



## **Triangle Inclusive Careers – Program Details**

**The Triangle Inclusive Careers Program is offered by The Power of the Dream, a Raleigh-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit, with the mission to create jobs and advocate for adults with autism and/or intellectual disabilities (IDD) in the North Carolina Triangle.**

### **Program Mission**

The mission of Triangle Inclusive Careers is to provide an online marketplace where qualified and supported job seekers with autism/IDD can connect with local employers at minimal cost. Triangle Inclusive Careers will incorporate the needs of both job seekers and employers in order to facilitate better opportunities for long-term successful employment. This program will include a network of partnering organizations who provide support and resources to our participants.

### **The Need**

According to the 2012 Disability Status Report for North Carolina, 5.3 percent of residents reported a cognitive disability, which was the most prevalent disability among youths ages 16 to 20. Three out of every four North Carolinians with a cognitive disability are unemployed, and the annual earnings of employees with cognitive disabilities average less than that of employees with any other type of disability. Among those with cognitive disabilities between ages 21 and 64, 33.6 percent live in poverty, compared to 17.2 percent of North Carolinians as a whole.

To assess the barriers that job seekers with autism/IDD face within the Triangle, The Power of the Dream held several meetings with community stakeholders, including employers, self advocates, support agencies, and caretakers. From their feedback, we determined that one of the primary problems is a lack of effective communication among employers, job seekers, and support agencies. Job seekers with autism/IDD often find the traditional application process inaccessible, while employers may struggle to identify qualified applicants, given that many job seekers with autism/IDD

have little to no previous job experience. Support agencies often do not establish effective long-term relationships with either employees or their employers, and without proper support, new employees with autism/IDD may be likely to lose their job within the first year. Finding and maintaining long-term employment is therefore a persistent problem for those with autism/IDD.

Other organizations have created similar programs that have so far been ineffective in the Triangle area. Many disability-focused portals become sites for "data-dumping" automated job listings that may not be appropriate for the autism/IDD community. Because they are national portals, there are few job listings in the Triangle area and no local efforts either for job seekers or employers. In addition, these existing programs do not offer any direct training or support to portal participants. Several of these portals also charge high user fees to employers, which may be a deterrent.

Tax incentives and other government support can help with the decision to hire a person with a disability. Many individuals with autism/IDD receive government assistance and Medicare/Medicaid. They are often interested in part-time positions to not exceed income levels for disability support payments. Others are very motivated to move on to a steady income, replacing dependence on the government with self-sufficiency. There really is no one-size-fits-all in the disability world and employers can use that diversity to benefit their business in the best possible way.

## **Inclusive Hiring: The Benefits of Employing Adults with Autism/IDD**

Many large U.S. and international companies are discovering the advantages of hiring individuals with a disability. For some, it is a certain skill set (pattern recognition, hyper focus, technical skills, etc.). For others, it is an opportunity to cover a portion of another employee's job description which only requires a couple of hours a week with a person who enjoys repetitive tasks, freeing the full-time employee up to perform more effectively in their core competency area. Others are drawn to social skills and customer service focus that bring value to a business's interface with customers.

Advocates often say, "If you've met one person with autism, you've met one person with autism," and this is true of adults with IDD as well. While employees with autism/IDD present some challenges, they also present rewards to employers that often, with the right support, outweigh the challenges. The Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center [has seen success](#) in employing adults with IDD for routine jobs that previously had high turnover. Other companies similarly have reduced turnover by hiring adults with autism/IDD.

[SAP has found](#) that adults with autism can excel in tech jobs. The company launched its Autism at Work program in 2013 with the goal of having 1 percent of its total workforce on the spectrum by 2020. SAP works with [Specialisterne](#), a company that matches adults with autism to job opportunities around the world and helps employers with their autism employment initiatives.

[EY \(formerly Ernst & Young\) believes](#) that adults with autism can provide diverse cognitive abilities that provide an immense benefit to their employers. Those skills can include working with data and

mathematics, attention to detail, the ability to pay close attention to a project for a long period of time, and identifying glitches in large data sets. As of the end of 2016, the firm's autism hiring program had hired four accounting-support associates.

## **Supporting Employees with Autism/IDD**

Making some adaptations to the hiring, onboarding and training process can help ensure success for employees with A/IDD and their organizations. Simply understanding social skills challenges can make the interview process more successful (understanding that the candidate may be uncomfortable with eye contact, for example). Partnering with a community organization to conduct a needs assessment can ensure that all of the employee's needs are met under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Some individuals are eligible for job coaches and support staff through Medicaid vouchers or Vocational Rehabilitation. These services are offered at no charge to eligible employees with a disability and employers should take full advantage of any kind of support available to allow for long-term success of their employee.

## **Program Details for Employers**

The portal offers a unique opportunity to look for qualified talent and diversity hiring. By entering into the portal, candidates have self-identified as disabled, taking the guess work out of the interview process during which employers are not allowed to ask health questions. The Power of the Dream has also conducted a workplace related needs assessment for each job seeker. This information will provide information to employers regarding accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) the job seeker might be looking for, or challenges that may have to be considered during training and orientation of the employee.

We urge any employer in the NC Triangle area willing to employ a person with Autism/IDD to enter the portal and use the resource section free of charge. Without registering, employers can review coded resumes of job seekers who have either a verifiable work history and/or have been thoroughly prepared for the job market as participants in The Power of the Dream's Triangle Inclusive Careers program. Once an employer wants to contact an individual job seeker, the portal will require registration (free of charge) and agreement to the Terms and Conditions of using the portal.

The Power of the Dream would be happy to talk with any employer (recruiter, HR professional, business owner, diversity officer) to further discuss employment of a person with autism/IDD and to answer questions that are not covered in the resource section.

## **Program Opportunities: Employers**

### Resource Section:

Employers may browse through the resource section of the Triangle Inclusive Careers portal as soon as it goes live in late October of 2017. No login or registration is required.

### Candidate Search:

Employers may look for potential job candidates for open positions. They will see resumes that list individuals' skills and background but not their names or contact information. When an employer is interested in a particular candidate, they will register and agree to the Terms and Conditions of using the portal. The Power of the Dream will verify that they are a legitimate Triangle area employer and then reveal the job seeker's contact information. The employer can contact The Power of the Dream at any time to ask questions regarding the process, resources, or candidates.

### Posting of Employment Opportunities:

Employers may post job openings, internships, and discovery opportunities for individuals with autism/IDD in the job section of the portal. Posting positions is free of charge, and job seekers will contact the employer directly.

### Education and Support:

Employers can learn about alternative interview techniques in the resource section. Many job seekers with autism/IDD have challenges answering open-ended questions and providing the expected social cues like firm handshakes or eye contact. Changing the application or interview process to meet the needs of a person with autism/IDD is an accommodation under the ADA and not preferential treatment.

The employer can arrange for interviews and make job offers without interacting with The Power of the Dream; however, we remain available for questions and support throughout the process.

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## **Program Details for Job Seekers / Candidates**

Triangle Inclusive Careers is targeted at individuals ages 18 to 64 with autism and/or an intellectual developmental disability, including individuals with developmental disabilities and no intellectual disabilities. No formal diagnosis is required to participate in Triangle Inclusive Careers, though it may be helpful for accessing employment resources through the referral program.

Program candidates should have a goal of finding and maintaining long-term employment for at least two years. Ideal program candidates will not currently be enrolled in high school or secondary education and will either be unemployed or underemployed. Individuals do not need a high school diploma, OCS certificate or previous work history to participate in Triangle Inclusive Careers.

### **Program Steps: Job Seekers**

Triangle Inclusive Careers is designed to ensure that all job seekers are qualified and prepared to enter the workforce with appropriate supports in place. To this end, all job seekers in the program will participate in an assessment and support process prior to entering the job portal. The steps of this process are outlined below:

#### **Step 1: Orientation**

Job seekers attend an orientation meeting that provides an overview of the Triangle Inclusive Careers' purpose and background. We also walk job seekers through each step of the program and answer any questions they have. If a job seeker is unable to attend a Triangle Inclusive Careers orientation, they will need to schedule an appointment with Triangle Inclusive Careers staff for a private orientation.

#### **Program Step 2: Application**

Job seekers who would like to join the program must submit an application form. The application for this otherwise free program includes a one-time fee of \$50 to cover the cost of the soft skills assessment (discussed below). This is a rolling application; however, participants who are interested in or are required to take the job readiness class (discussed below) should consider the course schedule in the timing of their submission. Ideally, participants should submit their applications no later than two weeks before the earliest class start-date.

### **Program Step 3: Soft Skills Assessment**

Once they have submitted their application, each job seeker will complete the “Workforce Readiness Skills” assessment developed by Learning Resources, Inc. This statistically validated video-based assessment is designed to measure the basic soft skills that most employers look for when hiring. A sample assessment video can be viewed here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqPjhVIVd\\_E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqPjhVIVd_E).

Once the job seeker has completed the online assessment, both he or she and Triangle Inclusive Careers will receive a customized report that details the participant’s strengths and areas in need of improvement. Triangle Inclusive Careers will also receive a score of the participant’s performance ranging from 1 to 10 that gauges that participant’s likelihood of employment success, with 1 being the least likely to succeed and 10 being the most likely to succeed. Because most employers who use this tool accept a minimum score of 6, we are also requiring a minimum score of 6 for our pilot participants to be placed on the portal. Participants who receive a score of 5 have the option to retest after completing the Job Readiness Class (discussed below).

Participants who receive a score lower than 5 will be redirected to other resources for improving soft skills, with the option to retest at a later date. This test is not a pass/fail indicator, but rather provides important information to those seeking employment. Scoring less than a 5 is an indicator that more preparation is needed before seeking to enter the workforce.

### **Program Step 4: Job Readiness Class**

Participants who score a 5 or lower on the assessment and participants who have less than 12 months of verifiable employment history will be asked to complete a Job Readiness Class through Wake Technical Community College. “Overcoming Barriers to Employment: Job Readiness Skills” is a 96-hour class that runs six hours a day, Monday-Thursday, for one month. This class was designed to integrate with Triangle Inclusive Careers and is tailored specifically to the autism/IDD population. Class modules include self management, communicating, interviewing, financial literacy, and basic computer skills. The class is free for participants who are unemployed or underemployed. All participants will create a resume by the end of the class.

Participants who score a minimum of 6 on the soft skills assessment and who have at least 12 months of previous work history may request an exemption from attending the class. This exemption must be requested and approved in writing. Participants requesting exemption may be asked to provide a resume and/or professional references. Triangle Inclusive Careers does not guarantee that it will grant all requested exemptions from the class.

### **Program Step 5: Needs Assessment**

Before entering the portal, each participant will meet with Triangle Inclusive Careers to discuss their specific employment support needs. Based on their needs, which could include transportation,

clothing, job coaching, etc., Triangle Inclusive Careers will attempt to refer participants to partnering organizations who can provide these resources. Triangle Inclusive Careers is not responsible for securing employment resources for program participants and does not guarantee that participants will receive all the employment supports requested during the needs assessment.

### **Program Step 6: Portal Entry**

Once participants have met all the prerequisites, they will be granted access to the Triangle Inclusive Careers Job Portal, which is set to launch October 2017. Participants will be able to create their own account with a username and password, upload their resume, browse job listings, and apply to jobs directly through the portal. Participants will also be able to browse additional resources listed on the website.

### **Job Portal: Privacy – Security – Cost - Disclaimers:**

- Employers can browse the resource section and the coded resume section without logging in.
- Resumes of portal participants will show a code instead of name and contact information to avoid access by un-vetted site visitors.
- Triangle Inclusive Careers will verify employers who register to list job openings or want to have direct access to the individuals posting coded resumes on the portal.
- The use of the portal is free of charge for both employers and job seekers.
- Triangle Inclusive Careers may screen uploaded content before publishing it to the portal.
- Triangle Inclusive Careers does not facilitate individual relationships between employers and job seekers and does not guarantee that all job seekers within the portal will find employment.
- Job seekers and employers registered on the portal will have to agree to the Terms and Conditions before they can post any information or obtain access to coded information.

### **Contact Us:**

For questions and comments, please contact our Employment and Outreach Coordinator, Tirthna Badhiwala at 919-212-4238, or email at [tirthna@thepowerofthedream.org](mailto:tirthna@thepowerofthedream.org)

### **The Power of the Dream general contacts:**

Email: [info@thepowerofthedream.org](mailto:info@thepowerofthedream.org)

Website: <https://thepowerofthedream.org/>

<https://www.handmeupsthrift.org>

Facebook: [https://www.facebook.com/thepowerofthedreaminc/?ref=aymt\\_homepage\\_panel](https://www.facebook.com/thepowerofthedreaminc/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel)

Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com/bojj80/handmeups-thrift-store-raleigh-nc-27615/>



## Application

Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Applicant Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Contact (if other than applicant): \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Contact Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Contact Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Primary Contact Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I have submitted the following items:

- \$50 application fee
- Resume (if applicable)

I understand that applying to Triangle Inclusive Careers will not guarantee me admittance into the program. I also understand that participating in the Triangle Inclusive Careers program does not guarantee employment or employment success. Furthermore, I understand that this is a pilot program, and I commit to giving ongoing feedback to the directors of Triangle Inclusive Careers.

Applicant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Sample Syllabus

### **Overcoming Barriers to Employment: Job Readiness Skills / Wake Tech Beltline Center (include specific street address)**

Contact Hours: [REDACTED]

Class Date: [REDACTED]

#### **Description:**

This program helps adults with social, intellectual, and developmental disabilities develop workplace-readiness skills for finding and maintaining employment. Through a partnership between Wake Tech and The Power of the Dream, the program teaches skills needed for success at work in a variety of industries. It also provides soft skills training and the opportunity for additional transitional employment support through The Power of the Dream.

#### **Course Objectives**

Students will...

1. have completed and assessment of assets and limitations
2. have developed a positive self-concept
3. have developed employability skills
4. have developed communication skills
5. have developed problem-solving skills
6. have an increased awareness of the impact of information technology in the workplace

#### **Outline of Instruction**

- Module 1 - Registration and Program Overview
- Module 2 - Job vs. Career
- Module 4 - Self-Assessment
- Module 4 - Goal Setting
- Module 5 - Employment Math
- Module 6 - Employment Grammar
- Module 7 - Presentation and Public Speaking Skills
- Module 8 - Organizational Skills for Employment
- Module 9 - Computer Skills for Employment
- Module 10 - Working Smart – Self-Awareness

- Module 11 - Working Smart - Self-Management
- Module 12 - Working Smart – Work Ethics
- Module 13 - Working Smart – Communication Skills
- Module 14 - Working Smart – Problem Solving
- Module 15 - Resumes and Online Applications
- Module 16 - Interview Skills
- Module 17 - Student Demonstration of Presentation and Public Speaking
- Module 18 - New Hire Process
- Module 19 - Probationary Period and Work Ethic
- Module 20 - Work Life Balance
- Module 21 - Financial Literacy
- Module 22 - Customer Service Skills
- Module 23 - Career Planning for Advancement

**Prerequisite:**

N/A

**Requirement for Successful Completion of the Course**

1. Attendance 95%
2. Participation

**Intended Audience:**

Jobseekers with Autism and/or IDD

**Related Courses:**

- CSP-4000JT3 - Critical Skills for College Students on the Autism Spectrum
- EDU-3200NE - Teaching Students with Autism: Strategies for Success