

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What kind of an organization is AHEDD and why was it founded?

AHEDD is a private, non-profit organization which was founded in 1977 to assist businesses in hiring and training qualified people with disabilities. Our specific mission is to serve the community as a catalyst in the employment and development of persons with disabilities.

AHEDD was established during a time when the educational system was being mandated to provide education to individuals with disabilities. This Right to Education coincided with deinstitutionalization of persons with disabilities, primarily those with intellectual disabilities, as historically the common practice was to send individuals away to live. After witnessing the success of an On-The-Job Training project headed by the National Association for Retarded Citizens, AHEDD was established to support the growing belief that individuals with disabilities can be employed in the private sector providing the right conditions exist to allow for their success on the job.

Today, AHEDD's Employment Specialists provide employment support to individuals that have varying types of disabilities, work experience, and education. When necessary, Employment Specialists offer training support directly in the work environment. They can assist employers in training individuals with disabilities by organizing job duties into teachable steps, providing extra supervision and guidance, and acting as a resource for information about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), possible accommodations, and a variety of other information. AHEDD strives to make persons with disabilities as independent and successful as possible in the workplace.

2. How many staff does AHEDD employ?

As of July 1, 2017, AHEDD employs approximately 81 individuals. The majority provides Individualized Employment services, and there is a cadre of regional Work Incentive Coordinators. AHEDD's Administrative & Support team is located in Camp Hill, PA.

3. Where are you located?

AHEDD operates throughout Pennsylvania through a network of offices and a group of staff that work out of their home. The agency's structure allows for services to be quickly expanded to new territories when needed.

4. What group or groups of people does AHEDD target in its placement efforts?

Programs currently operated by AHEDD target in-school youth (at least 14 years old) as well as adults with disabilities. AHEDD works with individuals that have disabilities such as: learning disabilities; visual impairments/blindness; hearing impairments/deafness; mental illness; intellectual disabilities; and other physical disabilities. Anyone with a disability that poses a barrier to his/her ability to secure and/or maintain employment could be eligible for services. Individuals served by AHEDD come from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, have different levels of ability and possess different amounts of academic and work experience.

5. How many individuals does AHEDD work with in a year?

Last year (2016-2017), AHEDD began the year with a little over 2,086 individuals as active participants on the agency's employment services caseload. During that year, we provided employment services to 1152 new individuals with a disability that had been determined as eligible for AHEDD's services. At least (56%) of those that were newly served were receiving disability related benefits from the Social Security Administration (SSA).

6. How many people are placed into jobs by AHEDD?

For Fiscal Year 2016-17, AHEDD placed 464 new individuals with a disability into employment. We continued to provide another 459 people with job support for needs that occurred beyond the first 12 months of employment, with 169 being supported for three years or more.

7. How long do AHEDD participants stay working?

Employment retention, not just placement, is important to AHEDD. One benchmark we track is 90 days of employment. For FY 16-17, 387 of 459 (84.3%) individuals were successfully employed for a minimum of 90 days. Among the 444 individuals that reached their 1 year benchmark by the end of Fiscal Year 16- 17, 290 (65.3%) were still employed at the 12th month and had worked at least 10 of those 12 months.

8. How does AHEDD get its referrals?

AHEDD receives its referrals from many sources. A few individuals refer themselves, but most come through contact with state and local human service agencies, schools, parents, churches, and other community organizations. As a result of the SSA program, Ticket to Work, many individuals contact AHEDD directly based on a list of providers approved by SSA.

9. What are the eligibility criteria for receiving AHEDD services?

The basic criteria for individuals referred to AHEDD are that they must have a documented disability that interferes with his/her ability to secure and maintain employment and be interested in becoming employed.

In addition to AHEDD's criteria, certain funding sources may impose additional requirements for eligibility. Requirements can vary between funding sources; therefore, individuals interested in services should call AHEDD for more information. During an initial meeting, AHEDD can determine if you are eligible and/or appropriate for current programs or if you would be better served by another organization/agency.

10. What types of jobs does AHEDD find for persons with disabilities?

AHEDD aims to individualize its job search efforts based on the person's needs, interests, experience and abilities. Therefore, AHEDD has found employment for individuals in all types of industry. The employment sought for AHEDD participants is competitive and integrated employment, meaning participants earn at least minimum wage and work along side others without a disability.

AHEDD has placed individuals into jobs such as:

Account Executive; Activities Aide; Administrative Assistant; Assembler; Assembler/Toolmaker; Auto Mechanic; Bagger; Bakery Clerk; Blood Bank assistant; Busser; Care Attendant; Cart Associate; Cashier; Cashier/Fitting Room Attendant; Certified Nurse Assistant; Certified Peer Specialist; Chef; Child Care Assistant; Children and Youth Caseworker; Cleaning Captain; Clerk; Communications Specialist; Community Support Team Case Manager; Counselor 1; Court Monitor; Crew Member; Custodial Supervisor Custodian; Customer Service Associate; Data Entry;

Deboner; Deli Associate; Delivery driver; Dental Lab Technician; Dietary Aide; Dining Room Associate; Direct Care Staff; Dish Washer; Driver/Warehouse worker; Executive Director; Expediter; Farm Laborer; Financial Executive; Fitting Room Attendant; Folder; Food Associate; Fork Lift Operator; Front Desk; Front Desk Security; Gardener; Greens Maintenance; Grill Cook; Groomer; Habilitation Specialist; Helpdesk Technician; Home Health Aide; Horticulturalist; Hostess; House Painter; Housekeeper; I/FST surveyor; Infant Room Assistant Teacher; Information Specialist I; Instructor; IT Technician; Janitor; Job coach; Kennel Attendant; Key Holder; License Technician; Loader; Lobby Attendant; Lumber yard worker; Lunch aide; Maintenance Helper; Maintenance/Landscaper; Manager; Manufacturing Apprentice; Massage Therapist; Meat Clerk; Mentor/Surveyor; Nurse; Overnight Stocker; Packer; Painter/Graffiti remover; Parcel Assistant; Parking Attendant; Peer Support Specialist; Personal Trainer; Pet Sitter; Phone Surveyor; Pizza Box Maker; Playground Aide; Receptionist; Recon worker; Recruiter; Residential Aide; Ride Operator; Sandwich Artist; School Crossing Guard; Seafood Associate; Security Guard; Silverware Roller; Substitute Teacher's aide; Tax Preparer; Teacher; Teacher Aide/Helper; Technical Call Analyst; Teller; Trash Collector; Tutor; Usher/ Customer Service; Utility Worker; Veterinary Assistant; and Warm Line Advocate.

11. What specific services does AHEDD have to offer?

AHEDD offers a variety of individualized services to both individuals with disabilities and employers. Those seeking employment can receive assistance with: resume preparation, appropriate completion of job applications, job interviews, training assistance at the job site, counseling for job related concerns, transportation training, and follow up services to ensure that the individual is satisfied with their job and meeting the expectations of the employer.

As of 2001, AHEDD provides work incentive counseling to SSA beneficiaries. This is a specialized financial service and is paid for by SSA and other sources. This service is designed for beneficiaries, 14-64, who are planning for employment or who are working and what to understand how earned income impacts their SSA and related benefits (e.g. Medicare, Medicaid). The service also helps beneficiaries to assess specific work incentives that can help increase earnings, savings or expand career planning options.

AHEDD also provides many services directly for employers. For instance, training assistance at the job site helps employers who may not have the time or experience necessary to train individuals with disabilities. In addition, AHEDD can provide assistance with the recruitment/screening of suitable applicants, job accommodations, financial incentives, and training on such topics as The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Disability Awareness and Sensitivity, and other related topics. The intensity and duration of all the services provided depends upon the needs and interests of both the individual and the employer. Training assistance at the job site could entail only a couple of hours for a few days or could require some degree of training for several months.

AHEDD's services for employers have been enhanced by its coordination of the PA Business Leadership Network (PA BLN) since 2000. The PA BLN is an employer driven program designed for business leaders to promote hiring practices that enable qualified people with disabilities to enter and succeed in the workplace. The emphasis of the PA BLN is to create opportunities where employers can communicate, peer-to-peer, to provide candid and frank assessments of hiring successes and challenges.

This network not only provides employers with access to a network of their peers, it also provides opportunities for training, positive public relations, an increased number of applicants with a disability, and a centralized source of information.

12. Who pays for AHEDD's services?

AHEDD receives its funding through various federal, state, and local agencies. In addition, AHEDD receives some of its funding through private sources like foundations and corporations.

Due to the variety of funding obtained for AHEDD services, employers and individuals seeking services are usually supported by available funding; however, if funding is not available, the individual or the employer may be asked to contribute to the costs of the requested services.

13. What are the benefits of using AHEDD to find employment or train an employee?

There are several benefits to working with AHEDD.

Some benefits to employers include:

Employers can gain assistance for complying with the ADA, which is the legislation regarding employment of persons with disabilities.

Business can access a pool of potential employees that have been virtually untapped.

Employers can be informed of tax credits available for hiring a person with a disability.

AHEDD will work with the employer to identify their immediate training needs and provide ongoing assistance with training if the need arises.

Some benefits to individuals with disabilities include:

Individuals with disabilities increase their independence and become more active/productive members of their communities. Employment of individuals with disabilities reduces their financial dependence on government support.

Those seeking employment get the expertise of an organization that is knowledgeable and experienced in assisting individuals with disabilities in finding and maintaining employment.

AHEDD's services are individualized according to the person's needs, interests, abilities, and experience. AHEDD follows the progress of each client for one year after they become employed to ensure they have the support necessary to be successful.

Some benefits to the community:

When individuals with disabilities are employed in the private sector, dependence is reduced on government services funded by taxpayers.

AHEDD is a great resource for providing area youth with employment opportunities and skills and preparing them to be productive members of their communities.

14. Tell the audience a success story

Be prepared with a success story