

MASSACHUSETTS



COMMISSION ON THE STATUS  
OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

# STRENGTH IN SUPPORT:

## *Tools, Resources, and a Call to Action for Disability Employment*

Workshop for the Massachusetts Association of People Supporting  
Employment First (MA-APSE) 2025 Employment Matters Conference

# Meet your presenters:

*Gyasi Burks-Abbott,  
Erin Weinman &  
Kathy Petkauskos*

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Gyasi



Erin



Kathy

# Today's Agenda

- Commission & Disability Employment Subcommittee
- Connecting Statewide Efforts
- What We'll Talk About Today
- Disability Inclusive Workplaces: Employer and Employee Perspectives
- Creating Inclusive Employment
- Gateway Arts Raffle Drawing

# Disability Inclusive Workplaces:

## Employer and Employee Perspectives Video



[Link for Disability Inclusive Workplaces Video](#)



# Creating Inclusive Employment:

## How MicroTek Supports Employees with Disabilities in the Workplace



[Learn more about MicroTek](#)

# About MicroTek



- Established in 1983 in Chicopee, MA
- Led by a volunteer, all-women Board of Directors
- Employs 62 employees, 22% of employees have disclosed a disability
- Builds wire and cable components as well as control panels
- Dedicated to our mission to create employment opportunities for people with disabilities



# How We Create a Culture of Inclusion



- We provide a safe and accessible work environment that focuses on employing individuals with disabilities
- We ensure that everyone is given the training and support needed to perform quality cable and assembly work to our customers' standards
- We foster a community of respect, responsibility, and recognition of everyone's contributions to our success
- We advocate for our corporate community to support meaningful employment for individuals with disabilities

# Support from the Start

<b>Application for Employment</b>		<b>MICROTEK INC.</b>	
POSITION(S) APPLIED FOR		DATE OF APPLICATION / /	
NAME LAST		FIRST	MIDDLE
ADDRESS STREET		CITY	STATE ZIP
TELEPHONE ( ) -		EMAIL ADDRESS:	
IF YOU ARE UNDER 18, CAN YOU FURNISH A WORK PERMIT? (X)		YES	NO
HAVE YOU EVER BEEN EMPLOYED HERE BEFORE? (X)		YES	NO
ARE YOU LEGALLY ELIGIBLE FOR EMPLOYMENT IN THIS COUNTRY? (X) (Proof of U.S. citizenship or immigration status will be required upon employment.)		YES	NO
DATE AVAILABLE FOR WORK / /			
TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT DESIRED (X)		FULL TIME	PART TIME
<b>EMPLOYMENT HISTORY</b> List your last three (3) employers, assignments, or volunteer activities, starting with the most recent. Include military experience.			
FROM	TO	EMPLOYER	TELEPHONE ( ) -
JOB TITLE		ADDRESS	
IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR AND TITLE		SUMMARIZE YOUR HISTORY OF WORK PERFORMED AND RESPONSIBILITIES	
REASON FOR LEAVING			

## Pre-Employment Support

Providing support from the application stage ensures individuals with disabilities can participate fully in the hiring process.

## Examples

- Allowing a provider or caregiver to attend the interview
- Sending interview questions before the interview
- Preparing the candidate for all aspects of the interview experience (environmental factors)

## Encouraging Dialogue

We provide tours of our facility during the interview process. We highlight examples of support in action. Our goal is to demonstrate that we’re a safe place to ask for help.



# Dedicated Support Team



## **Trained Employment Specialists**

MicroTek employs dedicated human services specialists trained to support employees with disabilities, ensuring expert guidance.

## **Personalized Assistance**

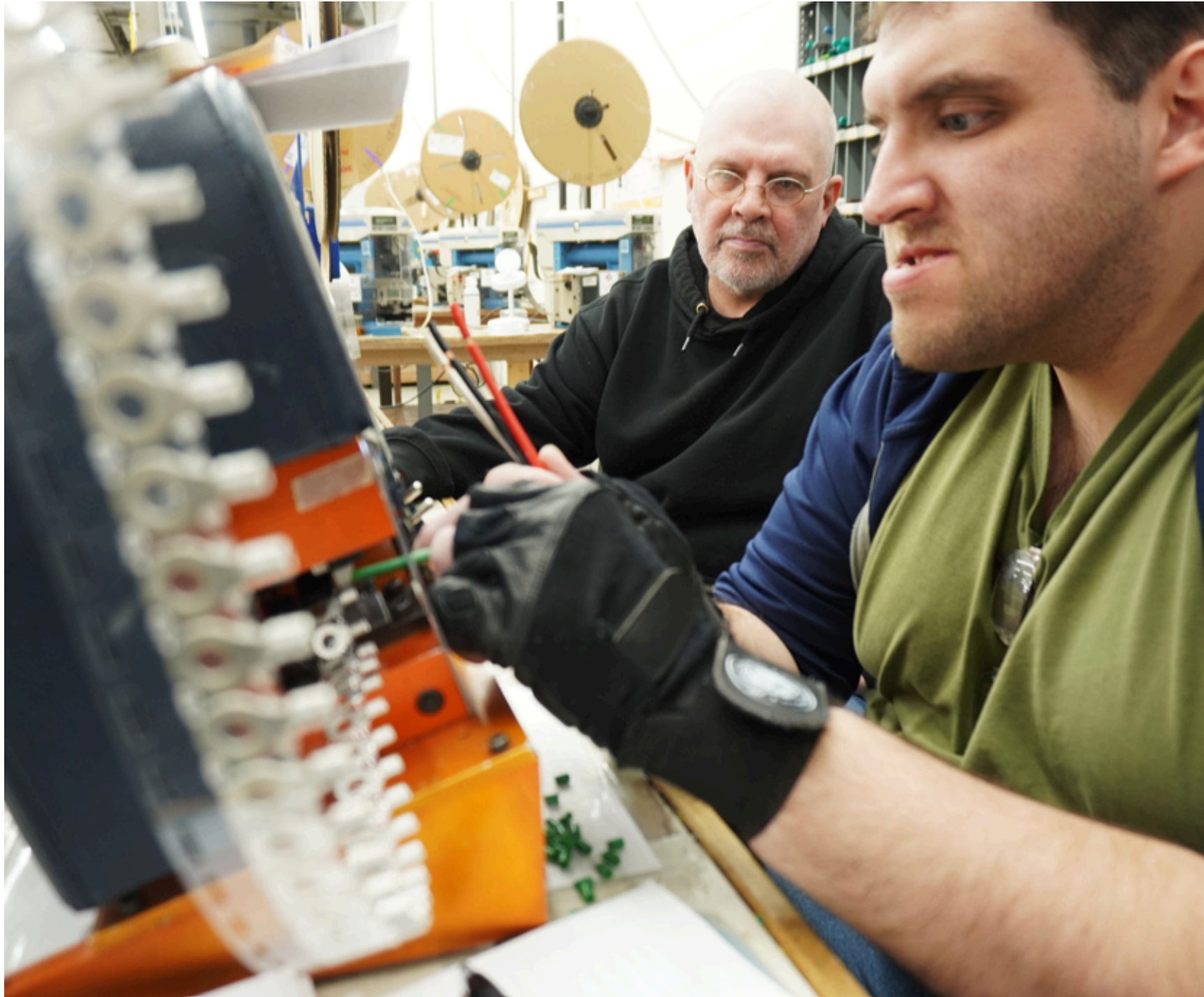
Specialists start with the least intrusive support and will offer additional aid when it's needed or requested. They are trained to problem solve and understand that mistakes are a part of growth.

## **Fostering Inclusion**

The support team ensures access to resources, fostering security and belonging within the organization.



# Peer Mentorship



## **Mentor Pairing Strategy**

Some employees with disabilities work with a dedicated “Team Leader”; a co-worker who provides additional on-the-job training and support.

## **Skill Development**

Team Leaders enhance Employment Specialist skills training. When a Team Leader is building a job, they often work side by side with an employee with a disability to train them until independence on that build is achieved.

## **Collaborative Environment**

When employees work together, they gain an appreciation for each other’s efforts and skills.



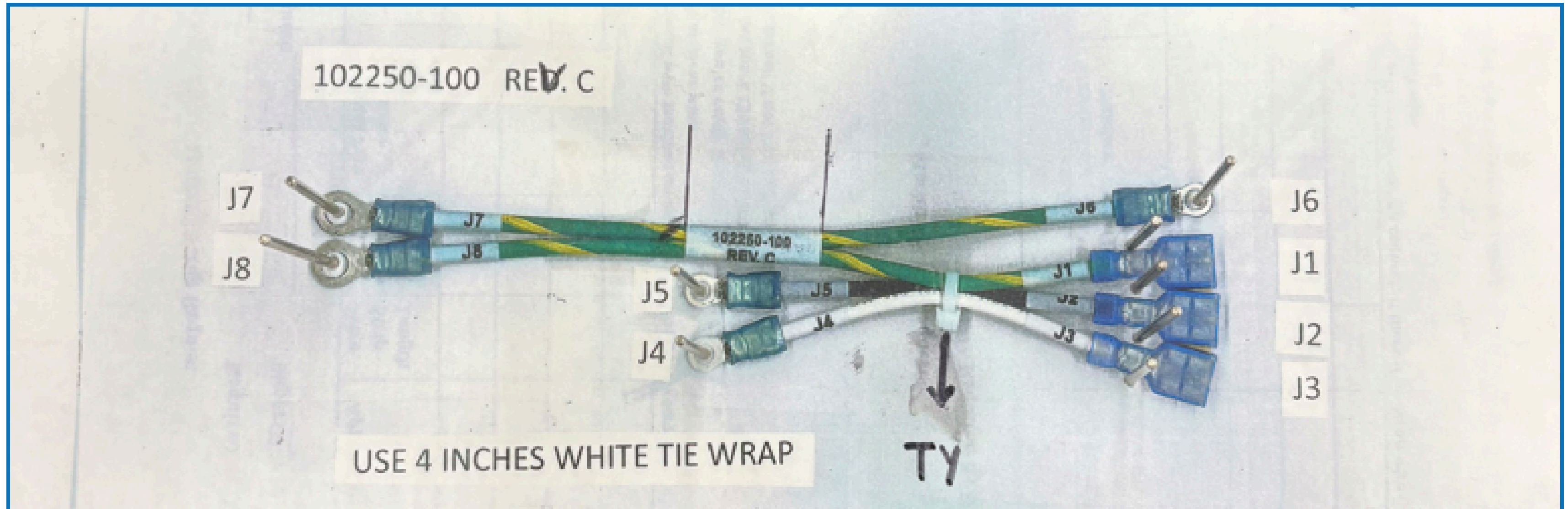
# Creating Support in Manufacturing



[Link for Job Aids Video](#)



# Assembly Job Aid



# Workplace Integration



## **Physical Workspace Integration**

Workstations for employees with disabilities are integrated alongside all employees, promoting inclusivity and interaction.

## **Inclusive Social Events**

All employees participate in company parties, trainings, and milestone celebrations, fostering unity and belonging.

## **Positive Workplace Culture**

Inclusive practices create a supportive culture where every team member feels valued and respected.



# Responsibility to Our Community



## MicroTek's Other Mission-Driven Activities:

- Highlighting and supporting likeminded businesses
- Making purchases from disability supporting businesses
- Acknowledging National Disability Awareness Month each year
- Career exploration and interview prep with students transitioning out of high school programs



# Why is Inclusive Employment Important?

## Results of an Informal MicroTek Employee Poll

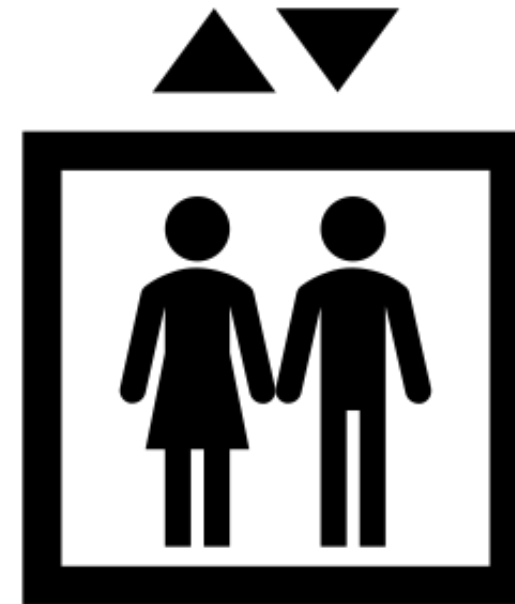
- I want to help my sister with bills
- To make money to buy stuff like clothes and shoes
- To make a paycheck
- To make money and get out of the house
- To make money
- To pay my bills
- I need to take home a paycheck
- I love money, I like spending it
- Because I need money
- Because I actually like it (the work)
- Because I like what I do
- I need money
- So I can buy things
- I work to support my family
- I enjoy work and I need a paycheck
- For money

# Curb Cut Effect



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# Assistive Technology





# Why Hiring People with Disabilities Matters

- Recruitment of new employees from an overlooked talent pool
- Retention of current employees who have or may acquire a disability
- Access to a dedicated and talented workforce
- An inclusive working environment





# Disability as a Source of Competitive Advantage

- Employees with disabilities can often bring unique abilities to the workplace
- Employees with disabilities can improve company culture
- Reputation for inclusiveness can attract customers
- Being viewed as socially responsible can attract capital investment



# Legal Compliance

- **Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act** requires federal contractors and subcontractors to take proactive steps to employ people with disabilities
- Being disability inclusive will **help** businesses that work with or want to work with the federal government meet regulatory requirements





# Legal Compliance: The ADA

- Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act requires employers with 15 or more employees to provide qualified individuals with disabilities an **equal opportunity** to benefit from the full range of employment-related opportunities available to others



# Financial Incentives

Eligibility for certain federal, state, and local incentives such as:

- The Federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC).
- State (MA) Disability Employment Tax Credit (DETC).



# Financial Incentives

## Massachusetts Disability Employment Tax Credit (DETC)

- An initial tax credit of up to **\$5000** or **30%** of wages paid to each disabled employee (whichever is less) after at least 12 months of continuous employment
- In subsequent years, a tax credit of up to **\$2000** or **30%** of wages paid to each disabled employee (whichever is less)

# Employment Profiles

Success Stories from Work Without Limits

*for*Health<sup>®</sup> CONSULTING at UMass Chan  
Medical School

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**WorkWithoutLimits<sup>™</sup>**  
— PUTTING ABILITIES TO WORK —

# Employment Profiles from Work Without Limits

## Meaghan's Story, Tufts Medicine



**Meaghan's advice to other job seekers:**

*“Don't be afraid to pursue employment. You have so much to offer, and accommodations are available to maximize your access to employment.”*



# Employment Profiles from Work Without Limits

Jared, UHealth Solutions



**Jared's advice to other job seekers:**

*“It’s important to remember that it’s completely okay to ask for help and be honest with yourself if and when you’re feeling stuck. The job search process can be overwhelming and exhausting, especially if you’re spending all your time scrolling through job boards like Indeed or LinkedIn.”*

# Employment Profiles from Work Without Limits

Laura, Amazon | Software Engineer Apprentice



**Laura's advice to employers:**

*“Disabilities vary widely—there’s no one-size-fits-all approach. Be flexible with accommodations and trust that the work will be completed.”*



# Employment Profiles from Work Without Limits

Matthew, Applied Light Manufacturing



## Matthew's Keys to Success:

- *Have a positive attitude*
- *Use an American Job Center*
- *Consult a Work Without Limits benefits specialist*
- *Use a job coach*
- *Take advantage of family support*

# Challenges in Supporting Employment:

## Word Cloud - Question 1

*What challenges are you facing when assisting candidates finding employment today?*

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Scan the QR code to participate!



# 1. What challenges are you facing when assisting candidates finding employment today?





# Supports That Make a Difference

## Word Cloud - Question 2

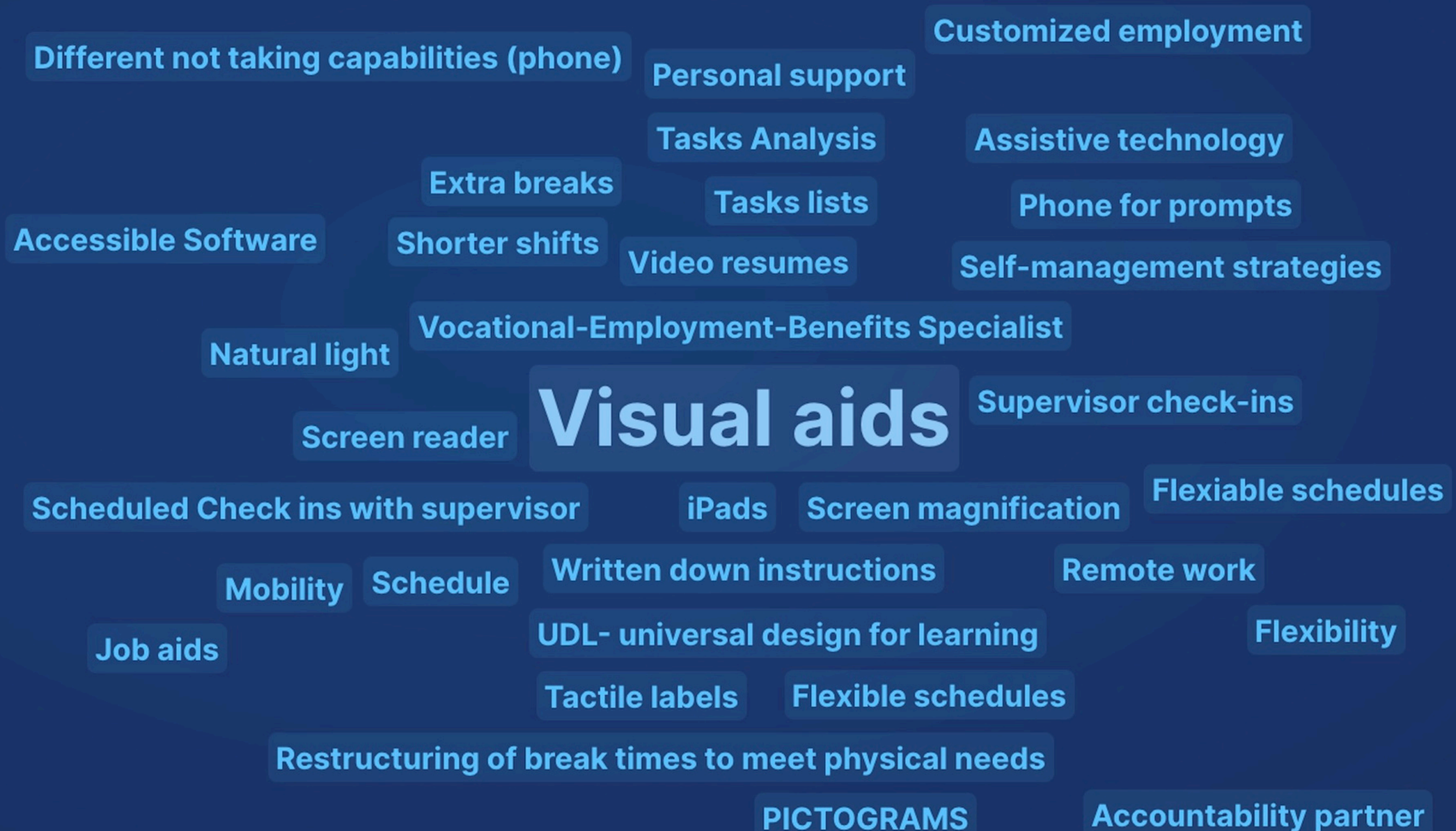
*What types of accommodations do you see the employees you support use?*

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Scan the QR code to participate!

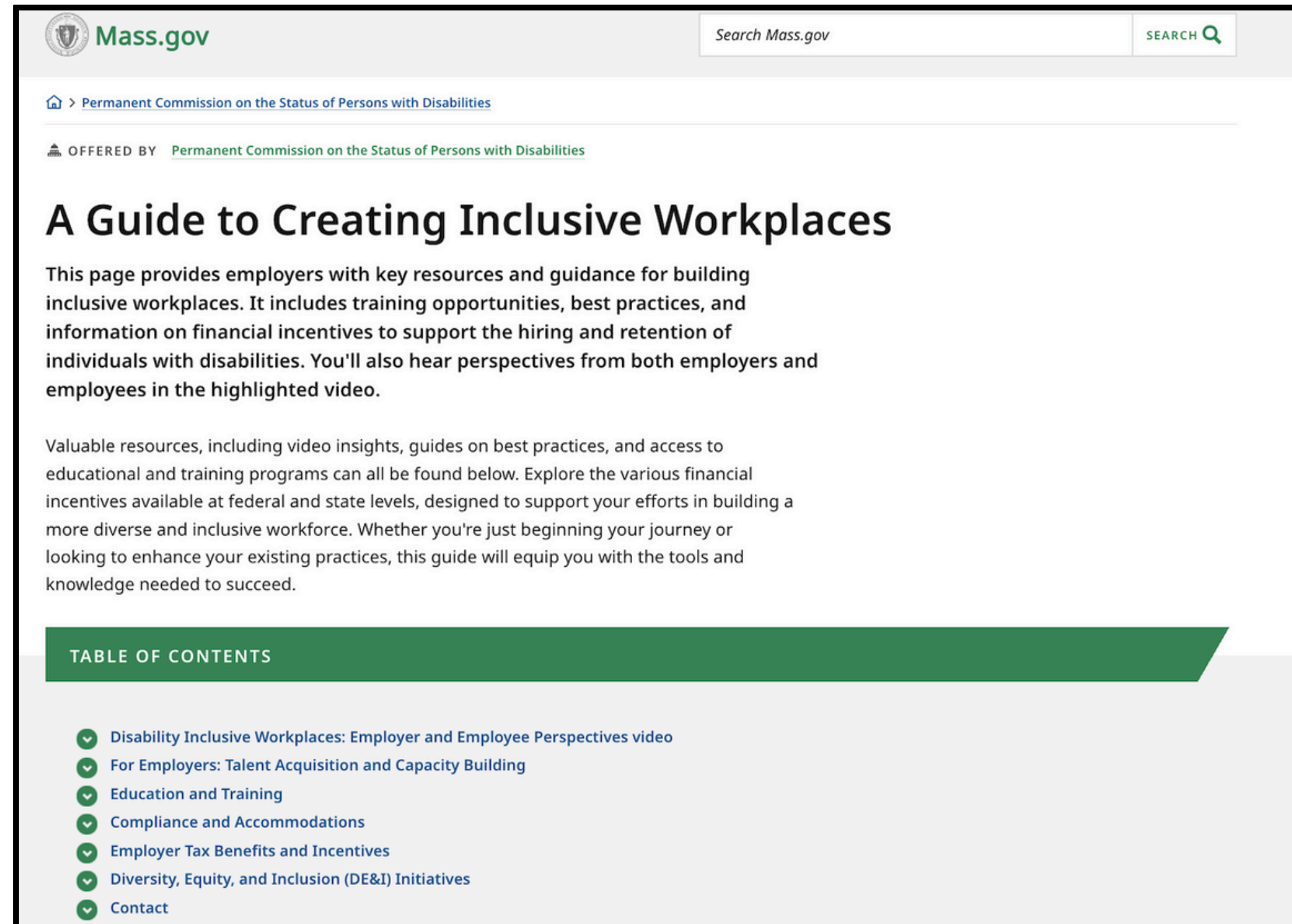


## 2. What type of accommodations do you see the employees you support use?





# Practical Resources You Can Use Today



The screenshot shows the Mass.gov website. At the top left is the Mass.gov logo. To its right is a search bar with the text "Search Mass.gov" and a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar is a breadcrumb trail: "Home > Permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities". Underneath the breadcrumb is a section labeled "OFFERED BY" followed by a link to "Permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities". The main heading is "A Guide to Creating Inclusive Workplaces". Below the heading is a paragraph: "This page provides employers with key resources and guidance for building inclusive workplaces. It includes training opportunities, best practices, and information on financial incentives to support the hiring and retention of individuals with disabilities. You'll also hear perspectives from both employers and employees in the highlighted video." Below this paragraph is another paragraph: "Valuable resources, including video insights, guides on best practices, and access to educational and training programs can all be found below. Explore the various financial incentives available at federal and state levels, designed to support your efforts in building a more diverse and inclusive workforce. Whether you're just beginning your journey or looking to enhance your existing practices, this guide will equip you with the tools and knowledge needed to succeed." Below the paragraphs is a green bar with the text "TABLE OF CONTENTS". Underneath the green bar is a list of links, each preceded by a green checkmark icon: "Disability Inclusive Workplaces: Employer and Employee Perspectives video", "For Employers: Talent Acquisition and Capacity Building", "Education and Training", "Compliance and Accommodations", "Employer Tax Benefits and Incentives", "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) Initiatives", and "Contact".

Mass.gov

Search Mass.gov

SEARCH

Home > Permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

OFFERED BY Permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

## A Guide to Creating Inclusive Workplaces

This page provides employers with key resources and guidance for building inclusive workplaces. It includes training opportunities, best practices, and information on financial incentives to support the hiring and retention of individuals with disabilities. You'll also hear perspectives from both employers and employees in the highlighted video.

Valuable resources, including video insights, guides on best practices, and access to educational and training programs can all be found below. Explore the various financial incentives available at federal and state levels, designed to support your efforts in building a more diverse and inclusive workforce. Whether you're just beginning your journey or looking to enhance your existing practices, this guide will equip you with the tools and knowledge needed to succeed.

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

- ✓ Disability Inclusive Workplaces: Employer and Employee Perspectives video
- ✓ For Employers: Talent Acquisition and Capacity Building
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- ✓ Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) Initiatives
- ✓ Contact

[Link to a Guide to Creating Inclusive Workplaces](#)

# Looking Ahead: From Awareness to Action

## Word Cloud - Question 3

*What can you do next in  
your own workplace or  
practice?*

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Scan the QR code to participate!



### 3. What can you do next in your own workplace or practice?

Educate Employers

Hire through MassAbility

Business Development

Make meaningful connections

Gather more employment stories

Network with potential employers

**Communicate better**

**Share success stories**

**More networking**

Better business engagement

Put traditional ways of thinking aside

More hands on skill building

Intentional hiring of people with disabilities

Hire people with disabilities

Educate businesses about resources



# Thank you! Questions?

## Contact

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# Gateway Arts Raffle



[Learn more about Gateway Arts](#)