



Employment of People with Disabilities:

Tips for Managers from 6 DHS Colleagues

These informal tips were compiled from the video interviews of six DHS employees. The interviews were conducted during the creation of the “Employment of People with Disabilities: A Roadmap to Success” course.

- **Alvin Shell**, Chief, Force Protection Unit, Office of the Chief Security Officer
- **Joe Tezak**, Director, Office of the Executive Secretariat, Customs and Border Protection (**CBP**)
- **Brian Parsons**, Senior Policy Advisor, Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
- **Tyra McConnell**, Counterfeit Systems Specialist, United States Secret Service
- **Elizabeth Yao**, Immigration Service Clerk, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (**USCIS**)
- **Kathy Lane**, Selective Placement Program Manager, Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

The 45 minute course is designed for managers and is available on all DHS learning management systems. In addition to the short videos and other material, the course contains an extensive listing of resources, including resources specifically targeted to help employees who are veterans with disabilities.

The course was created by the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties’ CRCL Institute.

Questions or comments? Contact CRCLTraining@dhs.gov

In General

Talking about Disabilities

- “Never ask what an employee can’t do; instead ask what he or she *can* do.” – *Alvin Shell*
- “When you talk with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, make sure that you make direct eye contact with *them* and not with their interpreter.” – *Tyra McConnell*

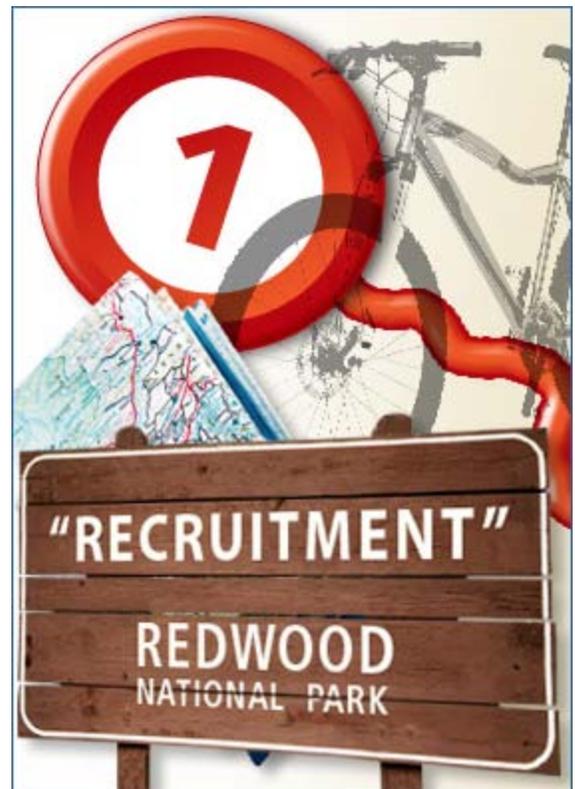
Offering Help

- “If you see someone having difficulty, it’s always best to ask: ‘What do you need?’ or ‘What can we do for you?’ and then let them respond. Avoid framing the situation in a negative way by making statements such as ‘You look like you’re not reaching that table very well.’” – *Elizabeth Yao*

- “Look at a disability as not a ‘dis’ in the sense as a disadvantage, a dislike. Instead, look at it as an ability to create possibilities.” – *Joe Tezak*
- “Always be open and never be afraid to ask.” – *Elizabeth Yao*
- “Avoid using third person statements such as ‘tell him’ or ‘tell her’ when using an interpreter to speak to a person who is deaf or hard of hearing. Instead, communicate with the deaf or hard of hearing person as you would with any other colleague.” – *Tyra McConnell*

Thinking of Candidates with Disabilities

- “Hiring managers should consider candidates with disabilities as a largely untapped resource. All of the research and best practices show that the more experience managers have in working with employees with disabilities, the more confident they become in proactively recruiting for additional employees with disabilities in the future.
- “Summer internships, interagency details, and temporary appointments are great opportunities for new managers and new employees with disabilities to build positive experiences together.” - Brian Parsons
- “Contact your disability program manager or selective placement program manager for help. A list of these contacts is in the ‘Roadmap’ course on resources section.” - Kathy Lane

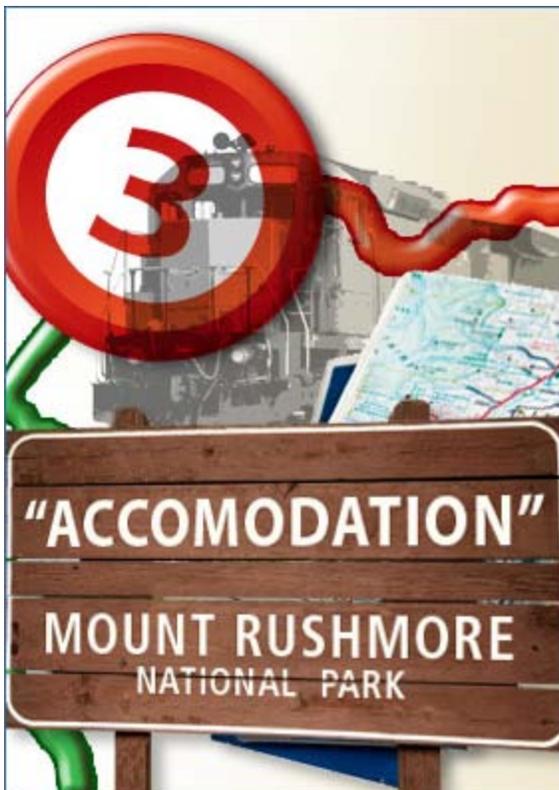
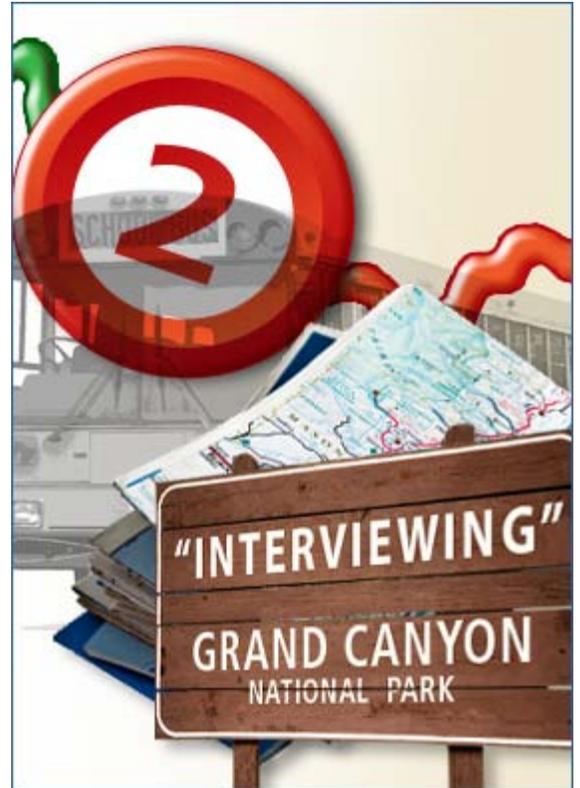


Using an Interpreter

- “When interviewing or hiring a hard of hearing or deaf person, you should request an ASL (American Sign Language) interpreter who is knowledgeable and has background experience in the field of work or the topic area you plan on discussing. Such requests ensure that communication is smooth and accurate.” – *Tyra McConnell*
- ‘Consider using Schedule A hiring authority for persons with disabilities. It will streamline the hiring process. A downloadable brochure is available as part of the ‘Roadmap’ course resources section.’ - *Kathy Lane*

On Accommodations

- “Ask two questions: ‘What accommodations do you need?’ and ‘How can I help you?’” – *Alvin Shell*
- “While interpreters are most often used by deaf or hard of hearing people to facilitate communication, remember that interpreters are also a reasonable accommodation for people who can hear but would like to communicate with their deaf and hard of hearing coworkers.” – *Tyra McConnell*



- “A supervisor may see an issue but may not know the exact solution. Employees should tell supervisors about their special needs so that a supervisor knows how to accommodate their disability properly.” – *Elizabeth Yao*
- “Never disclose accommodations, even necessary accommodations, without the employee’s consent.” – *Alvin Shell*
- “Have an open discussion about accommodations initially. Ask: ‘What can we do for you?’ or, ‘This is what we do in the Department, is there anything that we can do for you to make your job easier?’ These general questions put the burden on an employee to let a supervisor know what accommodations are needed. In the future if a supervisor sees that the employee needs more help or a different type of assistance, the supervisor can pinpoint what the employee’s needs and offer a suggestion.” – *Elizabeth Yao*

Telecommuting

- “Not only do I support telework for my staff, but the DHS and federal government are very supportive of telework. Telecommuting works. It is a benefit for not only for the employer (who gets results), but for the employee.” – *Joe Tezak*

Disaster Preparedness

- “When it comes to preparing the workplace for emergencies, always remember the importance of communicating directly with employees.

“There are easy, respectful ways to ask employees what their assistance needs would be in an emergency. For example, during new employee orientation and as part of a regular message to the workforce regarding safety matters, the employer can encourage anyone who may have additional needs during an emergency to mention these needs to a supervisor and the office’s emergency coordinators. The employee with a disability can also identify this need as part of the reasonable accommodation process.

“The key is to open up and maintain lines of communication about emergency preparedness that are based on the employer’s genuine commitment to workplace safety along with the employee’s voluntary, confidential disclosure of information.” – *Brian Parsons*

