



INCLUSION & EMPLOYMENT

Bucks County
Employment Coalition
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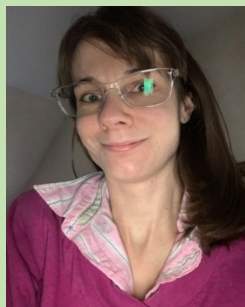
Portraits of Employment: Lisa McGrath

Lisa McGrath is happily employed at Wawa in Quakertown. Here she brews coffee, checks the coffee to replace when it is getting low, and keeps the area clean and organized. Lisa started working in the community 3 months ago. She now works 4 days per week, an increase from 3 days when she first started. Lisa enjoys working at Wawa because her coworkers are helpful, and everyone works as a team.

Lisa reports her journey to community work wasn't easy. She wasn't in the right state of mind to work in the community in the past, and she worked in a sheltered workshop for 6 years before deciding she wanted to branch out into community employment. As Lisa reports, working in the community has helped her to learn about who she is and helped her to become the person she was meant to be. She is able to use her own voice and be an advocate for herself.

Lisa has a lot of advice for others who want to explore working in the community: "Be true to yourself. Don't work too much or be too hard on yourself, it is a learning experience. We all make mistakes, learn to accept yourself as you are meant to be instead of how someone else expects you to be. Don't give up, keep trying. Keep your head on straight and you'll move forward in life. You don't have to go to college, just be smart in the decisions you make. Life is full of treasures and adventures, count your blessing every day and be thankful for what you have."

Congratulations on your successful community employment Lisa and thanks for the great advice!



**Upcoming Employment
Coalition Meeting:**

May 9th at 2:30
(via Microsoft TEAMS)

Benefits Counseling

Competitive, integrated employment is beneficial for individuals with disabilities in many ways. It helps you increase your financial independence, develop and use new skills, build relationships with co-workers and customers, and become more connected to your community.

Individuals with disabilities have and continue to be under-represented in the workforce and experience disproportionate unemployment and under-employment.

Individuals and families are often concerned about the impact of employment on the government benefits they or their loved one receives, such as Social Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Income (SSDI), Medicaid/Medicare, energy assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance for Needy Families, etc. Here's where benefit counseling can help.

Benefit counseling is "...a service that helps individuals with disabilities and their families understand how Employment and other life decisions will impact their benefits.¹" There are several myths about employment's impact on disability benefits. These myths can discourage individuals from pursuing employment, based on false assumptions. You can learn more about these myths by visiting the website below:

<https://choosework.ssa.gov/library/debunking-the-three-biggest-myths-about-disability-benefits-and-work>

Individuals with disabilities can both work and receive the government benefits they need. Benefits counselors can help show you the way. Benefits counseling is part of the Work Incentives Planning & Assistance Program (WIPA.) This program is designed to educate and assist individuals in pursuing employment and financial independence while reducing negative impacts to an individual's benefits.

Benefits counseling may also be available through the ID/A waivers:

<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/docs/Publications/Documents/FORMS%20AND%20PUBS%20ODP/Attachment%201%20-%20ISP%20Manual.pdf>

For more information on Benefits Counseling available through the WIPA program, please visit the Department of Human Services website below:

<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/WeCanWork/Resources/Pages/Work-Without-Losing-Benefits.aspx>

Disability Rights Pennsylvania also offers a host of self-advocacy guides and resources related to disability benefits, including employment for individuals with intellectual disability and autism:

<https://www.disabilityrightspa.org/resources/>

Are you an employer interested in finding out more about the benefits of hiring workers with disabilities? *Join the Bucks County Employment Coalition*

If you would like additional information on the Coalition, Employment First, or Supported Employment services, please contact Stephen Caughie at 215-444-2844

sccaughie@buckscounty.org

¹<https://apse.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Benefits-Counseling-Guide-.pdf>