

Lifeworks

A nonprofit serving
people with disabilities

An Untapped Resource: Workers With Disabilities

June 14, 2023

Lifeworks Services, Inc.





About Me

- Muna Mohamed, Director of Diversity and Inclusion at Lifeworks.
- Masters in Management with an emphasis on Organizational Diversity and Inclusion Leadership from the University of Dubuque and a Bachelor's in International Relations with a double minor in Political Science and Communication Studies from Minnesota State University, Mankato.
- Passionate about DEIA – Leverage Lived Experience as a Black, Muslim, Woman.
- Experience working as a Direct Service Professional.

About Lifeworks

Vision

We envision accessible, equitable, and diverse communities.

Equity Statement

Lifeworks strives to be radically accessible, diverse, equitable, and inclusive. We appreciate the vibrancy of difference, center the voices of silenced and marginalized people, and champion universal rights.

Mission

Lifeworks partners with people with disabilities to drive change by increasing opportunity and access in the community.

Learning Objectives

1

Discuss the employment trends and data in the disability community.

2

Debunk the most common myths and misconceptions about disabilities.

3

Explore the most common barriers to accessibility and inclusion.

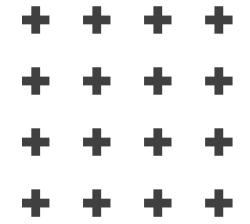
4

Provide takeaways in fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace.



Session Agreements

- We want this to be a **co-created** learning environment. Ask questions and engage!
- Lean into humility and **resist distancing**, this works best if we uncover ways we can relate to the content.
- Acknowledge misinformation and recognize that we must strive to address biases to **center the margins**.



What are the first words that come to mind when you think of disability?

Disability Inclusion 101

Language	General Tips	Best Practices
<p>Don't use language like "wheelchair-bound," "confined to a wheelchair"</p> <p>Do use language like "wheelchair-user"</p> <p>Don't speak only to an interpreter/companion/ personal assistant</p> <p>Do communicate directly to the person with a disability.</p>	<p>Communicate with adults accordingly. Never use baby talk or a paternalistic tone of voice.</p> <p>Remember that wheelchairs and mobility aids are an extension of personal space.</p> <p>Don't assume that someone with an apparent disability needs help/assistance.</p>	<p>Always presume understanding. Every person communicates in some way, even if not verbally.</p> <p>Defer to the person with a disability if they prefer "person-first" or "identity-first" language.</p> <p>Center the safety and comfort of those most impacted by injustice and oppression.</p>

Disability in the Community

Disability is Natural	Disability is Lived Experience	Disability is Intersectional
<p>Disability is a part of human variation.</p> <p>Disability is an asset to our communities.</p> <p>Disability is caused by disabling societal barriers, not by individual differences.</p>	<p>Disability is a diverse identity group; no two people experience disability the same way.</p> <p>People with disabilities are not a monolith. We're leaders, parents, fashion icons, comedians, co-workers, athletes, activists, romantic partners, etc. etc. etc.</p>	<p>All currently non-disabled people are "TAB" – temporarily able-bodied.</p> <p>People with disabilities make up one of the only identity groups that <i>any</i> person can join at <i>any</i> given time at <i>any</i> point in their life.</p>



The Disability Community

Disability is a natural part of human variation.

Disability is a diverse identity group – no two people experience disability the same way.

11.5%

Of Minnesotans
have a disability

51%

Of Minnesotans
with a disability
live in the Twin
Cities Metro

22%

Of Minnesotans
with a disability
are BIPOC

Employment Trends and Data

A person without a disability is 3 times more likely to be employed than a person with a disability.

- 21.3% of people with a disability were employed
- 65.4% people without a disability were employed

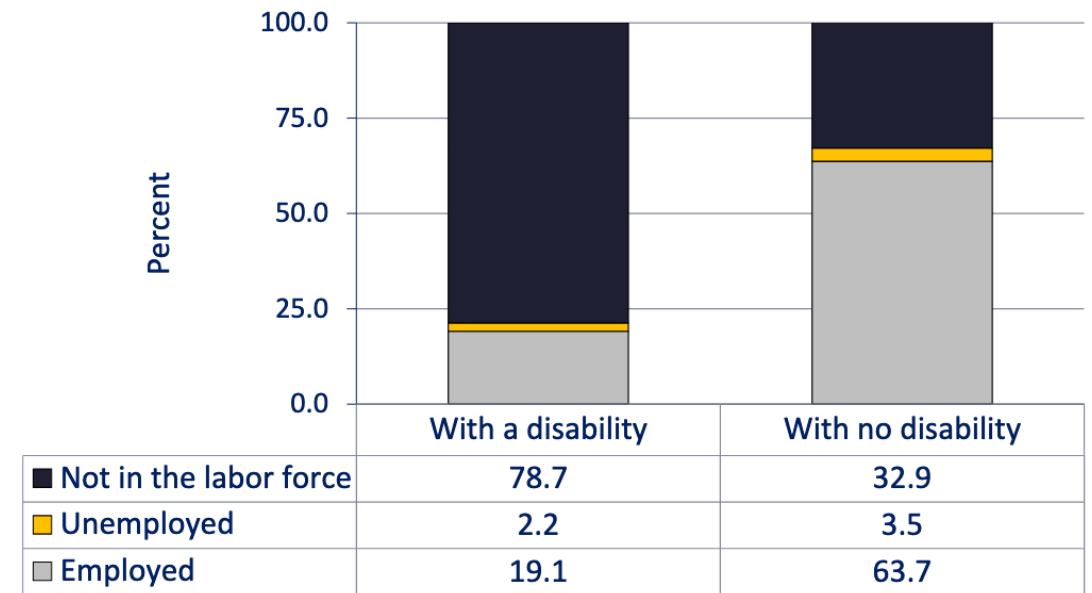
A person with a disability is more likely to be employed part-time.

- 30% of workers with a disability were employed part-time compared to 16% of workers with out a disability.

Unemployment rate of people with disabilities were double that of people with no disabilities in 2021 and 2022.

- 7.6% compared to 3.5%.

Persons with a disability are less likely to be in the labor force



SOURCE: Current Population Survey, 2021 annual averages

8 — U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS • bls.gov



The Business Case for Inclusion

**Access to a Large
Talent Pool**

**Increased Innovation
and Creativity**

**Expanded Market Reach and
Customer Base**

Meet Kirk

- Started working at Peace Coffee in 2010.
- Until 2017, earned subminimum wage labeling coffee bags and placing java jackets on cups.
- Advocated alongside Lifeworks to eliminate subminimum wage work for people with disabilities.
- Kirk and his coworkers created an inclusive environment at Peace Coffee.
- Kirk continues to work at Peace Coffee today, now earning over the City of Minneapolis minimum wage of \$15.00/hour.
- Kirk continues to advocate with employers and the state legislature to eliminate subminimum wage for all people with disabilities.





What are some common myths and misconceptions that are held about people with disabilities?

Myth #1

All disabilities are visible.

Myth #2

People with disabilities are less productive.

Myth #3

Accommodations are expensive and time-consuming.

Dispelling Myths About Disabilities

Myth #4

People with disabilities are a liability.

Myth #5

People with disabilities are helpless and dependent.

Myth #6

People with disabilities are all the same and have the same needs.



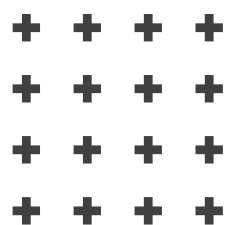
Meet Ajani

- Corporate Services Associate at Allianz.
- Co-founded disability employee resource group at Allianz.
- Serves on multiple boards of directors including Lifeworks, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission in Golden Valley, among others.
- Campaigned alongside Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey and Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison to advocate for citizens with disabilities
- Future aspirations include Golden Valley City Council, Mayor and beyond



Debunking these myths is important for promoting disability inclusion and creating a society that recognizes and values the diversity, abilities, and contributions of all individuals, regardless of their disabilities.





Common Barriers to Inclusion

**Physical
Barriers**

**Communication
Barriers**

**Attitudinal
Barriers**

**Economic
Barriers**

**Social
Barriers**

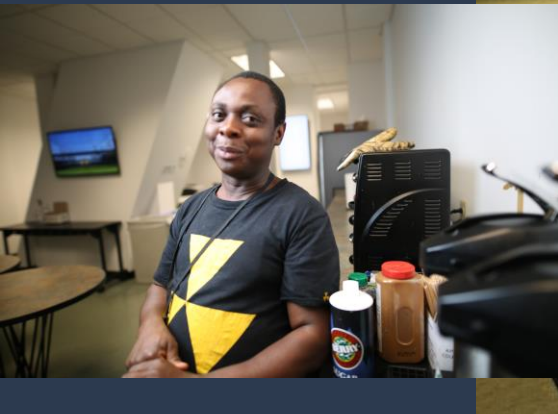
**Programmatic
Barriers**

Meet Jonda

- Started working at Ecolab in 2009 as a Lab Assistant.
- Volunteers at her church and fundraises for MS each year.
- Creates and sell her crafts and arts at the Ecolab Holiday Fair and other local venues.
- Plays softball and bowling and is a part of a book club.
- Jonda has broken past the limits to have her own apartment and live independently.
- When her job was paused during the pandemic, she reached out to her job coach to find other employment so she could continue to pay her bills and maintain her lifestyle.



Creating an Inclusive Workplace



1. **Get Educated** – Learn about different types of disabilities, the accommodations available, and best practices for inclusion.
2. **Communicate Clearly** – Be open and transparent with all employees about policies, practices, and accommodations.
3. **Encourage Diversity** – Recruit and retain a diverse workforce and create opportunities for difference perspectives and ideas to be heard.
4. **Provide Accommodations** – Ensure that necessary accommodations are provided in a timely and respectful manner.



An inclusive workplace benefits EVERYONE!





Let's Discuss

What's on your mind?

What ideas do you have?



Website

Lifeworks.org

Phone & Email

651-454-2732

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Social Media

@LifeworksMN



Thank You!