nTIDE Deeper Dive March 2023

**Recorded Introduction:** Hello! And welcome everybody to the National Trends in Disability Employment, or nTIDE Lunch and Learn series. Just a few housekeeping items before we begin. This webinar is being recorded. We will post an archive of each webinar each month on our website at www.researchondisability.org/nTIDE. This site will also provide copies of the presentations, the speaker's bios, full transcripts, and other valuable resources.

As an attendee of this webinar, you are a viewer. To ask questions of the speakers, click on the Q & A box on your webinar screen and type your questions into the box. Speakers will review these questions and provide answers during the last section of the webinar. Some questions may be answered directly in the Q & A box.

If you have any questions following this recording, please contact us at disability.statistics@unh.edu or toll free at 866-538-9521 for more information. Thanks for joining us and enjoy today’s webinar.

**Andrew Houtenville:** Hi everybody. This is Andrew Houtenville from the University of New Hampshire welcome to the nTIDE deeper dive a we have changed it from a Covid update to keep the approach in a little bit more detail we are able to get the raw data the individual level public use files a little but after the first Friday and we are able to use those to do a deeper dive to look at more detailed information. So I’m joined by Elaine Katz and John O'Neill at the Kessler foundation, Claudia Gordon is our guest speaker and Denise Rozell from AUCD. We will have this welcome and introduction and to the latest statistics, outline the focus of the deeper dive and then we are actually going to do our very first deeper dive presentation. So any input you have or feedback you have for us would be great. Since we have this month to month to month we tried to get as good as we can at the first time but we are always going to evolve. I think if we went back to the very first nTIDE or lunch and learn we have evolved quite a bit. Over time. And trying to get better and better and better. So any input you have is really recommended. Really recommended... We would really like to hear from you.

All right, so employment to population radio let's go over the first Friday result that we talked about if you were here two weeks ago.

So February was kind of a hold steady month for people with disabilities. And people without disabilities. It went slightly, the employment to population ratio went up very slightly for people with disabilities. And pretty slightly for people without disabilities.

This is consistent with kind of the seasonal trend that you may see. You know, there is seasonality with the numbers and this is consistent with what happened every February... Or I'm sorry January to February, we don't have March. We are still in March. So January to February.

So really this kind of movement it is January to February has never been a very exciting month when you look over time slight uptick. So not much going on for employment and when we look at labor force participation rates, so this is the percentage who are not just employed but also the percentage who are employed and looking for work, it adds people who are actively looking for work or on temporary furlough, but so this is kind of the engagement in the labor market. And some increases for people both with and without disabilities. Actually this is kind of, again it kind of falls within the potential seasonal range although it's a pretty good increase for people with disabilities, which is better than seeing a decrease.

Again probably the best thing, and I did not really point it out, you know we are basically at historic levels for people without disabilities, I'm sorry, for people with disabilities we are at historic levels. Whereas people without disabilities really have not recovered from the pandemic back to their pre-pandemic levels. If we go back to employment to population ratio again here, same thing. Historic levels recently for people with disabilities. People without disabilities still have more coverage of the pre-pandemic level and that is not to say that there is not a very large gap that still exists.

You know, we got excited about this great news, and maybe we will learn... You know kind of what is happening and how to extend what is happening but there's a tremendous gap. So much so that I have to take a break and the axis to fit them meaningfully on one page. Or in one chart.

So let's go forward. We have talked about the deeper dive and I want to kind of reintroduce for people who were not here last month, and kind of just solidify what we are going to try to attempt to do with the deeper dive. You know, the first thing is to be looking at subpopulations. Such as today we will be looking at African-American, African Americans with disabilities versus white people who report being white you know, looking at the same charts that you just saw but we are going to break it down by a race and we are going to focus on Black African-Americans and whites. So we can do this lots of different ways. Right now I have got it by a male/female 16 to 34, 35 to 64. I have got you know education breakdown I have got race. I have got Hispanic disability type so we are going to do is try to provide the same charts we have been tracking since, what? John, we have been tracking this since 2003.

**John O'Neill:** 2013.

**Andrew Houtenville:** I missed a decade. Sorry. 2013. And splitting it out by lots of different categories this is probably about 25 groups. I have got it now up to 77 groups. I keep adding groups and breaking things down further. So this actually reflects the traditional White / Black / African-American / Asian / Other race. I actually broke it down by Hawaiian Pacific Islander as a separate group and I do not have the numbers yet, but I'm coding up the data, the software. And I have got what is the terms they use? American Indian, Native American. Now, yeah I will get back to language use in a minute. The other thing we are going to do is kind of look at different, the deeper dive we are going to look at different measures, time periods and changes. So we will look at the employment population ratio sometimes and look at the labor force participation rate. We will provide the confidence intervals because as we get smaller and smaller samples we will have small samples and when you have small samples you have less precision. So we will put the confidence intervals in. For every kind of demographic group we are going to do the total, the disability and no disability groups, we are going to start with the original data from June 28, 2008 forward. We will do, nTIDE first Friday does monthly so we will do it monthly. We are going to probably focus a lot on the 12 month moving average. Sometimes we might be able to do a three month moving average. You know we will look at the change from the prior month. What I plan to do, and I do not want to visualize it here is create a mega table that is updated every month. So you don't have to wait around for new results or for us to get around focusing on a specific group. I'm just going to generate the data, all this data all at once every month. And it takes right now about four hours for the program to run. And update it every month so that at any given time we can update any of the analysis we are going to do in the deeper dive.

The other thing I just added, I added four more columns so that we are not just going to do the percentages. The labor force participation rate or ratio those are percentage measures. We are going to do the numbers so you actually have the numbers of people from XYZ that are employed or not. I also want to do the population because many times people will say okay you are showing this but what is the size of the population? So I have added a bunch of columns. So this mega table is going to be mega cool, really big.

Okay so this month deeper dive, this is our first time venturing into it. We are going to be comparing two race categories or race subpopulations, Black African-American only and white only. And those terms are very specific.

As I have been doing this work I try to stick as closely to possible as what the survey asks. Because I do not want to misrepresent what the person answered. So I have, boy I have pushed back on journal editors that have used Caucasian American or European American. As opposed to the word white. But that is not with the survey asks. There is lots, let me tell you, I think there's an open call, I'm sorry I will talk about that may be later. These are the terms, this is what is asked of the individual. I'm going to read a list of five race categories. You may choose one or more races. The survey, for this survey, Hispanic is not a race, they have a whole next set of questions on Hispanic origin. Are the person, or is, are you- actually they have, maybe I typed it in backwards. This shows that it actually is, it's not the person who is answering. Sometimes for this survey there is one person in the household that answers for everybody, which is always suboptimal, but coordination wise it’s what’s needed. And these are the words that are read out: White; Black or African-American only; Indian or native, Alaskan native; Asian; or native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. So these are the words that are used and I do not want to misrepresent. The word only represents that there may be people who have chosen multiple of these categories. And so when I break this out in the mega table there is a group called two or more races. So there might be people who report being Black or African-American and white.

And so this is people who report only being Black or African-American. And people who only report being white. So I'm really specific. Any thoughts you have on how to represent this, represent and language use I am happy to get any input you have.

**John O'Neill:** Andrew I was going to add that also people are asked to indicate all that apply.

**Andrew Houtenville:** That's right. They can do multiple. Right. And for the American community survey standard that the standard approached used by federally funded surveys. They have a call for comment on adding more to this list. To add, if I remember correctly they are going to break the Asian into East Asian and South Asian. And I think they may be also adding Middle East. So, anyway these things are evolving. There is lots of testing being done on these questions. So moving on, so we are going to track for this month we are going to track monthly employment population ratio, averaged over a 12 month period.

So that gives this kind of a better underlying sample. You will not have as much jumping around if we were to do this like the regular nTIDE do it month to month to month. So we are going to track those what's called average monthly labor force participation or employment to population ratio. We are also going to focus on April to March. So the first available will be April 2009 to March 2010. And that is so we reflect the Covid recession. The lockdown recession was officially by the Bureau of national, National Bureau of Economic Research was April and May of, it was only two months. April and May of 2020. So you will see, as we go we are going to basically treat that as one big block. April 2021, I'm sorry, April 2020 to March 2021. The second to last period we have that is going to be where all the pandemic related stuff fits in.

Next month when we get the raw data, I will be able to estimate this for the second full 12 months, April to March period after the pandemic.

So let's take a look. This is what it would look like if we were doing the nTIDE from above if this was all persons civilians ages 16 to 64 and this is what that above graph would look like. So we have got these April to March is April to March and that is so weird to say. April to March. Because it is almost like you got it wrong we need March to April, March to April is only, they are next to each other, they are not 12 months apart. So we are doing these 12 month periods. And that is because of this Covid dive. The dive you saw above was much deeper for people with disabilities. This is because it is all averaged over the 12 month period. What would it be? The 10 months after the lockdown. So it is a bit muted. All the jumps are a bit muted. Because they are averaged over a 12 month period. We still see the decline from the pandemic and the recovery, the historic recovery. So from the year, the 12 months prior to the pandemic it was 33.1%. The 12 months of the first 12 months of the pandemic was, it went down to 30.5%. And now we are historic high over the period April 2021 to March 2022. We are up to 34.3%. So, all-time high.

So again, adding these together, averaging them over the months basically pulls in more sample such that we get less random movements. Right?

And you can see that this is much less jagged points to it. Like them month to month to month to month. The monthly trend. All right now let's take a look at race. So I have put up two trendlines. One for Black or African-American only and one for white only.

And you know, the first thing to note is that the gap for the employment of people with and without, sorry the employment is really low. For both groups. But about two thirds lower for around 10 percentage points or two thirds lower for Black/African Americans with disabilities.

So again, a stark difference, by race.

The pandemic, if we have to think about the pandemic and all the good news that we have been telling about the pandemic over the last few years, about, good news about the pandemic... Good news about the potential expanding opportunities for people with disabilities. An expanded labor market participation for people with disabilities that is true for white only. But almost close, 20... One 10th of a percentage point back to the pre-pandemic highs. So people with African Americans with disabilities have nearly recovered, close to recovering. Now there is this kind of unprecedented decline we have never seen a decline between 2018/19 and 2019/20. So they are above their pre-pandemic level but not above the historic high that was set just the year prior. Not entirely sure what was going on here where there was a decline in the 12 month period, 12 months before the pandemic.

But again, nearly recovered, 2/10 of a percentage point from the previous high. Next month, next month we will be getting this, another data point. So we will have another data point. And hopefully we will see that people with disabilities from the African-American/Black population are improving. Okay so just some observations to sum up.

Oh, sorry. Not observations yet. Here is the trend for Black or African Americans and whites without disabilities. So you see a very similar trend. African-Americans without disabilities, you know showed an improvement over time. But both were hit pretty hard by the pandemic. And both subpopulations have yet to fully recover. So just like the overall population without disabilities regardless of whether you are in the African-American population or the white population you had yet to recover.

Let's go back to kind of just some observations. So some observations. The disability employment gap. So it's a bit hard to see because I don't have them on one page. But the gap between people with and without disabilities, for the Black/African-American population is wider and then when compared to the white population, the disability employment gap in the white population.

And you know, there's been some traditional words used like doubly disadvantaged. The intersectionality of race and disability seems to matter. So this could be an endemic of structural systematic issues with regard to say access to employment services. Or access to rehabilitation, medical rehabilitation services. So you know, this suggests that a person would be, you know, have the barriers that are put up by disabilities, their disability but then those barriers are harder to address because of their race background. So suggestible barriers really.

And then the one that was easier to see in the graphs, the labor market improvements seen by people with disabilities since the pandemic lockdown recession have been slower to materialize for Black African Americans with disabilities.

So I am going to stop there. And if we have our speaker, has our speaker arrived? So I will not jump to questions I will turn it over to Elaine Katz to introduce our guest speaker.

**Elaine Katz:** Great. We are really excited today to have Claudia Gordon a senior accessibility strategist with T-Mobile where she leads the strategies for disability inclusive culture and accessible work environment. A Jamaican native and a graduate of Howard University and the American University Washington College of Law, her disability policy and advocacy career spans nearly 30 years. During the Obama administration Claudia was the Chief of Staff to the Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs and Associate Director of Public Engagement for the White House Office of Public Engagement. Claudia has held senior leadership positions with Sprint Corporation, the US Department of Homeland Security, the National Council on Disability and the National Association of Deaf Law and Advocacy Center. Notably in November 2022, Claudia was appointed by President Biden to serve as a councilmember on the National Council on Disability and she was subsequently tapped to serve as the Council's vice chair. Adding to Claudia's versatile professional experience is her lived experience as an immigrant at the intersections of race, disability, and gender, which is the foundation for the strong emphasis on disabled individuals with multiple marginalized identities that she brings to her work. Welcome, Claudia.

**Claudia Gordon:** Hello.

Alright this is Claudia speaking. Am I supposed to be able to see myself on my screen because right now I don't. This is my first time using this platform today. So I am assuming, there we go. Okay. Beautiful. I can see myself now. All right hello everyone. It is my pleasure to be here today, and happy Friday. I would like to give a visual description. I am a Black female I have braids wrapped up in a bun on the top of my head I'm wearing a magenta shirt today. It is sparkly and I apologize for that. I was a last-minute wardrobe decision. I hope that doesn't bother anyone who is reading my ASL. I do have a voice interpreter interpreting from ASL to English. She is off-camera right now and if there's any need for clarification she will turn the camera on so we can clarify and proceed. I am working from my home office today in Washington DC.

I'd like to emphasize today that my participation is strictly in a personal capacity as a disability rights advocate, as an attorney and as an activist for over 30+ years.

Also my lived experience. So, Elaine and team, thank you so much for asking me to join this webinar today.

All right. So first, I think that it's fair to say that the data that was just reviewed regarding African-Americans compared to their counterparts who are white, disabled and nondisabled, I don't think the data is a surprise to anyone. It shouldn't be. Those numbers are a pattern. One that unfortunately we have seen over the years.

With that being said, it is important to gain an understanding that, yes people with disabilities of color, be they Black, Latinx, or other marginalized communities face compounded oppression and compounded discrimination. We faced discrimination based on disability and race.

This is my opinion, when we talk about employment I think we cannot look at it in an isolated area. Only employment. I think we need to take a step back and really look holistically. We need to look back in time. We need to look at the school systems.

One moment. I see a message popping up. Are we good with technology? Just making sure technology is okay.

All right. So let me go back to what I was saying.

When we are analyzing employment issues, and we are looking at trends on employment, I believe that it is important... Here let me make a bit of an adjustment to my camera here. I want to make sure that anyone using ASL today can see my hands. And also my interpreter can see both my hands and my face.

I believe it is important that we look at this issue holistically. For example, just this week, the Deaf and Disabled community had a big victory at the Supreme Court. There was a child in Michigan who was denied an appropriate education under IDEA. And as a result of that, the student fell further and further behind in his education. His language acquisition etc. So the system failed the student.

This case went all the way to the Supreme Court where all nine justices this week decided in favor of, the case is called Miguel Perez, and the National Association of the Deaf did have a role in this case. Again the decision just came down this week. And that to me is a perfect example of systemic issues, discrimination, oppression. And also it shows a tension between the two movements, the disabilities/civil rights movement versus other civil rights movements.

So I think it is fair to say that the disability rights movement is based on a single idea. It is based on a person who has a disability. But when you actually look at the intersectionality, you see that we must talk about justice and we must talk about both of those identifications equally.

We can't expect an equal outcome and we can't expect equity. We have IDEA for education, we have ADA and other civil rights protections for peoples with disabilities but those systems are designed to protect and provide equal access, equal opportunity. Well the same system, many of those systems are designed for, we still see people with disabilities being treated inequitably by the system, also LGBTQ+ people being treated inequitably by the system. So we need to look at the intersectionality of all of this. So when we are looking at trends if someone is denied an equal access to a quality education, like the case that was decided this week ultimately that is also going to impact where the person finds employment. What level of access to education they will get. Will they have access to a university experience? I went to a school for the deaf in New York. And I am a product of the system. I was in vocational rehab or VR. I was a VR client. Now if you look at the VR system it is not equal in terms of who is in the pipeline. I remember that I had to haggle back and forth with my VR counselor to allow me to go to Howard University. My VR counselor did not believe that I could succeed at Howard. In a traditional college or university system. Everyone else there could hear at the University. So therefore the VR counselor said I would not fit in, and they told me that, no vagaries, they told me that straight up and try to lead me to other options which were not my preferred options. I wanted Howard.

Fortunately I persevered. I'm very strong-willed and I'm a very determined person. And I wanted to follow my desire. That was my dream. And I wanted to go to an HBCU in Washington DC but everyone, especially parents, if the child is an immigrant, navigating through these systems and advocating, exercising your voice, exercising your right, it is an unjust society. It's an unjust system. So fortunately I was able to convince my VR counselor to fund my education at Howard.

But even then, the funding was very minimal. It was barely enough money. I had to just eke by. When I finished with my BA I went back to the vocational rehab system and said alright I'm ready for law school now. And basically the VR people said well we don't provide financial support for graduate programs. Nothing above a BA. But yet I saw my peers who were white and Deaf all were receiving that support from VR to finish their law degrees and I was told that wasn't a possibility. They were interpreting the rules more strictly to me. Again when you look at the civil rights model versus an equity or justice model the system has embedded bias against Black or other people of color. So again I just want to make sure with my personal story I make that connection.

I hope that the system gets better and I'm grateful... I'm grateful for the support I received back then because without that I would not be here today, speaking with you. And I recognize that that was a benefit that I received from VR to complete my education. So this case that was decided this week, the Perez versus the school district case again shows that inequity.

If we look at the workplace, I think it's very important that we look at the people in the workplace and analyze data and statistics and we could do that forever.

I worked at the Office of Federal Contract Compliance under the Obama Administration. At that time, we were working with corporations to update Section 503 of the Rehab Act. It was amazing. Really amazing to see the types of excuses that companies at that time raised. Excuses in terms of the 7% hiring goal. But really I think that it requires intentional action. It has to go beyond talking about the challenges and issues. Mindsets need to change. Behavior needs to change. It has to be more than just a study, more than just data. What do we do for example in terms of recruitment and recruiters? Are they aware of their unconscious bias? What training are they being provided? What partnerships are being set up with community-based organizations that both know and understand the communities and the connections. Those partnerships can feed qualified candidates into those employment pipelines. And remember those harder to reach populations like me, I was in the South Bronx in New York. How do you reach communities such as the one I was in?

The typical approaches may not necessarily work with harder to reach communities. That means extra effort needs to be added. That is required to be able to capitalize and pull in individuals who are oftentimes overlooked. To get those individuals into that pipeline and get their resumes in front of people. If you just put the normal announcements on websites or use the traditional approach by going to job fairs and hiring fairs and conferences, many people from Black and other marginalized communities are not going to be present at those types of locations. It is a certain privileged people who are at those locations. So I think to see those numbers for African-American and the Black community to improve, specific specialized outreach needs to be designed and implemented to reach them. So that those populations can be reached and those individuals can be reached.

You also need to look at what's happening in the school system like I said what's happening in the VR system like I mentioned, nonprofit and other organizations that serve communities with disabilities. We need to ensure that we are not unnecessarily excluding anyone. Remember, equality and equity. If we give everyone the same thing, that doesn't make it equitable because remember not everyone starts at the same starting point. So, some people require more to make the situation equitable.

For example, there are many people who may not have work experience. They may have the skill, but it does not show up on a resume. And they are in a Catch-22 because they have been discriminated against and declined opportunities to get that work experience. So therefore the resume can never be built up to the point that they will look like an attractive candidate on paper. So things like that need to be taken into consideration and wherever possible really consider those types of factors.

Intersectionality is very important so it is not just us, the Disability community that is analyzing the issue. We also need to engage the Black and African-American community. There are many different efforts and programs that are focusing on Black employment, Black education. We need to make sure that those efforts are also considering bringing in people with disabilities. Those two factions should not work in isolation. Because that intersectionality can cause a struggle. So ultimately working together will bring the best outcome for everyone and then everyone can succeed. And that is what we want. We want everyone to be more successful.

I will pause here. I'm not sure what my time limits are with the webinar today. I can only see myself on my screen.

Moderator, if you can just let me know, or someone let me know, give me some queues as far as time

**Andrew Houtenville:** Yes, I would say about five more minutes and we allow for question and answers

**Claudia Gordon:** Got it. Okay.

All right. So, to wrap up what I was saying, I'll give some parting words.

I would like to talk about how we can be more intentional with this effort. First, ableism, how society perceives people with disabilities. Ableism is an ongoing issue and ableism keeps people with disabilities and a variety of characteristics and intersectionality, it keeps those people marginalized, so ableism needs to be unpacked. Audism as well. As a Deaf person, that means people who can hear view me as a deaf person, different. They view me through an audist lens. So we need to look at ableism, audism, and unpack that through training. Really the best approach is to pull in people with disabilities and have them in the workplace interacting with others.

That is the best place to enhance both awareness and sensitivity. And really with everyone in both communities, the best form of training is interaction. So having people with disabilities in the workplace. Ableism, audism need to be addressed. We need to keep that bias against people with disabilities, especially people from Black and other marginalized communities, what keeps them outside the workforce needs to be unpacked. I think we need to move beyond talking and analyzing the problems. We need to set up strategies. We need to set up efforts that can be measured.

My old boss at the Department of Labor, when I was working on Section 503, my old boss would often remind everyone, employers want what is measured, what can be done. So if you can measure it, if you can collect data and have statistics, then people can be more accountable to actually get things done.

So establishing strategies, prioritizing initiatives, those things can lead to tangible, measurable outcomes for a variety of communities including Black job seekers.

In the workplace, for example here at T-Mobile I am the Senior Accessibility Strategy Partner. And my work approach is to break down silos within the enterprise. Cross functional collaboration is so very important. We cannot expect, for example, the recruitment team, will solve issues on their own. The recruitment team’s work needs to be done in partnership with for example the on-boarding team. Does the on-boarding team have the resources and equipment ready to make sure that a person with disability will have a positive, inclusive, and welcoming experience once they are hired. Actually pre-hiring, from the pre-hiring stage. So collaboration is very important. Training for managers is important. How do managers respond if they get a request for an accommodation? What does the process and timeline look like?

So again, Reasonable Accommodation Team needs to work in tandem with those other groups. Rules, policies need to be analyzed. Are they fair? Are they clear? Does an employee with a disability even know where to find assistance?

As we know, all workplaces have a lot of training. And many employees have to take training like on-boarding training. So work with the learning and development team or the training team to make sure that training is accessible. Is it captioned? Is the language respectful of all communities?

Does the training address for example disability awareness and etiquette? How to provide a workplace that is welcoming, mutually respectful and supportive of all employees regardless of their need. So those are just examples of the cross functional collaboration that I was talking about and that is really essential if you want to move the needle and get people with disabilities to be successful in the workplace.

Your marketing materials, your pictures on your website. Do you have images that represent people with disabilities? In those marketing materials? Do you show different types of disabilities? Different races? Different sexual preferences? Is all of that included in your marketing? These things are super important and none of it can be done in isolation.

Partnerships need to happen. For example with national organizations, the National Organization on Disability, Disability IN, consulting groups, value 500 etc. There is no shortage of research and resources that are out there that can help us solve these very solvable issues.

We have to start somewhere. Some companies’ maturity level is ahead of other companies. So don't feel threatened or immobilized by that. There may be a lot of work that needs to be done, but do not let perfect be the enemy of good.

And my final words as someone, my life could be very very different than it is today, but for the fact that people gave me a chance.

So my parting words are do not judge an individual based on race or disability. Let that person succeed or fail based on the scope of their dreams. Based on their ambitions. Their work ethic. Give them a chance. Let them prove themselves just like anyone else has to prove themselves. And really that's all. That is why I am where I am. And that is why I have the career that I have today. Because all of my previous managers and my current manager took a chance on me. And at the end of the day it is up to me then to prove with the quality of my work, by meeting my deliverables, etc., that my performance is up to par.

So it is not only for hiring managers and recruiters to look at someone and just judge them. I ask that you give us a chance. We have so very much to offer. We can solve this issue. It is solvable. Thank you.

**Andrew Houtenville:** Thank you, Claudia. So we have our Q&A... Our Q&A box if people want to type questions into the Q&A box. I will read them out loud. As they come in. So I will take the opportunity, this is Andrew Houtenville from the University of New Hampshire. Actually I will start my video.

Could you talk, I really like the idea of having, of breaking down silos in your current job and recruiting come on-boarding, pre-hiring manager training especially the manager training part. That is something that I was raised as an academic, not a manager but I am managing people. But it would be really helpful to get support from the organization. But there is one area that came to mind that I think could really play a difference... I will just jump to it. So, on-boarding. So part of on-boarding could be, how do you request an accommodation? A lot of times requesting accommodations is kind of buried because I think employers are afraid people will ask for an accommodation. Right?

But if during on-boarding, when you can start talking about or... Post the period between, I guess this would be defining on-boarding once the legal requirements where you cannot talking about disability during the hiring process ends and you can start talking about accommodation, do you have any thoughts about how to frame or train individuals and managers on making the request process more... Friendly, accessible, appropriate? Just another part of the workplace. As opposed to something that is kind of in the shadows.

**Claudia Gordon:** Claudia speaking, thank you. That's a great question. A few things come to mind.

Speaking for what we did here, where I work at T-Mobile, last year I worked very closely with my on-boarding team. We have many types of communication. So in the process I brought in an individual and we went back and looked at all the communication and we added language to those that spoke directly to what we can provide as a reasonable accommodation. So if you believe or you feel that an accommodation or a reasonable accommodation would be beneficial, here is who to contact. And we repeatedly put that message out.

During our orientation now for new hires, which happens the first week of their on-boarding, we bring a representative in from our employee resource group. It's an employee resource group for persons with disabilities. We call it the accessibility community at T-Mobile or ACT, so an ACT Chair is now on the agenda for orientation so someone there talks about how we have an employee resource group for employees with disabilities because there may be people who have not yet self disclosed who are in orientation and we feel it is important in those early stages to demonstrate the T-Mobile culture to them so that hopefully they will be reassured, and will allow them to come forward and if they need an accommodation to request it.

So I would say communicate early and communicate often what is available. If you have an individual with a disability in the workplace, weave accommodation into the on-boarding process. That allows them to see that and it helps I would say put a face to things that they have read and shows with the company values. And I believe that has a lot of impact.

**Andrew Houtenville:** Thank you. Let me read a question.

It is, we have some folks from the VR world, and going back to one of the earlier comments, sorry to hear that your VR told you, unfortunately already told you that way.

Let me see. Sorry. Can you speak about... So... Some great topics. I am a recruiter for a disability rights organization.

I want to tap into more A F A M With disabilities.

A F A M. For our role. Can you speak about resources that can help me tap into that talent pool?

A F A M with disabilities.

**Claudia Gordon:** And who is the question addressed to?

**Andrew Houtenville:** Claudia.

**Claudia Gordon:** I'm not sure I'm clear on the question. A F A M the acronym can you elaborate what that is? Is it an organization?

**Andrew Houtenville:** I think the A M is African-Americans?

I think it is A F is African... And I'm not clear either but it is usually used in African-American studies as a four letter acronym. But okay.

**Claudia Gordon:** Okay so let me just repeat the question then. How can we recruit, will you just repeat it?

**Andrew Houtenville:** Yeah sure, I am a recruiter for a disability rights organization. I want to tap into recruiting more African-Americans with disabilities.

Can you speak about resources... Or organizations that can help me tap into that talent pool?

So they are looking to recruit African Americans with disabilities.

**Claudia Gordon:** Okay. I think you have to start where you are. You need to look around your community. Again, remember, nontraditional approaches to outreach are what are needed here. So maybe start within your local community. Look for organizations there for example churches, places of worship. Family members. Friends. Nationally, locally, for example national Black Deaf advocates, they have a website I'm involved with the group but many organizations today, just like the American Association for People with Disabilities, AAPD, that's a very large cross disability rights organization based here in Washington DC. And one of my friends runs that organization. It is very inclusive. So they know this community very very well.

I would reach out to them. If you have a job description you can send it to them. With a message saying, do you mind circulating this with your networks?

things like that really go a long way. I do that in my current role. I use my network that I have to get the word out and build those relationships across the community. Those relationships are key. You need to put your organization's needs on the radar. You need to get it out in front of people who can help and then they can trickle that out to the community and you can reach more people. So building relationships is important. But start where you are, and then start building relationships. Disability IN, Lavette consulting, there are so many other organizations in the space that are available. Also don't forget Lincoln. Build relationships with VR.

If you have an entry-level VR is a great place to source. Schools, colleges, universities, their career services offices are great resources. So really all of that, what it boils down to is take the time to be intentional. Cultivate these types of relationships with diverse organizations and different types. Don't only focus on entry-level positions either. Look at senior positions. Build these relationships. And you can't just do it passively by putting out job postings. Really, if you want to target Black and African-American employees with disabilities you must be targeted. You have to be thoughtful, and it will require some work.

**Andrew Houtenville:** Thank you. I will do one more question. We have about three minutes left. So...

So I have been speaking with job coaches and developers about the importance of natural supports in the workplace. Claudia, in your career have you utilized natural supports in the workplace? if so, can you speak about

**Claudia Gordon:** Can you elaborate on natural supports, what you mean by that?

**Andrew Houtenville:** I don't know. Let's see if the person is still on the line to elaborate.

I think it is, for me natural supports have always meant colleagues, you know things around the office that are not necessarily part of a structure or system. Coworkers. Yeah.

**Claudia Gordon:** Okay. Yes. Yes. This is Claudia speaking. Thank you for the question. If I may respond to that quickly, yes. Yes. I think that in all workplaces none of us can succeed alone. It definitely takes a team and it takes collaboration. That is key. I have interpreters at T-Mobile. So T-Mobile is a blessing that they provide the interpreters. So when I show up to work every day I know my communication is not going to be an issue for me as a Deaf person we have deaf blind people on staff, we have one people on staff we provide visual descriptions of the type of natural support is built in there. Our presence in the workplace also serves to increase awareness amongst our colleagues. So naturally they figure out a way to interact and engage with us.

The company provides a variety of support. Some is through the accommodation process and some is just a natural support that is available to anyone. For example zoom. Making sure that our Zoom licenses provide captioning, making sure that WebEx is accessible so those are natural support things that are just built in, some company's applications there are applications for note taking. For example otter, or other grammar apps. Some companies are making those widely available now to everyone. Even though those are very beneficial for people with certain disabilities they are not only for them because if you make them available universally, that takes away the need for someone to ask for an accommodation. Because really everyone can benefit from those types of things. Like note taking. Having a notetaking app, or having an app that makes your grammar even better. There may be people who are dyslexic or have a learning disability. That app is good for them as a person with a disability but it's also good for other people without disabilities.

So take some of that stigma away because everyone has needs. We don't want to be seen as special or othered. These types of things apply to everyone.

**Andrew Houtenville:** Great. Thank you very much, Claudia. We are a bit over time, so I am going to close down now. I very much appreciate hearing from you, Claudia. And learning about the great things that are going on at T-Mobile. I just have one last question. How can we get you back in government because I think you could have a great impact there.

**Claudia Gordon:** Well, I think that the work continues. It is great right now to be in the private sector. The transition, you know, there are transitions in careers and it's been great to go from the government space to the private sector. It's been a learning opportunity. I never say never, though so you do not know where I will end up. I'm a public servant at heart, so who knows where I’ll end up.

**Andrew Houtenville:** Great. Thank you very much. All right bye-bye everybody. See you next time on nTIDE.

**Claudia Gordon:** Bye-bye everyone.