



## The Benefits of Having People with ~~Disabilities~~ Hidden Talents in the Workforce

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# Our Mission and Vision

Our mission at The Defeating Epilepsy Foundation is to provide the advocacy and educational resources needed to the epilepsy community and our society.

We are dedicated to removing the stigma that is associated with epilepsy and helping to create opportunities for those living with epilepsy.

We are expanding our mission and vision to include individuals with other neurological disorders as well as neurodivergent conditions. Due to the high amount of stigma both communities face, The Defeating Epilepsy Foundation feels it is necessary to help collaborate with organizations that will help people with comorbidities achieve the life they deserve.



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# About the Presenter

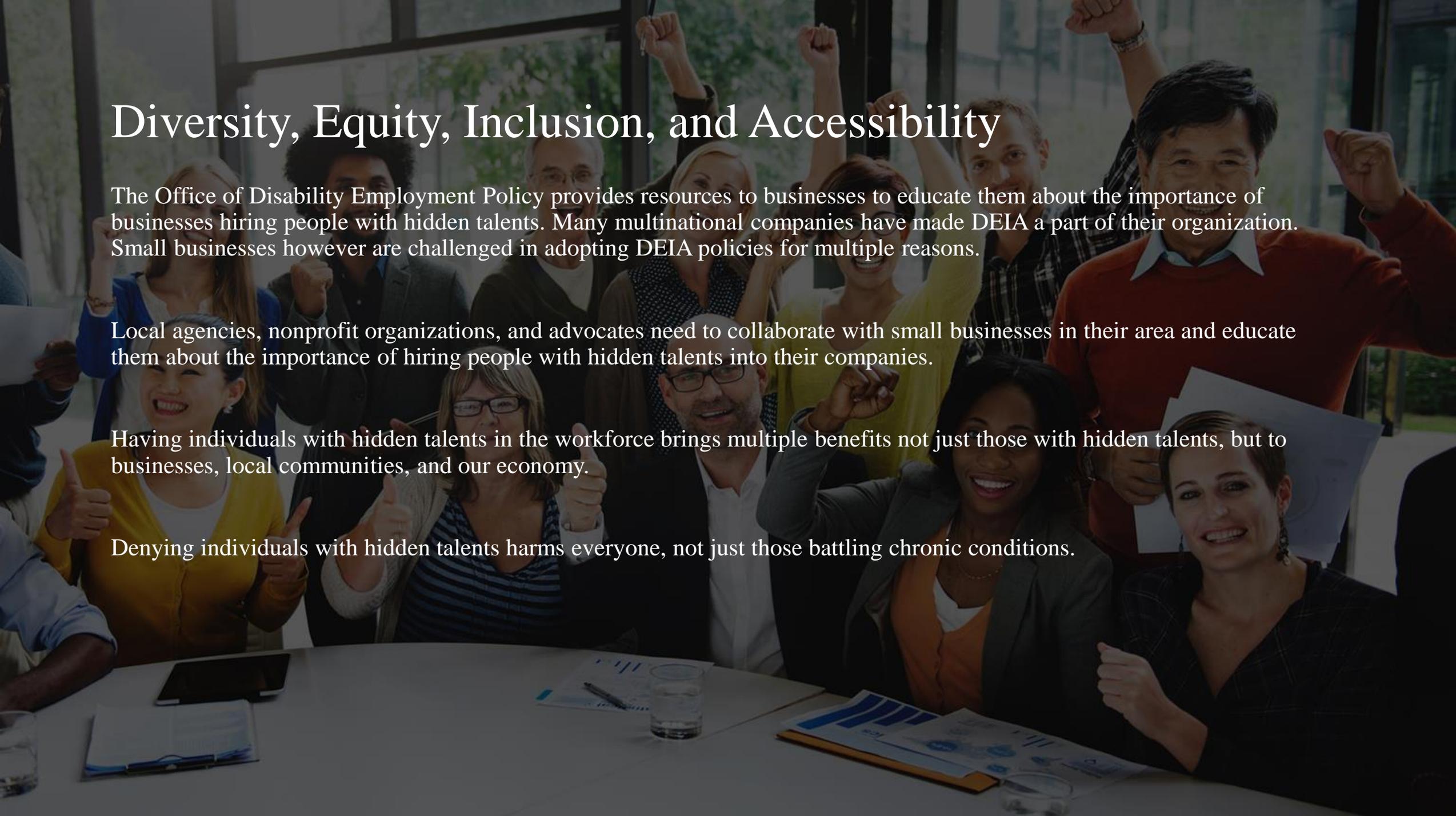
Natalie Boehm is a strategic consultant, disability activist, and author passionate about creating change. With years of experience in advocacy work, nonprofit, and organizational leadership, Natalie brings a unique blend of skills and knowledge to her role as the president of The Defeating Epilepsy Foundation.

Natalie has dedicated her work to those who are battling chronic illnesses to make sure they get the care they need and have a good quality of life. Natalie has battled epilepsy for most of her life and has experienced firsthand the challenges of navigating the healthcare and health insurance industries.

Throughout her career, Natalie has demonstrated a strong commitment to the mission and vision of her organization, continuously challenging herself to create positive change for those in need. Natalie understands the importance of collaboration, working to bring organizations together to create positive change.

Natalie wants the next generation of people with chronic illness not to experience the stigma that many from her generation have faced. She is focused on making sure that patients with chronic illnesses are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve despite their challenges.





# Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

The Office of Disability Employment Policy provides resources to businesses to educate them about the importance of businesses hiring people with hidden talents. Many multinational companies have made DEIA a part of their organization. Small businesses however are challenged in adopting DEIA policies for multiple reasons.

Local agencies, nonprofit organizations, and advocates need to collaborate with small businesses in their area and educate them about the importance of hiring people with hidden talents into their companies.

Having individuals with hidden talents in the workforce brings multiple benefits not just those with hidden talents, but to businesses, local communities, and our economy.

Denying individuals with hidden talents harms everyone, not just those battling chronic conditions.

# The Benefits of Having People with ~~Disabilities~~ Hidden Talents in the Workforce

Studies have shown that individuals with hidden talents are some of the hardest and most loyal employees due to the ableism and discrimination they have faced in the workforce. When an employer gives them the chance to show they are capable and have the potential to contribute to society, many are able and willing to succeed.

In the article, *Neurodiversity as a Competitive Advantage*, John, a data analytics professional on the spectrum had been unemployed for over two years. Despite having two master's degrees and graduating with honors, he couldn't make it through the hiring process.

Once employed, John became one of his department's most productive employees. Individuals who are neurodivergent have higher than average abilities, and are hard-working, yet need basic accommodations to achieve their goals. Many multinational companies are working towards expanding and having people with hidden talents in the workforce, but many small businesses are failing to do so.

In the article, *A Systematic Review of the Benefits of Hiring People with Disabilities*, findings show that the benefits of hiring people with disabilities include profitability, competitive advantage, inclusive work culture, and ability awareness. Secondary benefits for people were improved quality of life and income, enhanced self-confidence, expanded social network, and a sense of community.

# Social and Economic Benefits

According to the American Association of People with Disabilities, if one percent of people with hidden talents joined the workforce, the GDP would get a boost of up to 25 billion dollars.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, employing people with hidden talents has been shown to benefit businesses, such as lower turnover, increased productivity, and access to a broader pool of skilled workers. For people with hidden talents, the results are greater economic self-sufficiency, an opportunity to use their skills, and more active participation in community life.

The U.S. Small Business Association provides information to help small businesses benefit from having individuals with hidden talents in the workforce. Some benefits include establishing an inclusive culture and finding hidden talent.

The SBA also encourages small businesses to partner with advocacy groups and workforce development organizations to find employees who have been trained to help them find and keep jobs that fit their skills and interests. Several programs and government organizations are provided to help small businesses through the process.

Many small businesses are unaware of the tax credits they can receive when they are willing to provide the accommodations needed to have people with hidden talents working for them.

To get small businesses to hire people with hidden talents, government, and nonprofit organizations must collaborate to help educate the small business community to help them get over the phobia of hiring people with hidden talents.

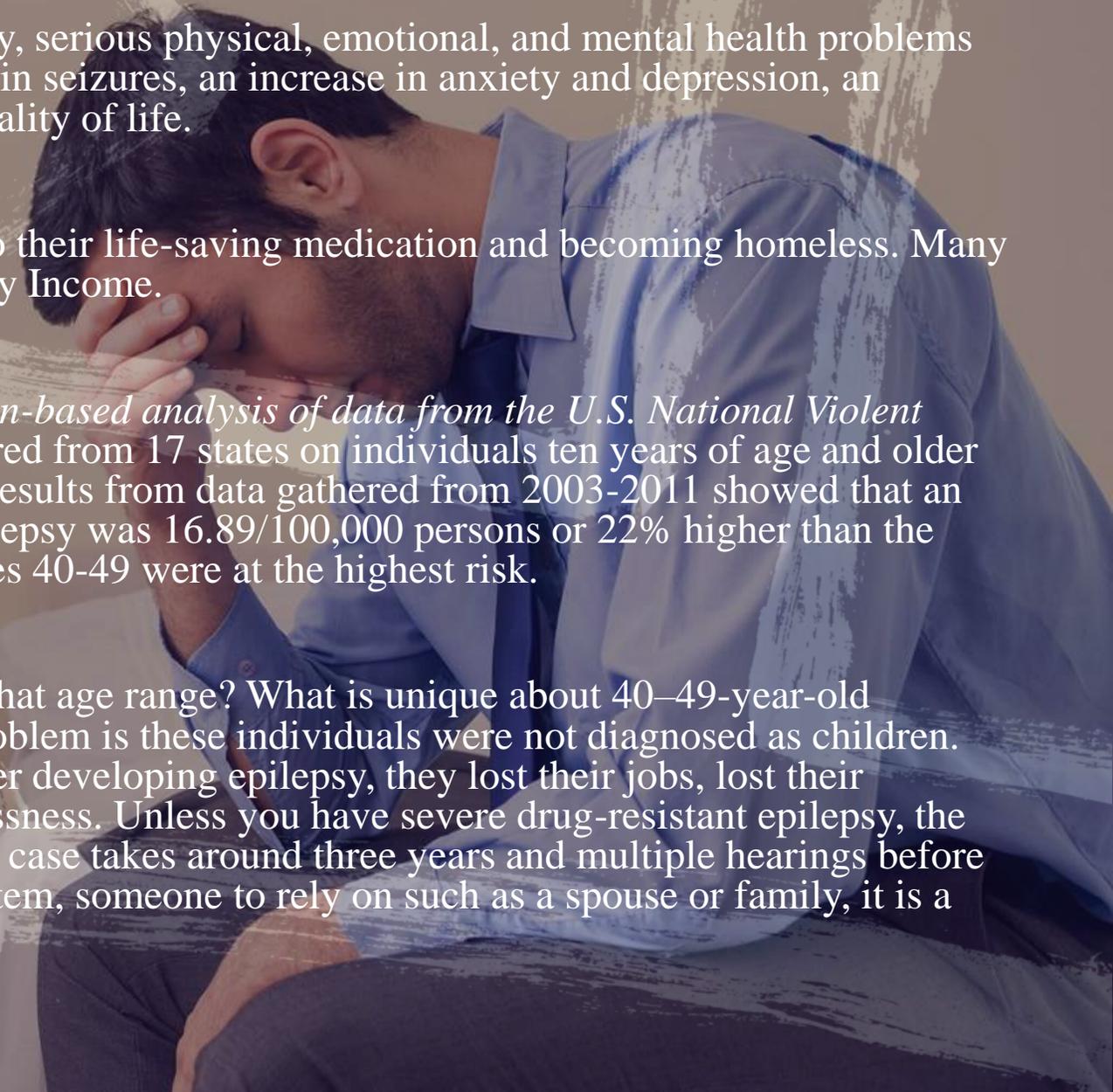
# Problems when People with ~~Disabilities~~ Hidden Talents are Excluded

When individuals with hidden talents are excluded from society, serious physical, emotional, and mental health problems arise. For example, many people with epilepsy see an increase in seizures, an increase in anxiety and depression, an increase in suicidal thoughts, and a decrease in their overall quality of life.

Many people with hidden talents live in fear of losing access to their life-saving medication and becoming homeless. Many fall through the cracks and are denied Social Security Disability Income.

In the article, *Suicide among people with epilepsy: A population-based analysis of data from the U.S. National Violent Death Reporting System, 17 states, 2003-2011*, data was gathered from 17 states on individuals ten years of age and older who committed suicide due to complications of epilepsy. The results from data gathered from 2003-2011 showed that an estimated annual suicide mortality rate among people with epilepsy was 16.89/100,000 persons or 22% higher than the general population (Tian et. al., 2016). Those with epilepsy ages 40-49 were at the highest risk.

Many who are not familiar with epilepsy would wonder, why that age range? What is unique about 40–49-year-old individuals being diagnosed with adult-onset epilepsy? The problem is these individuals were not diagnosed as children. They had careers, homes, marriages, and a productive life. After developing epilepsy, they lost their jobs, lost their licenses, marriages fell apart, and were headed toward homelessness. Unless you have severe drug-resistant epilepsy, the chances of getting SSDI quickly are little to none. The average case takes around three years and multiple hearings before SSDI is approved. When someone does not have a support system, someone to rely on such as a spouse or family, it is a death sentence for them.



# Final Thoughts

It is essential that governmental and nonprofit organizations collaborate and work together to educate businesses in their local area about the benefits of hiring people with hidden talents.

Hiring people with hidden talents can create growth, diversification, and have a positive impact both socially and economically.

Having people with hidden talents in the workforce can help to improve overall wellness, build confidence, gives them an opportunity to use their abilities, and create economic gain.

Denying people with hidden talents an opportunity for gainful employment can have a negative impact on their overall health. It can lead to isolation, homelessness, and suicide.

Government and nonprofit organizations can help to provide training for people with hidden talents and create a positive impact for not just people with hidden talents, but for their community.

# Resources

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# Resources

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