLOSIVE DEVICE: 34,647**



Research Findings

Two Surveys:

- Knowledge
- Beliefs
- Actions/practices

1. Employer study:

- SHRM National
- 1,014 survey respondents
- All HR professionals

2. Veteran study:

- Kessler Foundation
- 474 survey respondents
- Range of veterans with disabilities



Highlights from the Employer Study: Employer Knowledge

- Knew the basics of the ADA and USERRA
- Had some confusion about which laws applied
- Had some confusion around disclosure
- BUT: Did not know about resources for finding/recruiting vets with disabilities
- AND: Did not know how to accommodate vets with signature disabilities



Highlights from the Employer Study: Employer Beliefs/Willingness

Overall perceived benefits. **Generally, employers did believe in benefits of employing VWDs.**

- 73% agreed or strongly agreed that hiring VWDs would benefit their business/organization
- 24% were unsure

Job performance expectations. **Employers generally believed VWDs could perform on the job.**

- 72% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that VWDs perform as well as other employees
- 26% indicated they were not sure

Customer relations. **Employers generally believed hiring VWDs would be good for customers**

- 71% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that hiring VWDs would improve their customer image;
- 24% were unsure



Highlights from the Employer Study: Employer Beliefs/Willingness

YET...

Perceived effort burden. **Despite these positive beliefs, employers thought VWDs would require more effort.**

- 61% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that accommodating workers with PTSD or TBI would require more effort on the part of the employer

Manager time burden. **Generally, employers believed VWDs would take more of a manager's time.**

- 61% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that accommodating VWDs would take more of a manager's time
- 29% were unsure
- 10% believed accommodating VWDs would not take more of a manager's time/effort

Highlights from the Employer Study: Employer Beliefs/Willingness

YET...

Cost burden. **Generally, employers were unsure if accommodations would be costly.**

- 35% of respondents disagreed or disagreed strongly that it is costly to accommodate workers with PTSD or TBI.
- 52% of respondents were unsure whether accommodating workers with these disabilities would be costly

Signature disabilities. **Generally, employers were unsure if workers with the signature disabilities would be violent in the workplace.**

- 39% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that workers with PTSD were more likely than others to be violent in the workplace
- 53% did not know



Highlights from the Employer Study: Employer Actions/Practices

General Recruiting Practices. **Some employers use recruitment sources targeting veterans.**

- 38% of respondents reported that their organization generally used recruitment sources targeting veterans
- 27% reported using recruitment sources that targeted people with disabilities

VWD Recruiting Practices. **Yet, surprisingly, these numbers drop precipitously when respondents were asked more specifically about using common recruiting sources targeting VWDs.**

- Only 2-3% of the employers surveyed reported using any of the specific resources among a list of possible sources for finding and recruiting VWDs
- **Varied by organization size:** 25% of smaller organizations used recruitment sources targeting VWDs; 77% of larger organizations



Study #2: Veterans with Disabilities

In collaboration with:



- Kessler Foundation
- Tip of the Arrow Foundation
- SM Clark, U.S. Army
- Northeast ADA Center

Highlights from the Veterans' Study: Veterans' Knowledge

- Overall, scored higher on a True/False test about ADA than what we thought. But, nearly half believed these three statements were true:
 - *A veteran with a disability must tell an employer about a disability when they apply for a job.*
 - *A worker who did not tell their employer about a disability when they were hired can be fired when the employer finds out.*
 - *The employer does not have to change anything about how a job is done to accommodate a worker with a disability.*
- 44% strongly agreed or agreed that they have a good understanding of what types of accommodations they will need on the job
- 36% report they know where to get information about employment issues
- Fewer, only 29% have thought through how they will discuss an accommodation need with an employer.



Highlights from the Veterans' Study: Veterans' Beliefs/Expectations

- Almost 60% of respondents feared disability discrimination in hiring
- 29% believed they were ready to advocate for themselves as a person with a disability in the workplace
- Almost half (46%) agreed/strongly agreed that their disability would prevent them from obtaining many jobs
- Substantially fewer (35%) agreed/strongly agreed that their disability will prevent them from performing jobs
- Less than half (44%) were comfortable communicating their accommodation needs with an employer
- Those with the signature disabilities fear disability discrimination more



Highlights from the Veterans' Study: Veterans' Actions/Practices

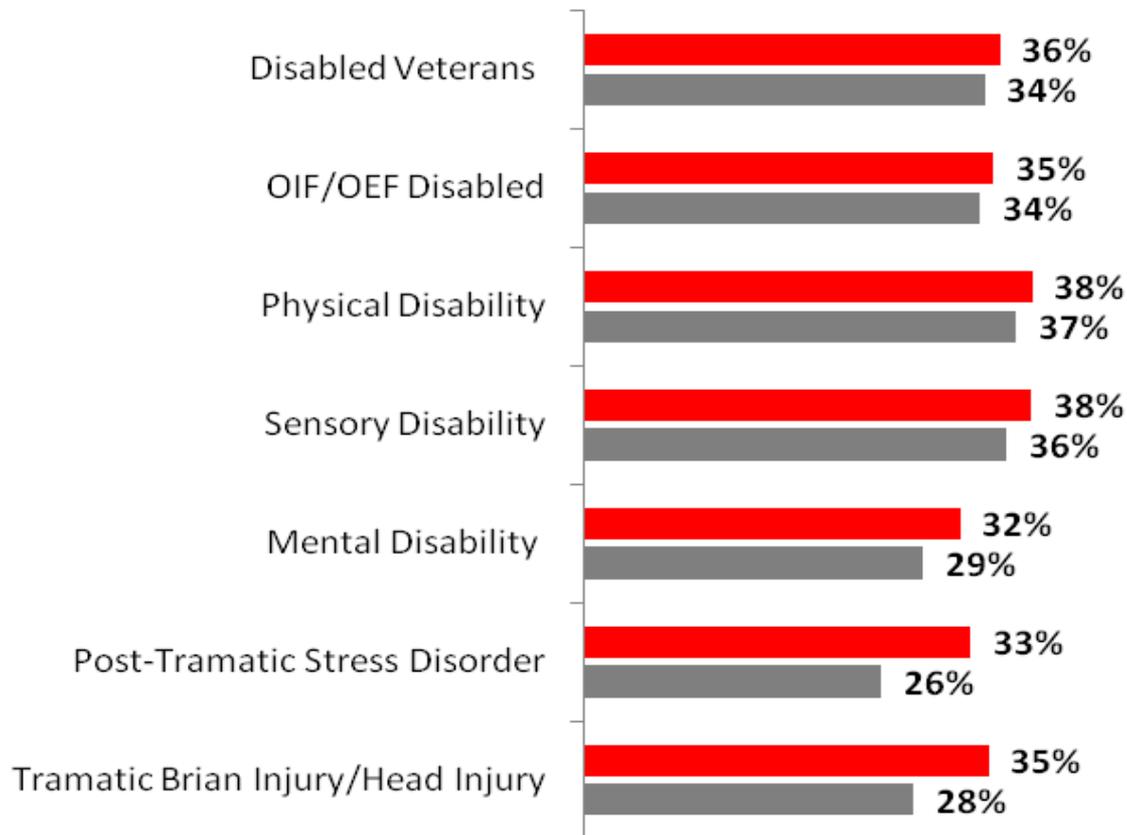


- Most veterans do not intend to request an accommodation either during hiring or employment
- Veterans with physical disabilities were somewhat more likely to ask for an accommodation

Study #2: Veterans with Disabilities

How likely is it that you will tell your employer that you have disability ?
very likely/somewhat likely

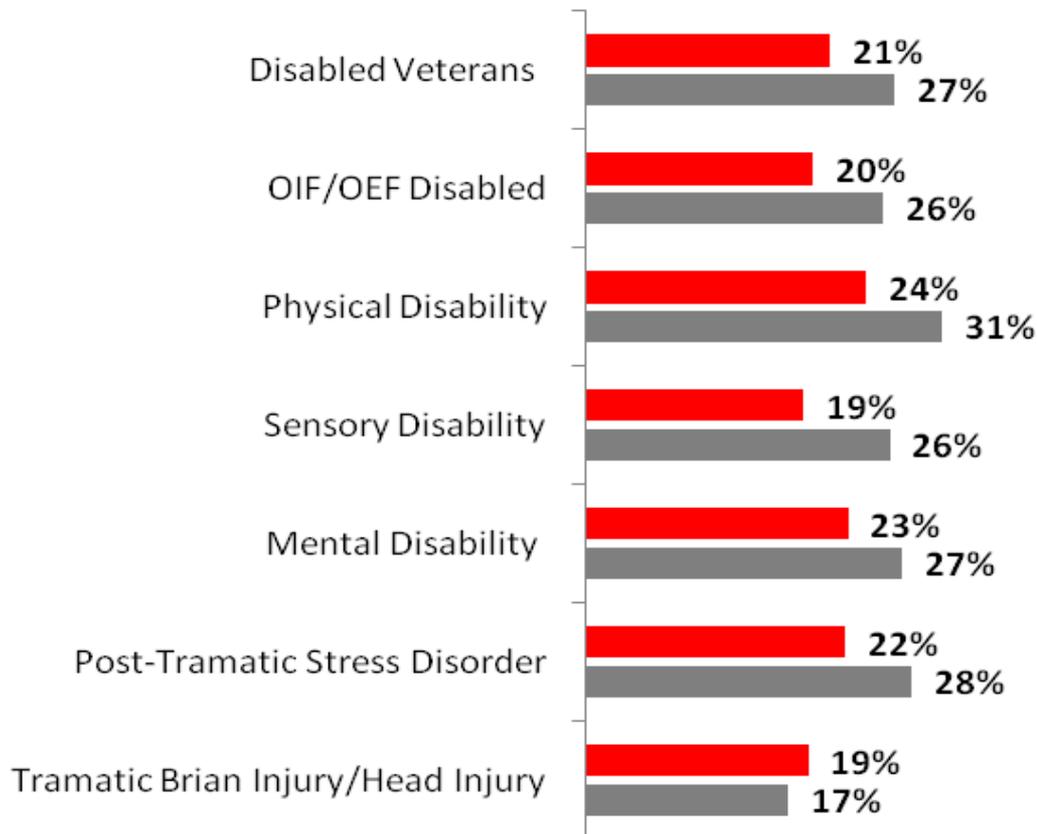
■ Hiring-Process ■ Employed



Study #2: Veterans with Disabilities

How likely is it that you will ask for (an) accommodation(s) for your disability ? very likely/somewhat likely

■ Hiring-Process ■ Employed



What's to be done?

Implications for Practice...

Develop awareness of misperceptions
Understand the special workplace dynamic
of signature disabilities:

- Changing conditions
- Broaden your accommodation repertoire
- No one size fits all
- Veteran may still be coming to terms with the disability after the return to civilian work life
- Understand that social stigma can come into play



Organizational climate; building trust and
openness

Practice implications: About Organizational Climate



- Build awareness among face-to-face leaders-- managers/supervisors
- Designate expertise for veterans with disabilities issues, specializing in signature disabilities
- Can veterans with disabilities reach out to others who have been through the same thing? Consider peer contacts or peer-based mentoring programs for veterans
- Assess your climate:
 - Does everyone understand disability inquiry and disclosure guidelines?
 - What actually happens to people when they come forward with an accommodation need?

Practice Implications: Building a Talent Pipeline

- Designate expertise in recruiting veterans with disabilities
- Build collaborations and partnerships. Find one or two recruitment partners
- Gear up to implement federal regulations for contractors (VEVRAA)
- Recruitment (and other) resources need to be made easier to use and access



Additional Resources

- Employer Assistance and Resource Network (EARN) – www.AskEARN.org
 - Recruiting Veterans – <http://askearn.org/refdesk/Recruitment/Veterans>
 - Creating an Inclusive Work Environment – [http://askearn.org/refdesk/Inclusive Workplaces/Creating an Inclusive Work Environment](http://askearn.org/refdesk/Inclusive_Workplaces/Creating_an_Inclusive_Work_Environment)
 - Business Strategies that Work – <http://askearn.org/refdesk/General/BusinessStrategies>
- Northeast ADA Center Making Work Happen Online toolkits – <http://www.makingworkhappen.org/>
- HR Tips – www.hrtips.org
- Employment and Disability Institute (EDI) – www.ilr.cornell.edu/edi

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