

The National Leadership Program Fellowship in Public Policy/Employment

Most working-age people with disabilities want a paycheck, not pity. However, 70% of them are outside of the workforce. The new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is a paradigm shift in how the workforce system does business, and that system must now be accessible to people with disabilities. Billions of dollars are going to the states to fund "unified plans" to expand employment, but these plans must be finalized by March 2016. Unless governors know what to do based on best practices, many states will continue the failed practices of the past. Our role is to educate key decision-makers about programs that are proven to work. We have close working relationships with governors and/or their key policy staff/vocational rehabilitation teams in all 50 states. We have spoken in-person with 40 governors, provided all 50 governors with key facts, and distributed a toolkit with best practices with disability, labor, and political leaders.

Who We Want

The National Leadership Program is ideal for people who want to gain skills and contacts while making a positive difference for people with disabilities. We are looking for thoughtful and results-driven individuals who want to achieve breakthrough results while getting hands-on experience. The fellowship is for college and graduate students, as well as for people transitioning into the workforce for the first time, or back into the workforce after a break.

Fellowship Duties

We are focusing in particular on the promotion of best practices and are looking for people with a strong background who are interested in public policy and/or employment issues. Fellows will gain direct experience working with state officials, private sector employers, and disability organizations.

The fellows will work closely with our National Leadership Program Director and Policy and Practices Director. Individual projects will be assigned based on an individual's unique skill set and their own ability to "bring something to the table." Projects might include writing op-eds, researching issues for press releases, collaborating with the Policy Director on public testimony related to disability issues, visiting inclusive employers, and attending meetings with key state or local leaders in the fields of business, disability, and government. Employment advocacy fellows will join supervisors at workshops and webinars that pertain to state politics and employment.

Each fellow will receive many opportunities to learn new skills, network, and gain direct experiences. In addition to hands-on work experiences, all fellows will participate in special presentations by guest speakers and intensive strategic communications workshops. A career plan will be developed by each fellow that will enable him or her to gain appropriate workplace experience while contributing directly and measurably to RespectAbility's impact. Upon the completion of the fellowship program, applicants can expect to come away with excellent experience in the field of policy, employment for people with disabilities and leadership skills to help them grow into confident advocates.

Important Details for Applicants

- Excellent communication, research, and organizational skills are strongly preferred, and fellows should exhibit leadership skills to complete their own projects
- Basic familiarity with the features and functions of Microsoft Office strongly preferred.

However, software training will be available for some fellows in collaboration with the Fellowship/Leadership Director as part of the career path planning process

- Strong preference for college juniors and above
- Commit for a minimum of nine weeks
- Hours are 9-5, and fellows must be able to work at least 20 hours a week, though 40 hours per week is preferred
- There is no tuition cost to do the fellowship, and fellows will be awarded \$250 a month as a transportation reimbursement
- The fellowship takes place in Rockville, MD (office is a short distance from the White Flint Metro Station)
- Your cover letter must explain why this fellowship in particular is of interest to you and what you “bring to the table.” You must discuss in your cover letter why you believe that you have the skills, focus, and independent drive to make a positive difference in your time with us at RespectAbility.

About Us: RespectAbility is a non-profit organization whose mission is to reshape the attitudes of American society so that people with disabilities can more fully participate in and contribute to society; and to empower people with disabilities to achieve as much of the American dream as their abilities and efforts permit.

RespectAbility provides equal employment opportunities (EEO) to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or genetics. In addition to federal law requirements, RespectAbility complies with applicable state and local laws governing nondiscrimination in employment. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including recruiting, hiring, placement, promotion, termination, layoff, recall, transfer, leaves of absence, compensation and training. RespectAbility expressly prohibits any form of workplace harassment based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, genetic information, disability, or veteran status.

To apply: send your cover letter and resume to jenniferm@respectabilityusa.org and tonyak@respectabilityusa.org