

EMPLOYMENT



Epilepsy affects over 3 million Americans.

What is epilepsy??

Epilepsy is a neurological condition. A seizure is a symptom of epilepsy. A diagnosis of epilepsy is generally given after a person experiences two or more unprovoked seizures.

Known causes of epilepsy include head injuries, stroke, brain tumors, poisoning, problems in brain development before birth, and serious infections such as encephalitis or meningitis. However, more than half the time, the cause of epilepsy is unknown.

The Epilepsy Foundation has a network of affiliates nationwide that provide services in their local communities. To locate an affiliate in your area, call us toll-free or visit our website's home page and type in your zip code under 'community connections.'

For more info contact:

Program Objectives

The unemployment rate for people with epilepsy is at least two times higher than that of the general population. If discouraged people with epilepsy (PWE) jobseekers are included, the unemployment rate rises to 34%. Among PWE with tonic-clonic seizures, the rate is 50%. Further, one recent study found employer policies and attitudes against PWE were more unfavorable than those for people with heart disease, cancer, or diabetes.

Dispelling myths like "people with epilepsy shouldn't hold positions of responsibility or take stressful jobs" is necessary. The fact is that people with epilepsy are found at all levels in business, government, arts, and many other professions. Employers and colleagues may not be aware of these individuals because many of them don't talk about epilepsy for fear of what others might think.

To address lingering problems with stigma and misinformation, the Epilepsy Foundation's ***Employment Program** is working to educate both PWE jobseekers and employers by offering benefits counseling, individualized employment plans, job coaching, support groups and functional/work evaluations. Additionally, the Foundation's online Career Support Center offers jobseekers current information on employment-related skills, resources, and assistance tailored to people with seizure disorders.

*This program was made possible by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Available Resources

- Brochure describing the range of employment-related resources available through the Foundation's online Career Support Center at: www.epilepsyfoundation.org/programs/csc.cfm. Download the brochure or call 800-332-100 for copies.
- The Foundation's Jeanne A Carpenter Legal Defense Fund (www.epilepsyfoundation.org/epilepsylegal) includes a national network of employment lawyers who provide free or discounted counseling to PWEs about their rights as job candidates and employees.
- A new "Accommodations Conversations" DVD modeling successful conversations between supervisors and employees requesting epilepsy-related accommodations on the job will be available by summer 2010.
- A job preparation guide that helps jobseekers organize their job search and access local and web-based job search resources. Browse or download the guide at: www.epilepsyfoundation.org/programs/csc.cfm.