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Fall 2018

Job Corps Disability Support Newsletter

## National Disability Employment Awareness Month

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October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). Led nationally by the Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), NDEAM celebrates the contributions of workers with disabilities, including educating and promoting the value of a diverse workforce inclusive of their skills and talents. The 2018 theme is “America’s Workforce: Empowering All.” Hiring employees with diverse abilities strengthens businesses, increases competition, and drives innovation.



### What Can Your Center Do To Celebrate NDEAM?

- **Hold a discussion:** NDEAM presents an opportune time to discuss the topic of disability employment with students; one easy way to do so is to use the [What Can YOU Do Campaign](#) ideas and materials.
- **Ask a Disability Program Partner to Present:** NDEAM presents an opportune time to discuss the topic of disability employment with students and staff.
- **Create a display:** NDEAM is a great time to freshen up bulletin boards. Start by putting up this year's NDEAM [poster](#), which will be available in both English and Spanish. Include materials with positive images featuring people with disabilities in various community and employment settings.
- **Organize an assembly:** Another option is to hold an assembly in a disability-related topic. Such an assembly might feature guest speakers from local disability service organizations and/or people with disabilities in various professions willing to talk about their jobs, interests, and experiences.
- **Participate in Disability Mentoring Day:** Disability Mentoring Day promotes career development for youth with disabilities through hands-on programs, job shadowing, and ongoing mentoring. The nationwide observance is the third Wednesday of each October, but centers may choose to host their own events on any day of the month (or year for that matter).
- **Implement "soft skills" training:** Interpersonal skills, such as teamwork, decision-making, and communications, are critical for success in all occupations and industries. During NDEAM or anytime, centers can address this gap with [Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success](#) — a series of interactive, hands-on activities to help youth prepare for employment, regardless of their interests or intended career paths.

# NDEAM (cont'd)

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## Job Corps Centers Participate in NDEAM

Each October, Job Corps centers are encouraged to conduct/participate in NDEAM activities. Some previous examples of center participation include:

- **Hawaii:** The center hosted guest speakers from Access Surf Hawaii (a non-profit organization helping children and adults with disabilities, and wounded veterans to discover their level of abilities in the ocean), and the Hawaii FI-DO Project (a non-profit that provides service dogs to people with disabilities other than blindness). Students, staff, and guests learned about the importance of inclusion, not only in the workplace, but in all aspects of life.
- **Pittsburgh:** The center had two separate NDEAM activities: 1) A Disability Awareness Poster Contest featuring famous people with disabilities. The winners received gift cards. 2) The Pittsburgh Steel Wheelers, a professional wheelchair basketball team, played against the Job Corps staff and students. The head coach gave an inspirational speech about working hard and persevering.
- **Anaconda:** The center hosted a returning guest speaker, Rhonda Cochrane, the President of the Montana Association for the Blind. She talked with students and staff about being in the workforce as a person with a disability using her service dog, Shadow.
- **Guthrie:** The center hosted a wheelchair basketball game as an opportunity to raise awareness about varying physical disabilities and people who use wheelchairs for mobility.
- **Phoenix:** The center hosted a guest speaker who was diagnosed as an adolescent with a neurological condition that affects his learning and motor skills. He has been involved with Special Olympics for eight years, and is a Family Advisor with Raising Special Kids. He spoke about being bullied based on his disability, as well as feeling isolated as a result. He shared his experiences making new friends via Special Olympics, and how helping other young people helped him overcome many obstacles.



Hawaii JCC SGA hosted Access Surf Hawaii

Are you ready for National Employment Disability Awareness Month? The [NDEAM: What Can You Do?](#) website offers ways to prepare and stay connected all year round.

## Tips and Stress Busters

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The national average of students with documented disabilities in the Job Corps is about 26% with some centers reporting a significantly higher percentage. How can staff make sure they are prepared for teaching all students, including those with disabilities? How can staff “work smarter,” minimize stress, and create successful learning environments? What resources are available for Job Corps staff when working with students with disabilities?

When working with students with disabilities, research points to specific tips and stress busters that have been correlated to student and staff retention along with consistent positive outcomes.



# Tips and Stress Busters (cont'd)

Some of those specific [tips and strategies from special educators](#) include:

- Teaching smarter: Better teaching is not a code for “more work.” Small adjustments in instructional practice can lighten teachers’ burden and improve learning.
- Taking time for reflection: Take time to reflect on what is working, what is not working, and how might you adjust your approach to teaching students with specific disabilities in the future.
- Accepting every student as they are: Students come to us with packages and baggage. Open and unpack slowly and gently, with kindness, respect, and understanding. Building a relationship with each student takes time and patience—allow it to happen organically. Particularly with students with disabilities, if you push it, shove it, or force it, you’ll have to start all over and it may or may not bloom.
- Active listening is a gift: Every day, every student will have a problem—or something they perceive to be a problem. Stop, make eye contact (when appropriate), and listen. Don’t offer a solution until invited to do so. Don’t minimize their problem, experience, or situation. Don’t take their problem to another staff member or superior until you’ve given the student time to think it through. Sometime all they want is to be heard.
- Scaffolding a lesson is just good teaching. Be prepared to break down a lesson and create pieces of learning. When each piece is explained, modeled, practiced, and applied, the parts fit together solidly to form a whole of understanding. Too much lecturing, too thick a packet, or too many directions can cause anxiety and disquiet. One small step at a time usually works best.
- Ask for help: Do not assume that you can teach, nurture, feed, clothe, and shelter every student in your class. Before you jeopardize your physical, emotional, and mental health, it’s important to ask for support. Your colleagues, Center Mental Health Consultant, the student’s Counselor, Regional Disability Coordinator, and other staff are ready to help you help your students.
- Start with the right resources: It can be difficult to find enough tools or instructional strategies to use, but with the right resources, partnerships and connections, it becomes easier to find something for each student.
- Design for Less Stress Using Universal Design for Learning (UDL): All students are different, and one size does not fit all. Designing environments and tools with disabilities in mind from the start provides solutions that are not only inclusive—they’re also better for everyone. UDL is an approach to learning that seeks to remove barriers such as inflexibility, one-size-fits-all, or lessons that do not meet the needs of the learners. More information on UDL and examples of how to implement in the classroom are available on the [CAST website](#).



## UDL Examples

- Provide choices (projects, work alone, work in pairs/groups)
- Create relevance, value, and real world connections
- Minimize threats and distractions
- Provide opportunities for self-assessment
- Vary the methods for response (written, oral...)
- Provide access to “assistive technologies”
- Offering alternatives for auditory and visual information

# Spotlight on Assistive Technology

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Assistive technology can play a role in supporting staff that work with students with disabilities by providing tools to increase independence. The apps below all involve some level of UDL by providing various ways to access the tools, varying the methods of response, and providing opportunities for self-assessment.



**ColorNote**: This app can be used to help students be more independent, remember tasks, and organize their responsibilities. A staff member can help their students with disabilities set task reminders to pop up at a certain time and utilize different colors to help them with prioritization. Features include sticky note memos, checklist notes with reminders, ability to organize your schedule by notes in a calendar, and color-coding abilities.



**Priority Matrix**: This app can be used to help staff and students organize and prioritize assignments, tasks, projects, events, etc. The app provides daily reports telling the user what to work on next—pulling from emails, calendars, and due dates. Staff can teach students how to become more accountable and independent by helping them prioritize with this app.



**Say&Go**: This app can be used to help staff and students record brief ideas, notes, and reminders that may be used later. Staff can teach students how to use a memory tool by recording short voice notes, and download them to their mailbox, Dropbox, or other apps on a smart phone. The short voice notes and reminders can be used as a simple task manager.

## Disability Resources

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### 2018 Customized Disability Partnership Tools

Each center Disability Coordinator received a 2018 Customized Disability Partnership Tool in August. Contact your Regional Disability Coordinator if you did not receive one. This tool is customized for each center (i.e., provides information about disability organizations that are located in the local area) and can be used to begin developing and tracking resources and partnerships. This tool should be available during Disability Program Compliance Assessments to document efforts to establish partnerships.

### Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

Have you seen the newly updated [Job Accommodation Network \(JAN\) website](#)? This comprehensive web-based tool continues to provide employers, individuals with disabilities, and others who support them with accommodation ideas, publications, training, and numerous research-based resources. The [A to Z Search Engine](#) is designed to help employers and individuals determine effective accommodations and comply with Title 1 of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Searches can now be conducted by disability, by limitation, by work-related function, and by topic.

#### Upcoming Webinars

- ADHD Part 2
- Disability Coordinator Orientation Part 3
- Applicant File Review Process: Start to Finish

Please check the [Event Registration](#) page on the Job Corps Community Web site for dates/times

# Disability Program Promising Practices

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- **Ottumwa:** The RAC collaborated with several center Disability Program partners and resources to brainstorm and provide accommodations for an applicant (now student) with specific physical functional limitations. Partners that supported the student and staff included Vocational Rehabilitation, JAN, Easter Seals Iowa, and Indian Hills Community College.
- **Atterbury:** The Academic Disability Coordinator provides quarterly disability-related trainings to the center instructional staff. Topics include “Teaching Methods for Students with Learning Disabilities,” “Test-Taking Strategies,” and “Attitudes are the Real Disability.”
- **Dayton:** The center has developed productive partnerships and resources that support the Disability Program. Some of their partners include *The School of Professional Psychology at Wright State University* that provides two psychology interns who work with student with mental health disabilities and conducts educational assessments; *Miami Valley Works* that provides a representative who comes to the center and works directly with student with disabilities on job placement, and *Dayton Metro Public Library* that provides tutoring for students with disabilities.



## Regional Disability Coordinators

- Boston: Kristen Philbrook ([kristen.philbrook@humanitas.com](mailto:kristen.philbrook@humanitas.com))
- Philadelphia: Annie Tulkin ([anne.tulkin@humanitas.com](mailto:anne.tulkin@humanitas.com))
- Atlanta and San Francisco: Stephanie Karras ([stephanie.karras@humanitas.com](mailto:stephanie.karras@humanitas.com))
- Dallas: Alyssa Purificacion Olivas ([alyssa.purificacion@humanitas.com](mailto:alyssa.purificacion@humanitas.com))
- Chicago: Sharon Hong ([sharon.hong@humanitas.com](mailto:sharon.hong@humanitas.com))

E-mail your comments or suggestions to:  
Johnetta Davis, National Health and Wellness Manager  
[davis.johnetta@dol.gov](mailto:davis.johnetta@dol.gov)