



# **Virtual Exclusion and Telework: Barriers and Opportunities of Technocentric Workplace Accommodation Policy**

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# Telework: The Pros and Cons

- Telework: work reconstructed as a set of tasks that need to be accomplished – not necessarily linked to a physical location or a given individual

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Expands job opportunities for people with disabilities</li><li>•Mitigates boundaries associated with transportation and the physical characteristics of the workplace environment</li><li>•Permits active worker communication and inter-worker interactions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Remote aspect of telework - lack of work support, job structure, technology, social interaction and communication</li><li>•Potential liabilities of telework, OSHA regulations, and fair labor laws .</li><li>•Employer resistance to telework</li></ul>



## Telework and People with Disabilities

- Federal Policy Environment
  - U.S. EEOC recognizes telework as a "reasonable accommodation" under 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
  - New Freedom Initiative (NFI 2001) focuses on Telework to help people with disabilities enter the workforce
- How can we design policy to facilitate the integration of people with disabilities into the workplace in such a way as to optimize their interactions with other workers?



# Key Barriers to Telework

**People with disabilities face additional barriers than those faced by teleworkers in general**

- Structural Barriers
- Policy/Regulatory Barriers
- Economic Barriers
- Technological Barriers
- Personal Barriers



# Telework Policy Objectives

- **Research**
  - Tracking telework practices to provide information on factors hindering and supporting implementation of telework
  - Current telework policies and practices among employers and implementation outcomes
- **Outreach**
  - Inform employers of “hidden labor pool” of people with disabilities and benefits of telework
  - Educate policymakers on issues unique to teleworkers with disabilities
  - Begin dialogue with planners and other stakeholder professionals on the differences between physical and virtual work environments



# Telework Policy Objectives

- **Interventions**

- Development of telework skills and training incorporated into vocational rehabilitation programs
- Establishment of a program similar to Ticket to Work program to assist people with disabilities in obtaining telework positions
- Development of detailed federal policies to oversee telework (or update ADA with provisions for telework)
- Tax incentives to confront the economic barriers faced by employers and their employees with disabilities



# Outcomes

- Increased access/availability of government resources
- Increased public/private sector knowledge transfer
- Increased productivity of persons with disabilities
- Development of a competitive market place for assistive/wireless technologies
- Facilitation of convenient and independent lifestyles



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