

# Customized Employment

## WHY CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT

- Employers see \$28.69 average return for every \$1 invested in accommodations.
- 87% of customers say they would prefer to patronize businesses that hire employees with disabilities.
- 8% employee turnover for those with disabilities versus 45% for other workers.
- 31% of those with a disability aged 21-64 had some college or degree compared to 33% of those without a disability.

### INCENTIVES

- Small business tax credit
- Architectural/Transportation tax deduction
- Work Opportunity tax credit

### Highlights of the New Section 503 Rules for Federal Contractors & Subcontractors

- 7% of individuals in workforce consist of qualified individuals with disabilities
- Data Collection on the number of individuals with disabilities who apply for jobs and are hired.
- Affirmative Action Requirements: The regulations specify a series of requirements for federal contractors to ensure they are maximizing their efforts to recruit, hire, and provide career advancement to individuals with disabilities, including outreach to an array of disability organizations.
- Invitation to Self-Identify as an individual with a disability prior to receiving a job offer and after they have received a job offer. Additionally, current employees will be asked to voluntarily identify themselves as individuals with disabilities every 5 years.

The Association of People Supporting Employment First has online resources for employers available at [www.apse.org](http://www.apse.org) > Resources > Employers



Kentucky Association of People Supporting Employment First [www.kyapse.org](http://www.kyapse.org) [kwolfe@uky.edu](mailto:kwolfe@uky.edu)

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## Custom Employment Story: Mallory

It's Tuesday morning, and Groundhog's Day Eve is being observed in Ms. Paulette's four-year-old class at Kids' Haven by Sandy. Then, Ms. Mallory arrives. Groundhog coloring becomes passé. "Ms. Mallory's here. It's book time!"

Ms. Mallory wheels up to the front. The coveted role of page-turner is selected for the first story. "Pick me! Pick me!" Her way of reading stories is not traditional. But traditional is still a concept that's in the process of forming for this age group. Using a head switch connected to the computer, Ms. Mallory clicks the switch at the end of each pre-recorded page. The switch turns the page on the computer screen and signals a "beep." The beep cues the page-turner, and the recorded voice simultaneously reads the new page.

The second book "Clifford, The Big Red Dog," comes to a close. Story time is over. There's a rush to Ms. Mallory – kids anxious to show the morning's groundhog artwork.

There was a time, not too far back, when work for Mallory hadn't been on the table. But to Sandy, an employment specialist, it made all of the sense in the world. After all, Mallory is a young adult, and work is one of the things that happen for most young adults during the day. Sandy devoted time with Mallory -- determined to discover her talents and interests.

Over time, it became apparent to Sandy that little ones were interested in Mallory, and Mallory was clearly amused by them. Sandy arranged to visit a childcare center, offering to perform a needs analysis – unobtrusively learning about what happens and looking for unmet needs. And if unmet needs are found, Sandy will suggest a solution. As things turned out, the teachers were frustrated that there were not enough hands on deck to read to the children as much as was desired.

The rest is history. A customized job was negotiated for Mallory. Children get to hear more books. Mallory gets a job working with kids. And kids get to know Ms. Mallory, a teacher who reads aloud in a non-traditional way. It's important to note, that this is the beginning of Mallory's employment story. Many chapters are still to be written. Mallory and Sandy are exploring additional employment, perhaps doing something similar to her work at the childcare, or perhaps something different.

Lessons learned: 1) Employment is important for everyone to consider. 2) Kids are always learning something. Who belongs and who doesn't. Who is like me, and who is different? Whom should I share my things with, or not? Little people can be immune to big people's prejudice, if introduced in a positive way to people, who for instance, read stories aloud in a non-traditional way. 3) Much learning is going on when Ms. Mallory is working -- important learning for everyone involved.



## Custom Employment Story: Daniel

Daniel had a great job. Having worked in Dr. Lehocky's office since 1999, things were looking good for Daniel. Filing patient charts, preparing employee time cards, collating materials for new patient charts, performing searches of clinic computer data for patient records, delivering office parcels, maintaining the inventory room, shredding obsolete records... Daniel was well respected by the clinic staff; his work was valued. But Mary Ellen, Daniel's employment specialist, was restless. She saw Daniel as a man who could contribute even more and increase his income – broadening prospects for a fulfilling career. Daniel and his folks thought this sounded great. And even though much was known about Daniel's interests and talents, everyone felt stuck when it came to thinking about seeking an additional job.

Mary Ellen suggested a job networking meeting as one way to generate new job ideas. She convened a group of people including family, friends and service providers – all of whom had high expectations for Daniel. After a brief time for food, fellowship, and meeting one another, the process for the gathering was straightforward: 1) refining a desirable list of work conditions for Daniel, 2) tying these conditions to tasks, and finally 3) connecting the tasks to specific employers and contact people. Sixteen people were able to attend the meeting that was graciously hosted in the home



Daniel shares with his parents. Wall-to-wall people; wall-to-wall ideas generated.

However, just as Mary Ellen and Daniel were getting started with the new employment connections generated in the job networking meeting, an employer contacted the Mary Ellen's agency, the Zoom

Group. Ceridian needed someone to do work that was consistent with the kind of work Daniel was seeking.

Mary Ellen visited Ceridian, studied employer needs and recommended Daniel. He was hired to duplicate and file information for Ceridian Stored Value Solutions -- maintaining customer account records for their pre-paid gift card program. As Daniel is becoming proficient in these tasks, Mary Ellen is seeking additional ways Daniel can contribute for Ceridian.

Lessons learned – 1) Follow-up is a critical aspect of supported employment. Mary Ellen provided the spark for Daniel to seek advancements. 2) Networking is the primary way that people connect with fitting jobs. Sometimes an intentional gathering, like a job networking meeting, is needed to get things rolling. 3) Finally, it's essential that organizations representing people with disabilities establish themselves as credible, dependable business partners. It's great when the phone call originates with an employer seeking the right person for work they need accomplished.