



## **Addressing the Fear Factor: How We View Invisible Disabilities in the Workplace**

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# *Session Objectives*

- Removing the fear factor surrounding invisible disabilities by increasing understanding, awareness, and sensitivity.
- Examining beliefs about invisible disabilities, the impacts of these beliefs in the workplace, and practical applications for assisting individuals with invisible disabilities as they participate in the workforce and in your programs.

# *Navigating Unknown Territory*

*Accommodations for persons with invisible disabilities*

Accommodation: any change or adjustment to a job, the work environment, or the way things usually are done that would allow an individual with a disability to apply for a job, perform job functions, or enjoy equal access to benefits available to other individuals in the workplace

# Exercise 1

1. Select a member of your group who will be designated as A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY. The remaining members of your group are human resources or management professionals.
2. Review the job description provided to your group.
3. You have 7 minutes to come up with three accommodations.



# *Exercise 1 – Share Out*

1. Was the exercise difficult? How so?
2. What did you think about the process of coming up with an accommodation?



# Exercise 2

1. Select a member of your group who will be designated as A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY. The remaining members of your group are human resources or management professionals.
2. Review the job description provided to your group.
3. You have 7 minutes to come up with three accommodations.



# Exercise 2 – Share Out

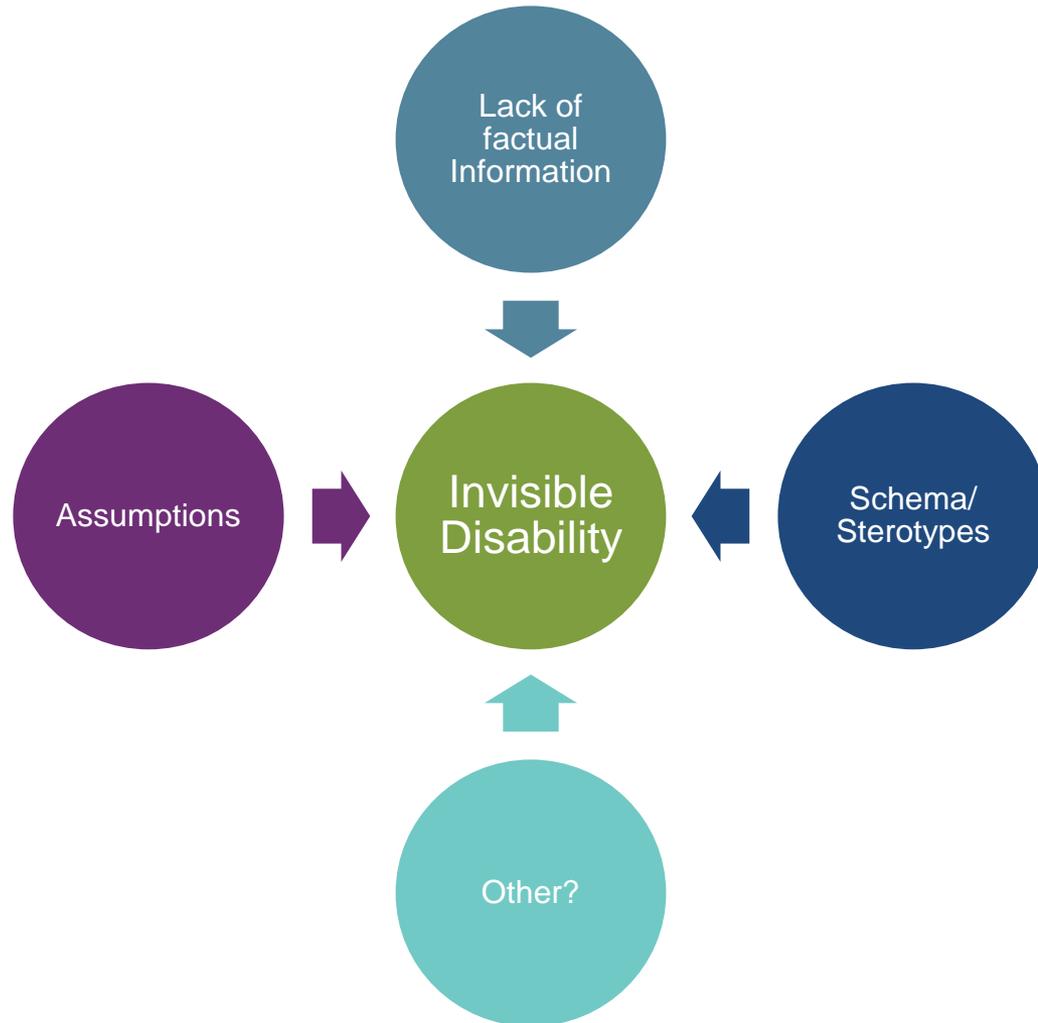
1. Was this exercise more or less difficult than the first exercise? Why?
2. What did you think about the process of coming up with an accommodation in this exercise?



# Video

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/buzzfeed-bipolar-video\\_us\\_561676dbe4b0082030a149e5](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/buzzfeed-bipolar-video_us_561676dbe4b0082030a149e5)

# *Invisible Disabilities – The Great Unknown*



IF YOU DON'T KNOW,ASK!



# Fact or Fiction?

- In 2014, one in five American adults experienced a mental illness
- Only 3-5% of violent acts can be attributed to individuals living with a serious mental illness. People with mental illness are 10 times more likely to be victims of violent crime.
- Employers who hire people with mental health problems report good attendance, punctuality, motivation, work, and job tenure that is on par or greater than other employees.
- Mental health problems are not a result of people being lazy or weak.
  - Biological
  - Life experiences
  - Family history
- Individuals with mental illness are often labeled not job-ready but individuals with similar needs are already found working successfully in the community.
- Most data show that accommodation costs are less than \$500

From *Health and Human Services* ([mentalhealth.gov](http://mentalhealth.gov)) and *National Center on Workforce and Disability* ([onestops.info](http://onestops.info))

# Mitigating the *FEAR FACTOR*



- Involve employee in conversations about needs
- Don't accommodate the diagnosis, accommodate the individual
- Reflect on your emotional reaction to disability – replace with emotionally neutral thoughts and actions –HOW the **SPECIFIC** limitations impact performance



From *Windmills Diversity Training 2009; Friends of Californians with Disabilities, Inc.*

# Mitigating the FEAR FACTOR



Vocational Rehabilitation Services  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



- Seek information from disability resources
- As a workforce professional, don't assume that the hiring professional will have the same emotional reaction that you may have



From *Windmills Diversity Training 2009*; Friends of Californians with Disabilities, Inc.

# *More on Disability Accommodations*

- Application, interview, performing job, accessing other employee benefits
- Employee, company, and job specific
- Disclosure
- Employee needs support to identify and disclose
- Interactive process
  - Consider accommodations on a trial period
  - Examples: modify job, policy, facility, tests/training

# Final Exercise

1. Select a member of your group who will be designated as A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY. The remaining members of your group are human resources or management professionals.
2. Review the job description provided to your group. This time, use the list of common functional limitations associated with the emotional disability of the employee to focus on how it will affect their work performance.
3. You have 7 minutes to come up with three accommodations.



# *Final Exercise – Share Out*

Was the task easier now that your focus was on the functional limitation? Why?



# Resources

- Job Accommodation Network ([askjan.org/](http://askjan.org/)) → Searchable Online Accommodation Resource
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability ([askearn.org](http://askearn.org))
- NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (<http://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/dvrs>)
- [Whatcanyoudocampaign.org](http://Whatcanyoudocampaign.org)
- ADA National Network ([adata.org](http://adata.org))
- Southeast ADA Center ([adasoutheast.org](http://adasoutheast.org))

# Questions?

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