



As far as you want to go.™

What is Walgreens Outreach?

Outreach is an effort by Walgreens to enhance the opportunities we can offer to people with disabilities by creating relationships with entities that serve or are otherwise interested in the employment of people with disabilities.

Walgreen Co. has a long history of employing people with disabilities, in each situation, a new relationship has been formed with a different entity.

Outreach helps the company mainstream these efforts and maintain a resource databank for employees.

Do you want to learn from Walgreens experience?

Walgreens is eager to share what we have learned in creating an inclusive work environment with other companies.

We realize that our efforts to employ people with disabilities can make a difference for some people, but we can impact so many more by helping others in the business community become more inclusive.

When asked for a quick description of how we did this, Randy Lewis, Sr. VP of Distribution created a concise poster that captures the essence of our efforts:

How To's:

Get a partner to provide workforce

Our employees have been successful because of they receive supports necessary for employment success. In the cases where someone's needs are beyond what we can provide, we have good partners who can offer this additional assistance.

Our partners invest time in understanding our jobs and our workplace, this understanding provides a good background for referring quality applicants and assures a long-term relationship that benefits us, them and the people they serve.

Start with a "rock star" employee

Our success in Anderson can, in some ways, be attributed to the fact that it was a "start-up". Recognizing that most places of employment are already in existence, we took this lesson from existing distribution centers. In these places, the success of management's initiative to hire people with disabilities was higher with a worker who had the ability to do the job and also had an out-going, pleasant personality (as gauged by co-workers).

Hold your ground on standards

Throughout the planning of this initiative, we held the belief that people with disabilities, given the right training and support, could work as fast, as accurately and as safely as our current workforce. In addition, we believed that people with significant disabilities could work full time jobs and be on time. We have seen this proven to be true in all of our buildings, the higher our expectations, the more our workers with disabilities achieved.

Face co-workers' fears with education

This is true for management as well. Due to our limited experience, personally and professionally, with many people with a variety of disabilities, our workforce had fears and stereotypes about people with disabilities in our workplace. These fears were based on portrayals of people with disabilities in the media as well as personal experiences that were not always positive or that demonstrated abilities in the workplace. Through training and experiential opportunities, we were shown people with disabilities being successful in highly competitive environments breaking all stereotypes we held. Without facing these fears, our management and workforce would not have had faith in this new labor pools' capabilities.

Lessons Learned:

You don't need an expert to do this

Using partners, common sense and faith, we have become very successful in creating an inclusive work environment, one building at a time. Although we provided many training opportunities from experts, the actual lessons came from the experience of managing and working in a respectful, inclusive workplace that continues to hold high expectations for every worker.

People need permission to "do the right thing"

We did not start out with a design or model on how to accomplish this goal. Many mistakes were made along the way. The freedom to make these mistakes (with good intentions) and continue forward to determine a new path to follow was essential. Our staff have been given permission to find out how this can be

successful in the workplace and then do it. Fear of doing the wrong thing, restricts staff's creativity to approaching unique situations.

Obstacles will surface unexpectedly but can be addressed as needed

We moved forward on the schedule that the work dictated. We did not wait to be ready to do this. If we had, we still would have done nothing. It is impossible to foresee every problem. They will occur, and can be faced as they arrive.

No good deed goes unpunished

At some point, we expect that someone will tell us we are doing this wrong or worse, that we are causing harm. Our intentions to create an inclusive workplace are nothing but intentions to open opportunities and our actions speak to that. We expect criticism and we expect to continue to learn lessons, but this will not detract from our determination to keep improving how we do this.

This is the best thing we've ever done

We started out wanting to change the workplace, what we found was that the workplace changed us. We have found every stereotype we ever held has been destroyed. Every "what if" has been replaced with story after story of success. We are offering opportunities beyond what anyone ever expected and this has benefited both the company and all of our employees.

You can find more information about Walgreens Outreach at:
www.walgreensoutreach.com/