



Project NATIVE

Native Americans Teaming in Visual Empowerment

MANY PEOPLE HAVE LOW VISION, BUSINESSES CAN ACCOMMODATE LOW VISION EMPLOYEES

What Businesses Should Know About the Americans with Disabilities Act and Visually Impaired EMPLOYEES Second in the Low Vision Awareness Series

Project NATIVE is a free program, based in Tahlequah, whose goals include raising awareness of the needs and challenges of the visually impaired. People with low vision include a wide range of visual capabilities and they can work at many different jobs; often the biggest limitation is the employer's perception of inability. In this handout we will briefly discuss what employers need to know to assist low vision employees.

First let us discuss the ADA. At the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, President George H.W. Bush said, **“Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down.”** These good words can be realized with a little education and consideration.

The U.S. Department of Justice provides an online booklet “ADA Update: A Primer for Small Business” which easily explains several ways to serve low vision customers as well as building accessibility solutions. The Department of Justice also provides a short course called “Reaching Out to Customers with Disabilities” (www.ada.gov/reachingout/intro1.htm)

Small Business Tax Credits and Deductions – YES CREDITS!

To assist small businesses to comply with the ADA, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Code includes a Disabled Access Credit (Section 44) for businesses with 30 or fewer full-time employees or with total revenues of \$1 million or less in the previous tax year. Eligible expenses may include the cost of undertaking barrier removal and alterations to improve accessibility, providing sign-language interpreters, or making material available in accessible formats such as Braille, audiotope, or large print. Section 190 of the IRS Code provides a tax deduction for businesses of all sizes for costs incurred in removing architectural barriers in existing facilities or alterations. The maximum deduction is \$15,000 per year. (Information from www.ada.gov/regs2010/smallbusiness)

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Small Business Issues

Training is the best way to prevent employment discrimination and the EEOC offers free presentations as well as fee-based training. Contact your small business liaison in the St. Louis District Office for information: Jack Vasquez, Lloyd.vasquez@eoc.gov, 314-539-7944. The EEOC website also includes a section called “Small Employers and Reasonable Accommodation” which may be helpful to the small business owner. (www.eoc.gov/eoc/outreach)

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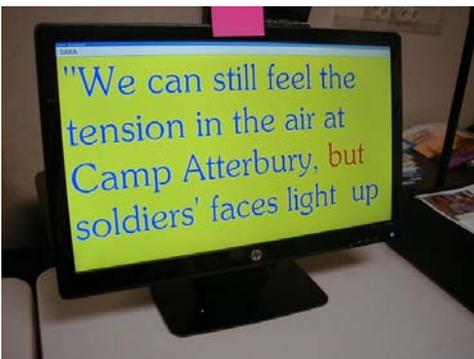
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What Businesses Should Know About Visually Impaired Employees

Your business can employ low vision people with just a little consideration. Here are some simple tips to accommodate these employees:

- Review access to your establishment (parking, sidewalks, ramps and doors) and access to products once inside. What challenges might they encounter?
- Treat the employee with dignity, respect and courtesy.
- Listen to the employee, make them feel comfortable and learn their needs. Be calm and professional.
- Offer assistance but do not insist. Ask them the best way to help.
- Provide visual aid equipment like large magnifiers or special lighting in their workspace if it will help them do their job. Be aware of other areas of work that may need minor adjustments.
- Speak to the employee when you approach them.
- State clearly who you are; speak in a normal tone of voice.
- Do not touch or distract a service dog without asking first.
- Tell the employee when you are leaving; never leave a person who is visually impaired talking to an empty space.
- Be descriptive when giving directions/instructions; work with them on new job tasks.
- Allow a reasonable training period that incorporates purchasing visual aids if needed.

If you have any questions about low vision or to ask Project NATIVE for a free consultation, please contact us at 918-456-5581. Project NATIVE is funded by the Administration for Native Americans, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Grant #90NA8147-01-00.



Computer Aids Open Up World of Technology



Cooking Aids for Safety



Craft Workshop Stretch Your Imagination and Capabilities

PLEASE SHARE THIS INFORMATION WITH YOUR EMPLOYEES!