

TAKE YOUR LEGISLATOR TO WORK THIS OCTOBER!

“MY DISABILITY IS *ONE* PART OF WHO I AM”



At work, it's what people *can* do that matters.

The Campaign for Disability Employment is a collaborative effort to promote positive employment outcomes for people with disabilities by encouraging employers and others to recognize the value and talent they bring to the workplace.

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FACILITATOR GUIDE



MISSOURI'S TAKE YOUR LEGISLATOR TO WORK DAY

“ONE PERSON AT A TIME”

We need your help....

October is **National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)**, a national campaign to raise awareness about disability employment issues and celebrate the many and varied contributions of American workers with disabilities.

Although led by the **Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)** under the **Department of Labor**, NDEAM's true spirit lies in the many creative observances held at the grass roots level across the nation every year. The **Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council (MODDC)** needs your assistance. Our **State** is celebrating NDEAM by asking each Missouri State Representative and each Missouri State Senator to visit one of their constituents with a disability at that constituent's place of employment.

This is where we need YOUR help! Missouri is a large state with 163 State Representatives and 34 State Senators. *We can't do this without your assistance.* Please ask at least one Missourian with a disability, who is *competitively employed in their community*, to first ask their place of employment for permission, and then invite their specific legislator to visit them at their place of work during the month of October. We would anticipate that this visit would be very short, probably less than one hour, but also include a visit from the local media.

We have included some tips and tools in this kit to help the employee, business, and the media and legislators to understand the importance of making this a success. We also **need you to let us know when an employee contacts their legislators (or their staff) and if they agree to visit.** This will help us to ensure that we can meet our goal of having each legislator invited to a constituent's work place in celebration of Missouri Disability Employment Awareness Month!

Please contact Charles "Chaz" Nickolaus, cnickolaus@moddcouncil.org or Charlie German at cgerman@moddcouncil.org or please call (800) 500-7878 if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you!

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Organizing a “Take Your Legislator to Work” event is a powerful tool to give your state legislators an up-close look at the contributions workers with disabilities make to the state economy, their communities and the business where they work. Your outreach will be the first step in building an ongoing relationship with legislators and their staff, and will strengthen overall advocacy efforts.

GETTING STARTED

Planning for “Take Your Legislator to Work Day” can be stress-free by engaging a committee of dedicated local community members. Recruit participants (*this includes other facilitators and workers with disabilities*) not only from your agency, but from community members known to you, who share the same values of inclusion.

Once you have found a worker with a disability who is interested in participating in your district, please work with them to get the included Participant Info Sheet filled out and sent in. The information provided will enable the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council to have a better idea of participation throughout the state and identify areas where more participants are needed. It will also enable us to be better able to help you promote the event.

*Note: Each individual has their own unique needs and abilities. Please ask how you can best assist them during the planning process. **We want to empower everyone to be as independent as they can during the entire process.***

8 WEEKS PRIOR TO THE EVENT

- Make sure the leadership at the business site is open to hosting a legislator. *Schedule a meeting with the owner/manager to discuss the goals of the activity and outline the impact it will have on their business.*
- **Submit invitations to state legislators and/or candidates to request a meeting.** A sample invitation letter is included in the *Participant’s Guide*. Be sure that the participating worker **follows up with a phone call within five business days of sending the initial invitation**. Remind them not to forget to mention the letter and re-invite the legislator and/or candidate and his or her staff.
- If the participating worker works with a job coach, or receives another form of support, please try to include that person or agency representative in the conversation with the legislator. You may also wish to invite your own affiliate organization. Remember to include the employer in the conversation. His or her perspective will be important to the legislator.
- Work with the participating worker to draft a document describing your **“take away message”** and identify what key issues you would like to discuss. This document can be used to brief all of the participants before the event.
- Draft an itinerary for the visit. A sample itinerary is available for you in the Participant Guide.

CHECKLIST:

- Participant Info Sheet** completed and sent
- Employer has been contacted and has **agreed to the visit**
- Participant contacted the legislator & **date for Legislator visit has been set:**

Time & Date _____

- The Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council has been notified of the visit and scheduled date.

2 WEEKS PRIOR TO THE EVENT

- By now, the event date and time should be confirmed. It is important to **provide the legislator's district office with the proposed itinerary for the day's events.**
- Put together an **informational packet with background information and handouts for the legislator** to take back with them.
- Plan to **meet with all of the participants a few days before the event** to discuss the itinerary and the main "take away message." **Practice discussing key issues** with each other before meeting with the legislator. This will allow your group to have a common voice and a greater impact on the legislator and their staff.

CHECKLIST:

Date for Legislator Visit has been set

Itinerary for day of visit has been created

Itinerary has been submitted to the legislator's district office

Informational Packet has been created for the legislator

Your group has practiced talking about the key "take away message" and each person has notes prepared for what they plan to say

Press Release has been sent to local media agencies

TAKE YOUR LEGISLATOR TO WORK DAY

1. The tour should last approximately **30-45 minutes**. Be sure to include samples of all areas where employees with disabilities participate.
2. Be available to assist the participating worker as needed, but make sure they are the one doing the majority of the talking during the visit. This is their time to show their contributions.
3. Make sure the take away materials you have worked on as a group are presented.
4. If you haven't heard back from the local media, make another attempt to let them know about the visit in the days leading up to the event.

CHECKLIST:

Every participant who plans on speaking has practiced what they want to say.

Every participant has created notes for what they want to say.

Remember your notes on the day of the event.

At least one person in the group has a camera on hand to take pictures.

Last minute attempts to contact the local media have been made.

Informational Packet for the legislator has been printed and is ready to hand out.

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE EVENT

1. Send a follow-up “**thank you**” letter immediately after the event thanking the legislator and staff for their time. (A sample letter is included in the participant guide)
2. Include any photos from the event.
3. Send a “thank you” note to all of the attendees for participating in the event. Include any photos from the event.
4. Please also send any photos or links to news articles written about the event to cgerman@moddcouncil.org. We would love to share your stories of success with the rest of the participants throughout the state.

CHECKLIST:

“Thank you” note and photos have been sent to Legislator & staff

“Thank you” note and photos have been sent to all attendees

Photos & links to news articles about event have been sent to AFP

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE **Place on Your Organization’s Letterhead**

DATE: *(DATE OF VISIT)*

FOR RELEASE: For Immediate Release

ATTENTION: *News editor name here
(if known)*

CONTACT: *(Name & Phone Number)*

WHERE: *(Business Name and Address)*

REP. /SEN. (NAME) TO TOUR (BUSINESS NAME) Throughout Missouri, workers with disabilities are improving our communities. These workers are contributing to their local economies, paying taxes, giving of their skills and talents.

(Legislator Name) will observe the work of an employee with disabilities at the (business name) to learn more about the contributions workers with disabilities are making in their communities.

Briefly describe the purpose of the tour and give a brief background on the individual’s contributions to that business

To celebrate October’s National Disability Employment Awareness Month, the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council is promoting the Take Your Legislator to Work Campaign to acknowledge and celebrate Missouri workers with disabilities. Governor Nixon has made job creation a priority for our state, and this is an excellent opportunity to showcase the skills and talents of employees with disabilities in Missouri.

PHOTO/INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY:

(Designate Specific Time)

Choose a spokesperson from the business to answer questions about the individual's role at that business. Briefly describe the purpose of the tour and give brief background on individuals' roles in that business.

Rep./Sen. (Name)

(Spokesperson—Include Title)

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: *(Name and Phone Number)*

If applicable, also give contact information for the business' Public Relations staff.

Thank you!

*The **Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council** and its partners thank you for playing such an important part in this project. We could not be successful without everyone working together across the State of Missouri. We firmly believe that individuals with disabilities deserve the same employment opportunities as their peers without disabilities. We recognize that we can't change the entire state at once, but we contend that if everyone helps just one person at a time, it will add up in the end to make a huge difference. Thank you for the part you're playing in making a difference for just one person.*