



Employment for People with Disabilities



Disabilities do not need to limit the pursuit of fulfilling work. Understanding how to manage a new injury alongside employment—whether designing a job search and seeking accommodations or protecting health insurance—can help people living with paralysis build rewarding professional lives.

Q: I'd like to get a job. Where should I begin?

The Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation recently published *"Employment for People with Disabilities"* a comprehensive guide to seeking or returning to work after sustaining an injury. Download a copy from our website or call our Information Specialists to have

the booklet sent by mail. Along with in-depth explanations of topics ranging from how employment impacts Supplemental Security Income to using assistive technology to support work-related challenges, the booklet also offers advice on how to tackle interviews and embrace the unique strengths that living with a disability brings. Use the booklet to help define goals, identify any gaps in education or training, and map a path toward a successful job search.

Q: Are there any programs or services that can help me figure out what I'm interested in and provide training?

Begin by calling your local vocational rehabilitation agency. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education and found in every state, vocational rehabilitation programs offer people with disabilities an array of employment-related services, including career counseling, on-the-job training, education and job placement. In addition, Ticket to Work and Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) are federal work-incentive programs that can help individuals who want to work develop a plan to do so. Ticket to Work, created in 1999, offers free vocational rehabilitation and support services to individuals receiving Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income. Participants choose local providers such as non-profit organizations or Independent Living Centers to help them achieve targeted career goals, whether starting a business or finding a part-time job. Some examples of support services found through Ticket to Work include career counseling, interview coaching, job shadowing, tuition and transportation assistance. People participating in the PASS program set aside SSI income to achieve a specifically defined work goal; unlike regular SSI income rules, income put aside for PASS-related work goals does not reduce SSI benefits. The program may be used to buy supplies to start a business or pay for additional education or training.

Q: I'd like to return to the job I had before I became paralyzed. How should I proceed?

Take time to assess your options after an injury. Don't immediately resign from your job or assume that the disability presents insurmountable challenges. As soon as possible, contact the company's office of human resources to determine eligibility for short-term disability or long-term disability. (Caregivers may qualify for the Family and Medical Leave Act, which allows eligible employees of covered employers to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons without losing health insurance coverage.) Once rehabilitation and recovery are underway, individuals will need to assess whether returning to a previously held job is possible with reasonable accommodations. The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) based at West Virginia University and funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, is a free, confidential and invaluable resource for both employees with disabilities and their employers. With staff available by phone, text and

email, and a searchable database (organized by disability and accommodation,) JAN can help identify solutions that allow work to continue after the injury. If accommodations are not enough to allow you to return to that same job, consider whether your skills can be shifted to a different role within the company; a roofer who sustains a spinal cord injury and cannot physically sustain that work anymore might instead take his or her knowledge into the field, providing estimates for customers using a drone.

Q: I'm worried that working will cause me to lose my health insurance and personal care coverage. How can I determine the impact ahead of time?

Access to federal health insurance and disability payments can be a critical safety net for people who have sustained spinal cord injuries or are living with other disabilities. A fear of becoming ineligible for these benefits — combined with the uncertainty of how a disability may impact getting a job—can become a barrier to seeking employment. Vocational rehabilitation counselors and providers who partner with Ticket to Work and PASS can help assess the impact of a job on benefits. The Reeve Foundation also offers access to a pre-employment benefits analyst who can help determine whether leaving disability benefits to take a job is an option that works for your specific circumstances. Call our Information Specialists for more information.

Q: I don't have a college degree and my level of paralysis prevents me from doing any physical job. Can I be employed?

Yes. Vocational rehabilitation services and federal work-incentive programs like Ticket to Work and PASS can help people with disabilities access education or training to support new employment. In addition, state specific and federal hiring authorities offer an expedited and non-competitive hiring process for people with disabilities. While some jobs require a college degree, many do not. Federal jobs at the GS-2 level are available to those with a high school diploma and most clerical and assistant positions require just three months of general work experience. Contact your local vocational rehabilitation agency to see how and where to apply for state jobs, or visit [USAJOBS.gov](https://www.usajobs.gov) to search federal job listings and learn more about the Schedule A hiring authority.

Q: I don't want to work but want to stay busy. What options should I consider?

Volunteering is an act of generosity that benefits both those who give and those who receive. For people with disabilities, sharing skills and talents with the world can not only help fill time, but keep feelings of isolation and depression at bay. Brainstorm potential activities by thinking about what you liked to do before sustaining your injury. If you

were a passionate soccer player, coaching a youth team might be fulfilling. If you love to read, consider recording books and news articles for organizations that serve the visually impaired. Call your local food pantry and see if they need servers for meals or even someone to greet clients when they arrive. Support individuals experiencing new spinal cord injuries by volunteering at your local rehab center or becoming a peer mentor with the Reeve Foundation (www.ChristopherReeve.org/peer).

Sources: Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation, "Employment for People with Disabilities," Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, Social Security Administration, Family and Medical Leave Act, Job Accommodation Network, USAJOBS

Need to talk to someone?

Our Information Specialists are available to answer your questions.

Call toll-free 1-800-539-7309 Mon-Fri, 7 am-8 pm EST.

Or schedule a call or ask a question online at

<https://www.ChristopherReeve.org/Ask>.

Resources for Employment

U.S. Social Security Administration

<https://www.ssa.gov/>

Phone: 800-772-1213, 800-325-0778 (TTY)

Social Security Online: Welcome to the Ticket to Work Program

<https://www.ssa.gov/work/index.html>

This site provides information about the Ticket to Work Program which allows most people receiving Social Security benefits to obtain employment services, vocational rehabilitation services, or other work-related support services from an Employment Network of their choice.

Social Security Online: The Red Book – A Guide to Work Incentives

<https://www.ssa.gov/redbook/>

The Red Book serves as a general reference source about the employment-related provisions of Social Security Disability Insurance and the Supplemental Security Income Programs for educators, advocates, rehabilitation professionals, and counselors who serve people with disabilities.

Social Security Online: Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) Program

<https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/pass.htm>

PASS lets disabled individuals set aside money and/or things he or she owns to pay for items or services needed to achieve a specific work goal.

Social Security Online: Working While Disabled – How We Can Help

<https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10095.pdf>

MSKTC: Employment after Spinal Cord Injury

<https://msktc.org/sci/factsheets/employment-after-spinal-cord-injury>

MSKTC is a national center that works to put research into practice to serve the needs of people with traumatic brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, and burn injuries.

Cornell University: PASS Online

<https://www.passonline.org/>

This website provides basic information to help people decide whether PASS is right for them, as well as an application form with drop down sample answers and helpful hints.

U.S. Department of Labor: Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep>

200 Constitution Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20210

Phone: 1-866-633-7365

ODEP provides national leadership by developing and influencing disability-related employment policy and practice affecting the employment of people with disabilities.

U.S. Office of Personnel Management: Federal Employment of People with Disabilities

<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/disability-employment/>

1900 E Street, NW

Washington, DC 20415

Phone: 202-606-1800, 1-800-877-8339 (TTY)

This site helps people understand federal disability hiring programs, access a variety of employment-related resources, and learn about gaining access to reasonable accommodation in the federal workplace when appropriate.

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

<https://www.eeoc.gov/>

Phone: 800-669-4000, 800-669-6820 (TTY)

E-mail: info@eeoc.gov

The EEOC is responsible for enforcing federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or an employee because of the person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.

EEOC: Facts About the Americans with Disabilities Act

https://www.eeoc.gov/sites/default/files/migrated_files/facts/fs-ada.pdf

EEOC: The ADA – Your Employment Rights as an Individual with a Disability

<https://www.eeoc.gov/publications/ada-your-employment-rights-individual-disability>

EEOC: Questions and Answers About Health Care Workers and the ADA

<https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/health-care-workers-and-americans-disabilities->

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Career One Stop

<https://www.careeronestop.org/ResourcesFor/WorkersWithDisabilities/workers-with-disabilities.aspx>

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, Career One Stop has info and resources for workers with disabilities.

Knowledge Translation for Employment Research Center (KTER) Employment Research Database

<http://www.worksupport.com/index.cfm>

This database features articles addressing interventions that lead to successful employment outcomes. Users may sort entries by disability type, population, types of interventions, and more. KTER staff at Virginia Commonwealth University created this database.

Veterans Administration: Veterans Employment Toolkit

https://www.va.gov/vetsinworkplace/docs/em_fullversionResources.asp

Organizations

Affordable Colleges Online: College Scholarships for Students with Disabilities

<https://www.affordablecollegesonline.org/college-resource-center/affordable-colleges-for-students-with-disabilities/>

AgrAbility Project

<http://www.agrability.org/>

225 S. University Street

West Lafayette, IN 47907

Phone: 800-825-4264 (Toll-free) AgrAbility helps farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers with disabilities through education and assistance. AgrAbility helps with employment; access to appropriate assistive technology needed for work and daily living activities; information related to the treatment and rehabilitation of disabling conditions; and support for family caregivers.

American Stroke Association: Return to Work (After a Stroke)

<https://www.stroke.org/es/life-after-stroke/recovery/return-to-work>

Ask EARN (Employer Assistance and Resource Network)

<https://askearn.org/>

Ask EARN has resources to help employers hire and retain people with disabilities.

Disability:In

<https://disabilityin.org/>

Disability:In empowers businesses to achieve disability inclusion and equality. One of their programs, Inclusion Works, provides participating companies with unlimited, customized, virtual and onsite consulting provided by a team of disability inclusion

experts.

Disabled Person Inc.

www.disABLEDperson.com

A non-profit organization whose mission is to reduce the unemployment rate of people and veterans with disabilities.

Easter Seals: Employment and Job Training

<https://www.easterseals.com/get-support/areas-of-support/employment-job-training>

141 W Jackson Blvd, Suite 1400A

Chicago, IL 60604

Phone: 800-221-6827

Easter Seals provides an array of services and supports to help persons with disabilities and other needs obtain and maintain employment.

ExceptionalNurse.com

<http://www.exceptionalnurse.com/>

13019 Coastal Circle

Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410

E-mail: ExceptionalNurse@aol.com

ExceptionalNurse.com is committed to inclusion of more people with disabilities in the nursing profession. By sharing information and resources, ExceptionalNurse.com hopes to facilitate inclusion of students with disabilities in nursing education programs and foster resilience and continued practice for nurses who are, or become, disabled.

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

<https://askjan.org/>

Phone: 800-526-7234, 877-781-9403 (TTY)

E-mail: jan@askjan.org

JAN is a free consulting service that provides information about job accommodations, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the employability of people with disabilities.

Lime Connect, Inc.

<https://www.limeconnect.com/>

260 Madison Avenue, 8th Floor

New York, New York 10016

Phone: 212-521-4469

Lime Connect is a non-profit organization that offers programs to give job seekers with disabilities resources and hosts networking events to help applicants find the right connections to land their next job.

Muscular Dystrophy Association: Employment Resources for Young Adults

<https://www.mda.org/young-adults/employment>

National Telecommuting Institute aka NTI Central

<https://www.nticentral.org/>

NTI is an organization founded to promote economic independence for Americans with disabilities through training, job placement, and ongoing employment support. **LandAjob** provides a large database of potential job opportunities that can be searched and filtered by location, job titles, job skills, Federal and non-Federal contractors. Also, working candidates can take part in reimbursements up to \$10,000 for work related expenses over a three-year period for those on SSDI and five years for those on SSI. **NTI@Home** places Americans with disabilities in work-at-home jobs. Most of these positions are in the Customer Service field, but other work from home positions have included tech support and quality assurance. NTI@Home provides free virtual classes through NTI University to prepare candidates for our work-at-home jobs.

Nolo: Your Right to a Reasonable Accommodation Under the ADA

<https://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/free-books/employee-rights-book/chapter7-8.html>

Includes an estimate of the cost of most accommodations.

Personal Assistant Services in the Workplace

<https://askjan.org/topics/persassist.cfm>

1-800-526-7234

1-877-781-9403 TTY

A program of the Job Accommodation Network.

ServiceSource

<https://www.servicesource.org/>

ServiceSource is a not-for-profit corporation with regional offices and programs located in nine states and the District of Columbia. ServiceSource's regional offices share a mission to provide exceptional services to individuals with disabilities through innovative and valued employment, training, habilitation, housing and support services. The states include Colorado, Delaware, DC, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

Think Beyond the Label.com

<http://smarpolicyworks.com/about/history/>

Has info for workers with disabilities who are job seeking.

UCP: Employment for Job Seekers

<https://ucp.org/resource-guide/employment/>

UCP: Statistics about People with Disabilities and Employment

<https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsdisability.htm>

University of Washington Healthy Aging and Physical Disability, Rehabilitation Research Training Center (RRTC): Employment Concerns for People with Disabilities

<https://agerrtc.washington.edu/index.php?q=info/factsheets/employment>

Vaseful

<https://www.vaseful.com/>

305 Witherspoon St.

Princeton, NJ 08542

Phone: 609-751-9800

A floral business that provides employment for people with disabilities. The proceeds also support people with disabilities.

Job Boards/Job Search Sites

AbilityJOBS

<https://abilityjobs.com/>

Provides a job board for people living with a disability.

AbilityLinks

<https://abilitylinks.org/>

Provides a job board and a place to post your resume.

disABLEDperson, Inc.

<https://www.disabledperson.com/>

PO Box 230636

Encinitas, CA 92023-0636

Phone: 760-420-1269

E-mail: info@disabledperson.com

disABLEDperson, Inc. provides a disability job board to help people living with disabilities find a job. They work with employers who have a strong desire to hire qualified applicants with diverse backgrounds. The organization also sometimes holds job fairs.

Disability Job Exchange

<https://jobs.localjobnetwork.com/disability>

A job board that can be searched by state, metro area, category, keyword, or company.

GettingHired: Careers & Community for Talented People with Disabilities

<https://www.gettinghired.com/>

GettingHired allows people with disabilities to connect to each other and help their careers through services such as mentoring and discussion forums, career assessments and job recommendations, and allows people to search for jobs from employers committed to hiring people with disabilities.

NTI

<https://www.nticentral.org/>

Phone: 877-248-8912

Email: info@NTICentral.org

NTI is a nonprofit disability organization dedicated to advocating and supporting the employment goals of the disability community and their family caregivers. They have been a pioneer in the work-from-home movement since 1995.

USA Jobs

<https://www.usajobs.gov/>

A job board of federal government openings, click on “Individuals with a Disability” bar.

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