

FREE SOCIETY: INCLUSION OF LAWYERS WITH DISABILITIES AUTISM/NEURODIVERSITY IN PRACTICE

Statistics on why including and supporting attorneys with disabilities matters:

Lawyers with disabilities account for **0.53% of the profession** (National Association for Law Placement, 2018).

0.52% of law firm partners are lawyers with disabilities (NALP, 2018).

0.46% of associates are lawyers with disabilities (NALP, 2018).

NALP **did not report** on summer associates with disabilities given only 15 summer associates self-reported.

People with disabilities would be the United States' largest minority group, comprising **50 million Americans** (Department of Labor).

Keep in mind as this is happening, the legal profession is steadily improving and employing more women, minorities, and LGBTQ+ law students and lawyers (NALP, 2018).

Information about autism, neurodiversity, and neurodiversity at work:

Autism is a **neurological and developmental disability**. It is sometimes accompanied by other conditions such as intellectual disabilities, epilepsy, and mental health diagnoses.

1 in 59 children in the United States is diagnosed with autism (Center for Disease Control)

Some people say “autistic” or “disabled” (identity-first language). Some people say “person with autism/a disability” or “has autism/a disability” (person-first language). If possible, **ask and honor any language preference** of who you’re interacting with. This comes up a lot in the disability community.

There are four autistic boys per one autistic girl (Center for Disease Control)

Neurodiversity is a concept where neurological differences are to be recognized and respected as any other human variation. Labels that fall under neurodiversity include autism, ADHD, dyslexia and other learning disabilities, Tourette Syndrome, and intellectual disabilities (Neurodiversity Symposium). People with these labels are **neurodiverse** or **neurodivergent**; anybody else would be called **neurotypical**.

Advantages of hiring neurodiverse people includes different perspectives (Harvard Business Review).

Diversity of thought encourages problem-solving.

There is an employment gap amongst people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (“I/DD”). People with I/DD have as high as an **85% unemployment** rate (Autism Society of America, 2018).

At best, **36% of adults with I/DD are paid employees** (The ARC).

Resources for further reading:

Terry Carter, *The Biggest Hurdle for Lawyers with Disabilities: Preconceptions*, ABA Journal (June 2015),

http://www.abajournal.com/magazine/article/the_biggest_hurdle_for_lawyers_with_disabilities_preconceptions

National Association for Law Placement, <http://nalp.org>

Haley Moss, *I'm Florida's First Openly Autistic Attorney. Here's What That Means*, HuffPost (April 9, 2019), https://www.huffpost.com/entry/openly-autistic-attorney-florida-haley-moss_n_5ca65e44e4b0409b0ec5c17a

Robert D. Austin & Gary P. Pisano, *Neurodiversity as a Competitive Advantage*, Harvard Business Review (May-June 2017), <https://hbr.org/2017/05/neurodiversity-as-a-competitive-advantage>