

The National Leadership Program Fellowship in Communications and Stigma

RespectAbility's stigma-busting Communications Fellows are on the frontline of fighting prejudice, misinformation and low expectations. Fellows work on a team to create and deliver positive images, stories and best practices. We identify, test, shape and deliver materials that are leveraged in our proactive outreach to employers, the media, thought leaders, Hollywood, elite schools, policy makers and political candidates. We are nonpartisan in our approach, do not lobby and follow guidelines for nonprofit organizations. We focus in particular on the promotion of best practices and will assign fellows who are hoping to enter public relations, new media, communications or media relations to work in this area. Much of our stigma reduction work is associated with outreach to Hollywood and employers.

Our program is fully accessible for people with disabilities and offers full-time in-house job coaching, skills development and networking opportunities. Assistive technology and personal care support are available as needed.

Communications Fellows are assigned to one of three areas of outreach based on interest and skills.

Employer Outreach / Social Media: Our social media campaign in this area is called #RespectTheAbility, which highlights the benefits of inclusive employment, including the better bottom line that results from recognizing the talent of people with a variety of abilities. Fellows interested in employer outreach should be proficient in news-style writing and/or social media and have the desire to increase their skills in these areas.

Hollywood Outreach / Stigma: While one in five people have a disability, [fewer than two percent](#) of scripted television characters (15 people) have disabilities. Furthermore, Most people with disabilities in film and TV are played by able-bodied actors and are shown in a negative, inaccurate light. Stigma fellows will help create a community of practice in Los Angeles coordinating with multiple partners to reduce the stigma against people with disabilities in Hollywood.

Political Outreach: Voters with disabilities are systematically ignored and only 27 percent of polling locations are fully accessible. Our blog, TheRespectAbilityReport.org, covers candidates' and politicians' progress in addressing disability employment issues. Fellows create news stories and are a part of the team for nonpartisan and educational candidate and grassroots outreach. Fellows interested in political outreach should have good writing and editing skills and an interest in politics. This fellowship is available leading up to the elections in 2018. Applicants for 2017 fellowships interested in political outreach also will be assigned to employer or Hollywood outreach.

Additional communications fellowships may be available to applicants with other skill sets including web design and video editing.

Who We Want

The National Leadership Program is ideal for people who want to gain media and communications skills and contacts while making a positive difference for people with disabilities. We are looking for creative, 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

Our current fellows spend a great deal of time working on this issue through social media outreach and analytics, materials development, media pitching, database development and maintenance and event planning. As a result, fellows gain direct experience of working with the media, political campaigns, Hollywood and PR companies, including leaders in these fields.

The fellows will work closely with our National Leadership Program Director and Communications Director. Individual projects will be assigned based on an individual's unique skill set and their own ability to "bring something to the table." Tasks might include writing blog posts, utilizing social media, designing graphics, editing photos and videos, attending political campaign events, and visiting inclusive employers. Stigma reduction fellows will join supervisors at workshops and webinars that pertain to stigma, national politics and communications.

Each fellow will receive as many opportunities as possible 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 strategic communications and policy, fair knowledge of issues for people with disabilities, and leadership skills to help them grow into confident advocates.

Important Details for Applicants

- Excellent communication and organizational skills are strongly preferred, and fellows should exhibit leadership skills to complete their own projects
- Strong preference for college juniors and above
- Commitment for a minimum of nine weeks, preference for full semester for current students
- Hours are 9-5, and fellows must be able to work at least 20 hours a week, though 40 hours per week is preferred
- No tuition cost to do the fellowship; fellows will be awarded \$250 a month as a transportation reimbursement

- Fellowship takes place in Rockville, MD (office is a short distance from the White Flint Metro Station)
- Cover letter must explain why this fellowship in particular is of interest to you and what you “bring to the table.” Discuss 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 nonprofit 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 and 1-2 page writing sample to jenniferm@respectabilityusa.org and tonyak@respectabilityusa.org. Also, please complete the linked [Google Doc Form](#).

Learn more here: <http://respectabilityusa.com/about-us/career-opportunities/the-national-leadership-program/>.