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College Africa Group – Disability Awareness: Working with People with Disabilities

People with disabilities represent a significant and largely underutilised resource for businesses. Many disabled persons are underemployed or unemployed. As a result of advocates for diversity, as well as a shrinking labor pool, employers are taking a serious look at hiring and retaining people with disabilities. This two-day workshop will give supervisors, managers, and human resource consultants tools and tips for creating a diverse workplace.

During this workshop, participants will learn to:

- Prepare to welcome people with disabilities into their workplace
- Interact with people with disabilities
- Identify and overcome barriers in the workplace
- Use respectful, appropriate, acceptable language in any circumstance
- Understand what their company can do during hiring and interviewing
- Understand what job accommodation is and how it applies in their workplace

Defining Terms

To start, participants will learn what the terms “disabilities” and “stereotypes” mean.

Misconceptions and Realities

There are plenty of misconceptions, as well as realities, to working with people with disabilities. We'll explore some of those in this session.

A Business Case

In this session, participants will complete a case study to explore why companies should hire people with disabilities.

Dissecting Labels

This session will discuss why labels are inappropriate and how they can make people feel. We will also provide participants with some ground rules for being respectful and using appropriate language, as well as how to be practical when discussing a disability. Several lists of inappropriate terms and more appropriate language will be provided.

Accessibility

Accessibility refers to making your workplace, and your business, available to people. Although laws differ between regions, this session will cover some basics of physical accessibility. Attitudinal barriers will also be discussed.

The Cornerstones of Diversity

Diversity experts Armida Russell, Amy Tolbert, and Frank Wilderman have identified four cornerstones of diversity development. They are knowledge, acceptance, understanding, and behavior. We will examine each cornerstone in detail during this session.

Encouraging Diversity by Hiring

This session will address two key hiring issues: what can the company ask, and what can the candidate expect?

Using the STOP Technique

Diversity expert Lenora Billings-Harris has developed a four-step technique that you can use when someone is behaving in an inappropriate manner. It's called STOP! Participants will learn about the technique through a lecture and will then practice it in a role play.

Communication Essentials for Disability Awareness

In this session, we will talk about respecting confidentiality, preparing documentation, and where to find good resources.

Communication Styles

This session will allow participants to take a more objective look at the advantages and disadvantages of both sides of different dichotomies related to communication styles.

Critical Conversations

Next, we will give participants a framework for discussing disabilities. We will include specific questions that are appropriate for gathering information without infringing on an employee's rights.

How Do We Make It Happen?

To wrap up the course, we will explore how you can use accommodation and job shadowing to create a truly accessible workplace.

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