

Employment  
Series for  
Persons with  
Disabilities

# tips for

# Job Seekers



This booklet is for the job seeker who has a disability. It is intended to support your life/work decisions, learning and work exploration, and your personal management.

It will help you:

- Approach employers with a strong business case for hiring a person with a disability
- Explore diversity in the workplace
- Consider how effective communication skills, behaviours and attitudes can foster positive interactions when finding and keeping work
- Investigate career planning and work-finding services available
- Evaluate the impact of your health on your decisions
- Review your preferred future and fine-tune your action plan
- Explore effective work search tools, interview strategies and work alternatives
- Evaluate work opportunities
- Connect with further information and resources

## Acknowledgment

*Employment Series for Persons with Disabilities: Tips for Job Seekers* has been produced in a partnership between Human Resources Development Canada - Alberta/NWT/Nunavut Region, Alberta Human Resources and Employment, Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission and The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. Funding was provided by Human Resources Development Canada and Alberta Human Resources and Employment.

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## Formats:

### Internet

Available on the Accessible website, WORKink:  
<http://ab.workink.com>

### Print

Learning Resources Centre  
12360 - 142 Street  
Edmonton, AB T5L 4X9  
Phone (780) 427-5775  
Fax (780) 422-9750  
Internet [www.alis.gov.ab.ca/careershop](http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca/careershop)  
Catalogue Item #437154

### Alternative Formats

For further information call the Career Information Hotline, (780) 422-4266 (in Edmonton) or 1-800-661-3753 (in Alberta). Deaf or hearing impaired call TDD (780) 422-5283 or 1-800-232-7215 for message relay service in Alberta.  
E-mail [info@alis.gov.ab.ca](mailto:info@alis.gov.ab.ca)

**Aussi disponible en français sous le titre** La série sur l'emploi pour les personnes handicapées: conseils pratiques destinés aux chercheurs d'emploi.

Fondation canadienne pour l'avancement de la carrière.  
#202 - 411 Roosevelt  
Ottawa, ON K2A 3X9  
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## Preface

This is one in a series of three booklets for:

- persons with disabilities seeking work
- current or potential employers of persons with disabilities
- service providers working with persons with disabilities.

*For persons with disabilities,* finding and keeping work is usually no different than for persons without disabilities. However, there are additional issues to deal with, including how and when to tell an employer about their disability.

*For employers,* recruiting and hiring job seekers with disabilities may be a new experience. The process is really not that different from hiring and retaining persons without disabilities. However, some unique factors must be addressed, such as the appropriate terminology to use and questions about how a person's disability impacts their work.

*For service providers,* these booklets provide tips on working with job seekers with disabilities.

These booklets are intended to complement, not replace, other career development, work search and human resources materials. The focus is on providing practical tips and best practices on employability and employment from a cross-disability perspective. When appropriate, references are made to specific types of disabilities.

Additional information can be found in the appendices at the back of each booklet.

*Appendix A: Resources* offers a listing of organizations, websites, publications, and videos that may be of further use.

*Appendix B: Legislation* provides an overview of federal and provincial legislation regarding the hiring of and working with people with disabilities.

## Ask Yourself

What additional ideas or examples can I use to apply the business case to my work search?

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Is there any other information I need or steps I can take to make sure I am comfortable bringing up this topic and discussing it with an employer?

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## Introduction

Finding work can be very challenging for many people. As a person with a disability, you know about challenges. This booklet provides practical tips and ideas to help you identify and overcome challenges, create opportunities, and deal with typical concerns and questions relating to work search and employment.

To get the full picture, a number of employees with disabilities, supervisors of persons with disabilities, and service providers who work with persons with disabilities were interviewed for this booklet.

Today, more job seekers with disabilities are entering the workforce. For someone with a disability, this booklet will:

- help you look at how you deal with your disability in a work context
- take you through the work search process, from setting goals and getting ready for interviews, to being successful at work
- provide you with useful tips and suggestions.

If you know a service provider, counsellor, or employer who could benefit from information about working with persons

with disabilities, refer them to the other booklets in this series.

Why are businesses employing persons with disabilities? Besides the benefit of skills and contributions, employers can:

- access an underutilized talent pool
- have a workforce that reflects society
- be prepared for the time when universal access and a variety of work options will be the norm.

## A Vision for the Future

The vision is that *persons with disabilities participate as full citizens in all aspects of Canadian society. The full participation of persons with disabilities requires the commitment of all segments of society. The realization of the vision will allow persons with disabilities to maximize their independence and enhance their well-being through access to required supports and the elimination of barriers that prevent their full participation.*

In Unison: A Canadian Approach To Disability Issues, A Vision Paper (1998).



# The Business Case for Diversity

The term, “the business case” is often used by people looking to show employers the many good business reasons for hiring employees with diverse experiences and backgrounds. You may find it helpful to use the business case to promote your skills and the contributions your experience can make.

Diversifying an investment portfolio is considered a vital strategy for smart investors. For employers, diversity in their workforce refers to all the ways that people are different from each other and how these differences work together in an organization to achieve strength through balance.

Diversity goes beyond employment equity. Employment equity is a legal requirement which focuses on four “designated” groups that have traditionally been under-represented in the workforce — persons with disabilities, Aboriginals, visible minorities, and women. See *Appendix B: Legislation* for more information.

Companies that hire persons with disabilities are showing their commitment to both diversity and employment equity.

## Good Business Sense

There are many practical reasons for including persons with disabilities in the workplace.

- 1. Competitive advantage -**  
It helps a company to have employees who come from all parts of society and who are, look, act, and think like the company’s potential customers. A diverse workforce can help meet changing consumer demands and emerging niche markets.
- 2. Diverse perspectives -**  
Persons with disabilities have considerable life experience solving challenging problems on a regular basis. Creative problem solving skills can help companies find new solutions and lead to more satisfied customers.
- 3. Public image -**  
Employing persons with disabilities is a plus because it gives a company a positive image in the community.
- 4. Larger resource pool -**  
Persons with disabilities offer skills and expertise often

overlooked or underutilized in the past. New technologies and increased access to post-secondary education means that persons with disabilities are capable of doing work that many employers would never imagine them doing.

- 5. Universal access -**  
Hiring persons with disabilities promotes universal access which, in turn, benefits everyone. As examples, automatic doors installed to assist persons with disabilities also help other employees and customers with heavy loads or children in tow. Larger print, larger computer monitors and improved lighting reduce

**The majority of persons with disabilities have mild disabilities. This group has a very high participation rate in the labour force. Persons with severe disabilities are least likely to be in the labour force. Yet, despite more severe disabilities, 26% of this group do participate.**

Health and Activity Limitation Survey (HALS), Statistics Canada, 1991 (Survey updated every 10 years)

## Think About...

- How do I describe my disability to others?
- How does or would my disability affect my work? What limitations or restrictions do I have?
- How do I describe the kinds of accommodations or adaptations I require at work?
- How do I address “delicate” issues such as medication regimes or toilet routines?
- How open am I when people ask questions about my disability or about what I can or cannot do?
- Where do I draw the line? What kinds of questions am I not comfortable with?
- How do I respond to questions I don't wish to answer?
- Would I ever be willing to speak to a group of co-workers, to tell them about my disability and experiences, in order to help educate them?
- What articles, books, videos, or agencies would I recommend to help people learn more about my type of disability?

eyestrain for everyone. Ergonomic chairs and workstations cut down on health complaints, and flexible work arrangements and teleworking increase the job satisfaction of all employees.

### 6. Prepared for the future -

As the population ages, employers will need to know how to value and support differences in mobility, learning, communication and work styles. The expertise and experience of people with disabilities in these areas will be a vital contribution to the workplace.

Employers want to know how they will benefit from hiring you. Emphasize your qualifications and suitability for the work. In addition, applying the six business case reasons for diversity in the workforce will help you prepare for your work search, draft cover letters and handle interviews.

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*Hiring a person with a disability gives our clients an impression of the kind of company we are. It represents what we believe in.*

(Business owner who employs a person with developmental and physical impairments)

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*More employees are comfortable identifying their own needs for support and accommodation to assist them in being more productive and successful.*

(Manager in a government department)

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*Co-workers see me making efforts and think how hard it must be for me. Then they know they can do it too.*

(Individual with a mobility disability)

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*The presence of employee 'X' benefits the other employees. It has been good for morale and the spirit of teamwork.*

(Retail supervisor)

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*The employee [with a disability] comes to work every day and shows incredible motivation and drive. Other employees think "I should have that too".*

(Manager in sales company)

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*Individuals in our team have built stronger communication skills. They are more conscious of how they communicate and how well they are understood.*

(Manager with a disability who supervises persons with disabilities in a large organization)

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# Part 1 - Before You Begin

The following sections cover important information on self-awareness, communication, disclosure, and accommodation that you can use throughout your work search. You'll find these themes run through the entire process from preparing applications to being interviewed to being successful at work.

## Self-Awareness

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*You have to come to terms with your disability. You never get over it, but you have to come to terms with it.*

(Salesperson with a mobility disability)

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How comfortable you are with your disability affects the people around you. Your ability to answer questions about your disability or the limitations you have, within reason of course, will help to put others at ease. Appearing uneasy or evasive may put interviewers and co-workers on the defensive. They may think you don't trust them or that you are trying to hide something.

As someone with a disability, you have a role to play in educating others about disabilities and helping them overcome their fears and concerns. This doesn't mean you have to reveal everything about yourself. Like anyone else, you have a right to your privacy.

The way you say things is as important as the words you use. A positive attitude can make an enormous difference in how people respond to you. Many people with disabilities mention the use of humour as one way of deflecting questions or lightening up a potentially "heavy" conversation.

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*I tell people my dog is a working dog while in harness. Sometimes I say "You can't scratch him behind the ears, but I like to be scratched behind the left ear!" I use a lighthearted approach to get the point across.*

(Job seeker with a visual impairment)

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In the colour bar on the side, "Think About" lists questions to help you prepare for interviews and work with others. If you find they make you uncomfortable, go through them with a counsellor, friend or family member.

## Changing People's Opinions

You may have an idea of some of the thoughts or concerns that employers or counsellors may have about persons with disabilities. You may even have some yourself regarding people with disabilities different from yours. Here are a just a few examples of misconceptions.

- Persons with disabilities can't keep up with other workers.
- There are only certain kinds of work that persons with disabilities can do.
- A person with a disability is likely to miss a lot of work.
- A person with a disability will have more accidents at work.
- It's too expensive to hire a person with a disability — because of the extra costs of accommodation.
- It would be hard to fire a person with a disability if they didn't work out.
- Persons with disabilities don't really want to work.

All of the above statements are based on certain assumptions or stereotypes about persons with disabilities. **And, most importantly, they are false.**

## Ask Yourself

How important is it to me to address this situation?

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Will doing so help me get what I need or want?

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What are the possible impacts of addressing or not addressing this situation?

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**You have the power to help others to see persons with disabilities as skilled, productive workers, as active members of the community, and as post-secondary graduates.**

Part of your challenge in looking for work is to ensure people see you as a person and help get them past the stereotypes.

*We don't like things that are different. We don't understand or like things that don't fit our mould. Our whole society is somewhat like this. It is related to the way we were brought up.*

(Employee with a mobility impairment)

People's beliefs can affect, and possibly interfere with, their attitudes and behaviour towards persons with disabilities. Encourage them to "wait and see" and not to jump to conclusions.

*One barrier that people have is that they try to picture themselves in my position and then they think they couldn't do the job. They overlook the fact that I've been blind for a while and have developed all kinds of skills and experience in dealing with my blindness. I've learned to compensate.*

(Job seeker who is blind)

**Stereotyping is defined as creating an oversimplified, false or generalized portrayal of a group of people. Stereotyping does not allow for exceptions or individual differences and prejudices a person's ability, skills and personality based on unfair assumptions. To be fair, a job seeker should be judged on their merit regardless of race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical and mental disability, marital status, age, ancestry or place of origin.**



# - Before You Begin

## Take Charge

You are in the best position to help others change their misconceptions about people with disabilities. Provide them with positive experiences and information that will form the basis of new attitudes. Put them in contact with community agencies working with persons with disabilities.

Here are some ways you can do this.

- Provide reading materials or direct people to websites about disabilities and persons with disabilities.
- Talk openly with co-workers or friends who ask for information.
- Invite a guest speaker from an agency specializing in community education or employment services for persons with disabilities.
- Offer to arrange for disability awareness training.
- Volunteer with an agency assisting persons with disabilities.

## Communication

Whether you're at work, or with friends and family, you use communication skills every day. These skills are vital when looking for work or starting a new job.

### Facing Challenges

In your work, and in life, you'll face many situations related to your disability that require you to communicate assertively. They can be as subtle as the way people act around you – patronizing, looking, speaking, avoiding or interacting, as blatant as jokes about disabilities, or references about your disability or other people's disabilities. How you handle the situation says a lot about you. There is no right or wrong approach, only what works best for you.

It may be helpful to remember that individuals you are interacting with may be uncertain of what is the appropriate way to ask a question or handle a situation about your disability. They may also be unaware of what your preferences are.

## Creating Better Understanding

The following strategies can help you address communication challenges.

### 1. Stay positive -

Many persons with disabilities comment on "the look" they receive when meeting new people. They feel that this look covers a range of emotions from curiosity and pity, to shock and disgust. It is very important that you don't make assumptions, as this may lead you to jump to wrong conclusions and to offer a negative reaction.

### 2. Make inroads -

Every situation is a new opportunity to create learning and awareness.

## Resources

*A Way With Words: Guidelines and Appropriate Terminology for the Portrayal of Persons with Disabilities.*

*The Ten Commandments of Communicating with People with Disabilities.*

See *Appendix A: Resources* at the back of this booklet.

## Ask Yourself

How have I disclosed my disability in the past? What were the results?

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What can I learn from these experiences and the experiences of others to help me decide what is best for me?

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How much does my employer need to know to hire and/or to understand my accommodation needs?

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### 3. Be open -

Discuss how you want to be treated, what assistance you require, and what not to do.

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*Communication needs to be open, honest and clear. For example around office layout, I had to explain about excess furniture and that I couldn't get around if some wasn't removed.*

(Employee with a mobility disability)

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### 4. Be prepared -

Practice dealing with a sensitive or difficult discussion in advance.

### 5. Help others to find out more -

Offer resources or referrals to someone who wants more information.

### 6. Set your standard -

Are the commonly accepted standards or words used when referring to individuals with disabilities consistent with your standards?

### 7. Be clear -

Make your co-workers aware of how their remarks affect you.

## Disclosure

“Disclosure” refers to letting people know about your disability. Letting prospective employers know about your disability may be the biggest question in your work search. Do you tell them? How and when do you tell them? You have a great deal of control in this area and you have to decide what is best for you. It's your decision if anything is mentioned on your cover letter or résumé, or if you say something during the interview, or if you prefer to tell your future employer at the time of the job offer.

Here are a few things you should know.

1. Based on interviews with service providers, employers and job seekers, all indicated that disclosure:
  - is a very personal choice
  - is an important and complex decision
  - depends on the individual and the situation. What is right for one person may not be right for another, and what works for one employer may not be successful for another.

# - Before You Begin

2. Disclosure should be left up to you. This could be different when dealing with a placement agency that works specifically with persons with disabilities, though you will still have some say in how much is disclosed.

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*It depends entirely upon the individual. I ask "How do you want to approach this?" They need to know that if I am approaching an employer on their behalf, the employer will know they have a disability and want to know more.*

(Community service provider)

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## To Disclose or Not To Disclose

Before deciding if, when and how to disclose your disability, think about and discuss the following questions.

- Is your disability visible?
- How do most people react when they learn about your disability? How do you deal with their reactions?
- When do you feel most comfortable and confident disclosing your disability?

- Are there any safety reasons (personal or organizational) that would impact your decision to disclose?
- How will your employer react to your disclosure? Will they think you are dishonest? Can you deal with their reaction?
- What misconceptions might the employer have about your disability?
- If you disclose, will you be able to reassure your employer that your disability will not affect your ability to do the work?
- Do you need accommodations for your interview? Or if you get the job?
- What do you know about this employer's policies and experiences regarding people with disabilities?

(Adapted from *Career and Placement Services Tips*, University of Alberta)

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*Not to talk about the disability may be fooling everybody - yourself and the employer.*

(Psychologist working with persons with disabilities)

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Once you have reached a decision, ask yourself one last question: Will disclosing my disability at this time and in this way help me reach my goal of getting work?

## When and How Much To Disclose

Disclosure may occur as early as the initial contact or application, particularly if your disability is a visible one. Or, it may happen once you begin your employment.

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*I disclose that I am blind on an application. There is no sense hiding it and surprising them at the interview. I also explain that I use voice-based software and have what I need to do the work. I don't want to waste an employer's time or my time, if they are not interested in hiring someone who is blind.*

(Job seeker who is blind)

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*I don't say I have a disability on my résumé. I don't trust people's attitudes enough to tell them in advance. At the interview I can prove that blindness is not the issue and show my credibility.*

(Educator with a visual impairment)

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## Advantages and Disadvantages of Disclosure

The following information can help you decide if and when to disclose information about your disability, depending on the situation.

(Adapted from *Career and Placement Services - Tips*, University of Alberta)

Options	Advantages
Third party referral	<p>A recommendation from someone the employer knows can increase the chances of being invited for an interview</p> <p>Employer is immediately aware of your situation</p>
Written application (résumé, cover letter, or application form)	<p>The employer may appreciate your willingness to be forthcoming and open</p> <p>The employer may be actively recruiting for a diverse workforce</p>
When the interview is scheduled	<p>Employer has already expressed an interest in interviewing you</p> <p>Employer can prepare for interview (accommodations)</p> <p>A better opportunity to explain your situation</p>
After scheduling the interview	Same as above
At moment of meeting	Reduces risk of the employer forming preconceived opinions about your abilities
During the interview	Provides an opportunity for you to reassure the employer and answer questions
After receiving an offer	If your disability will not adversely affect your ability to do the work, the employer cannot withdraw the offer



# - Before You Begin

Disadvantages	Recommendation
<p>Little or no control over what is said about you</p> <p>The information could be used to screen you out of the interview process</p>	<p>Use this option if the person making the recommendation knows you well and is supportive of your goals</p> <p>Follow up with a phone call to the employer to answer any questions</p>
<p>Does not allow you to address questions the employer may have</p> <p>Limited space to explain your abilities, accommodations, etc.</p> <p>Could be used to screen you out</p>	<p>Use this approach if your disability might be an advantage in terms of being hired (the employer has an employment equity program)</p> <p>Focus on your skills and abilities</p>
<p>Employer may react negatively (feel you've been dishonest)</p> <p>Employer may draw inappropriate conclusions and not give you serious consideration</p>	<p>If you require accommodations for your interview, you might want to disclose at this point</p> <p>If the interviewer is not the one scheduling the interviews, you may want to call back and disclose to him/her</p>
<p>Same as above</p>	<p>Same as above, plus it allows you time to prepare what you want to say and how to say it</p>
<p>Employer may feel unprepared for the interview or react negatively</p> <p>Interview setting might not be appropriate</p>	<p>If your disability is not visible, and you are self-confident and able to keep the employer's attention focused on your skills and abilities, you might want to use this method</p>
<p>Same as above</p>	<p>If your disability is not visible, you can disclose at this point and, focusing on your abilities, explain any accommodations you will require</p>
<p>The employer's reaction could be very negative</p>	<p>This option could be used if your disability is not visible, will not affect your ability to do the work and you will not require accommodations. If you are in this situation, you may also choose not to disclose at all</p>

## Ask Yourself

What forms of accommodation have I had positive experiences using?

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For this specific type of work, what accommodations will assist me in being productive and successful? What will they cost?

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## Tips and Advice on Disclosing Disabilities

If you have had little success in disclosure situations, or feel uncomfortable, try role-playing the disclosure process. Here are some tips.

- Be positive. Focus on your skills and qualifications and don't present your disability as a weakness.
- Be prepared to address any concerns employers express, even if they are not directly stated.
- Know what workplace accommodations you may require, including their availability, cost and what funding programs the employer can access.
- Anticipate the employer's reaction and possible questions to your disclosure and how you will answer the questions.

### Advice When Disclosing

1. Keep it short and simple.
2. Plan what you are going to say.
3. Use examples.

## Accommodation

As a person with a disability, you may need certain working conditions, tools and technologies to help you be a successful employee. These accommodations will have to be discussed with your potential employers.

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*It may not be done the same way as other people but the outcome is the same.*

(Employee with a mobility disability)

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Many organizations are exploring alternate working relationships and accommodations to meet the needs of workers. Accommodating the needs of persons with disabilities is no different.

- Increased demands on productivity and effectiveness are leading to new technologies.
- Working at home or from satellite offices is becoming common.
- Tasks are being assigned on a temporary or permanent basis, based on skills, interests and abilities.
- Workplaces are introducing larger computer monitors, improved lighting and ergonomic chairs to reduce physical strain.

Most accommodations are easy to introduce and cost very little.

# - Before You Begin

While some government funding is available, most employers consulted said that the costs were minimal and the majority chose not to pursue funding.

*Remember that the costs of accommodation are pretty minimal. Often there are simple solutions.*  
(Employee with a mobility impairment)

## Types of Accommodation

Workplace accommodations take many forms:

- making workplace facilities accessible
- modifying work schedules
- restructuring the work
- acquiring or modifying equipment, software or devices

### Financial Assistance

Funding may be available from the federal and provincial governments to:

- make worksite accommodations
- purchase tools and technologies.

See *Appendix A: Resources* at the back of this booklet.

- providing support services or qualified assistants
- changing work locations
- retraining and/or reassigning employees.

*An employee with MS has a heavier load of tasks which requires desk work as opposed to process work away from his desk. We also moved his desk so it would be more accessible to the outside, in case of emergency.*

(Supervisor commenting on accommodations made in the workplace)

*Re-assignment of day-to-day reading to staff, and assumption of more strategic planning and organization, enabled growth and development of staff and better utilized my skills and interests.*

(Manager who recently lost most of his vision)

## Hints for Accommodation

You may already have some experience with accommodations in the workplace. Here are some additional strategies for job seekers.

- Take care of your own needs by providing the equipment or technology if possible. This eliminates one thing for the

**Accommodation is all about ensuring that individuals are positioned for success and maximum productivity.**

employer to worry about or to use as an excuse not to hire you.

- Be open, honest and clear. Explain what your specific needs are. Don't expect your employer or co-workers to anticipate them.
- Know how much it costs to provide your physical accommodations and where they can be purchased.
- Know what funding is available for accommodations, and let your potential employer know about it and how to access it.
- Offer solutions, not just what you can or cannot do.

**80% of accommodations suggested by the Job Accommodation Network for persons with disabilities can be made for less than \$500.**

Job Accommodation Network in Canada is now called Job Accommodation Services (JAS) at Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work. See *Appendix A: Resources* at the back of this booklet.





# Down to Work

devices for the deaf. If not, would you be able to effectively communicate what you need?

6. **Accommodation** - Are you aware of any accommodation you may require in a workplace or training situation? Can you offer suggestions to meet your needs, such as ramps, lighting, visual emergency alarms, or automatic doors?
7. **Funding and financial support** - Do you know what sources of funding are available to you or a potential employer? How will your current financial support be affected if you start working?
8. **Residency and telephone** - Are you in a stable living situation where you have access to a telephone? Can employers leave messages for you?
9. **Communication strategy** - What strategies have you developed that enhance your ability to communicate with others? You may find that using e-mail, lip reading, or working with individuals or in small groups works well for you.

## Attitude

An important thing to prepare is your attitude. Melanie Witt, in her book *Job Strategies for People with Disabilities*, refers to the importance of having a productive attitude as perhaps the one thing that no one and no circumstance in your life has control over but you.

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*A good attitude can see you through anything.*

(Employee with a mobility disability)

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If you are recently disabled and adjusting to your new situation, you may need to work through feelings of loss, anger or frustration before you are ready to look for work.

If you are recovering from a negative experience at school or work, you may need to spend more time reviewing it with a counsellor or support person before moving on.

You need to approach your work search situation with the most positive attitude you can. If you assume you will be treated in a negative way because of your disability, you may come across as defensive and negative yourself.

## Facing Your Fears

Most people feel afraid when considering a major change, such as re-entering the workforce after a period of time. As a person with a disability, you may face the added challenges of stereotypes and biases.

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*Try to face your fears: fear of failure, taking on new things, fear of the unknown. Get support. You don't have to be fighting the world on your own. The support may be financial, spiritual, or encouragement.*

(Employee with a mobility disability)

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The following list contains many of the fears which people with disabilities face when entering the workforce. Using the services of an agency or service provider can help you address these fears. Or, you may wish to discuss your fears with a family

## Resources

*Changing Course  
Midstream*

See *Appendix A: Resources* at the back of this booklet.



# Down to Work

The best way to find out about an agency or organization is to visit it. Arrange an information-gathering interview. That way you can see for yourself the location and accessibility of the facilities and find out about the feel of the place, the staff and the clients. Here are some questions to ask an agency.

- What range of services do you provide?
- What client groups do you serve?
- Do you provide individualized services? Group services? Or a combination of the two?
- What are the qualifications and experience of your staff?
- What support do you provide during the work search? At work? For how long?
- What responsibilities and commitment do you expect of me?
- What kind of success do your clients have? In what type of jobs do they get placed?

When meeting a service provider for the first time, here are a few things to consider.

**1. Confidentiality** - You may be asked to sign a Release of Information form to allow the service provider to contact other professionals such as

your social worker, doctor or psychologist. You need to understand why they might be contacted and how that information will be used.

**2. Reasons for asking specific questions** - For the service provider to effectively assist you, they may need to know something about your disability and your accommodation needs. This information will help identify suitable types of work or prepare you for an interview. A service provider will usually explain why the information is needed and how it can be useful. If these questions seem personal and unrelated to the purpose of your appointment, ask how that information relates to your work search.

**3. The role of the service provider and what you can expect** - Usually the service provider will explain about the service and what you can expect. If this does not happen, make a point of asking.

**4. Be helpful** - Mainstream agencies who do not specialize in working with persons with disabilities may be somewhat uncomfortable at first discussing your

disability with you. You can help the situation by offering relevant information about yourself and your disability.

While you may have concerns about getting work, your service provider may also have concerns about:

- offending you
- asking you personal questions
- making a mistake
- showing their ignorance
- not being able to help you.

It may be possible that you are the first person with a disability, or with your type of disability, that the service provider has worked with. Help them get past their discomfort or uncertainty. Speak openly about your disability and its impact on work-related issues and encourage questions.

Remember that you are in charge of your work search. If there are issues that you are not comfortable with or that you feel are preventing a constructive and productive relationship, discuss these with your service provider.





# Down to Work

## Developing a Personal Profile

Whether you are developing a plan on your own or with help, it is more important to focus on your abilities than to focus on what you cannot do.

The career development process typically consists of:

- getting to know yourself
- exploring possibilities
- setting goals
- taking action.

Your counsellor may ask you about:

- your past experience - education, employment and volunteer work
- how you have made decisions in the past, or with whose help you have made them
- how your view of yourself and your life experience have

influenced the career choices you have made

- what your lifestyle is like, and what your hobbies and interests are
- challenges that might affect your learning and planning.

## Reframing

Reframing is looking at things in a different way. If experiences have left you feeling negative, try to look for a positive approach. For example, you may say to yourself, "Nobody wants to hire me because I have a disability." You can reframe that thought and say, "I may have a disability, but I have a lot of abilities that someone would hire me for." A counsellor or other support person can help you reframe some of your past experiences and beliefs and identify learnings that may have come from them.

If you are newly disabled, you may start thinking of yourself in a different way than before you were disabled. Part of your challenge will be to reframe the way you think of yourself. It may be difficult to accept that you are no longer able to do certain things. However, you still have all of your past successes as well as many untapped skills.

Focus on what you can do and the skills and interests you have.

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*You need to turn your disability into a success story or show its advantages. The way I handle this is to demonstrate a strong and positive attitude. I don't hide behind my disability. I use it as something I have mastered.*

(Employee with a mobility disability)

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Remember that you have developed skills from meeting the challenges of your disability. Think of times when you have used the following:

- creative problem-solving
- flexibility
- recovering from a mistake or difficult or awkward situation
- sense of humour and positive attitude
- determination.

## Think Long-Term

Discuss your career goal with your service provider or counsellor. If you have not done much research, they may suggest ways to find out more about the education, training and skills needed, where the training is available, what it

### Resources

*Changing Course  
Midstream*

*Job Strategies for People  
with Disabilities*

See *Appendix A: Resources* at the back of this booklet.

## Ask Yourself

What have I learned from previous work searches?

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What will I do differently this time?

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If this is your first work search: What similar situations can I draw from? (finding volunteer work, researching school assignments or educational institutions)

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would cost, and what the labour market demand is for that occupation.

Don't be afraid to tell the service provider about your dream job. Even if you never get it, you may find there is similar work you can do. For example, a person with a developmental disability may dream of being a veterinarian. The agency places the person in a veterinary clinic where he carries out specific tasks he can handle and learns more about the demands of being a vet and working around animals. As a result, the person's new, more achievable goal, is to become a zoo attendant.

If you have no idea about what kind of work you would like to do, or would be capable of doing, a service provider can help you explore a variety of options to identify, assess and develop your goals. For example, it may be difficult for you to take full-time studies, so the length of your training may have to be longer than usual. Or the work itself may present particular challenges and you will have to determine if you are interested, willing and able to meet them.

Sometimes you may need to try something to see if it is right.

You may apply for specific training only to discover that it is your marks, and not your disability, that prevent you from taking the training. Sometimes a little rejection is needed before you are ready to move on to something else. Then again, you may surprise everybody and work harder to get accepted into the course!

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*At university some instructors asked me not to take their courses, saying 'This is going to be too much for you.' When I decided to study counselling they were dubious about how I could ever be a counsellor with my lack of eye contact and inability to pick up visual cues.*

(Counsellor and Ph.D. with a visual impairment)

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*I was told I shouldn't consider library science because I wouldn't be able to shelve books. It was only later I realized that shelving books is seldom part of a librarian's job.*

(Employee with a mobility disability)

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*As a counsellor, I'd hate to think I'd turn off a potential Rick Hansen.*

(Counsellor with a disability)

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# Down to Work

## Financial Assistance

Financial assistance for persons with disabilities and employers may be available from the federal and provincial governments.

See *Appendix A: Resources* at the back of this booklet.

*You might not be able to do everything that you want to do! Don't blame your disability for everything. Know yourself and your disability.*

(Employee with a mobility disability)

Programs or services to consider include:

- on-the-job training
- apprenticeship
- self-employment program or entrepreneurial workshops to help develop business plans and do research
- supported employment through agencies which provide job development and ongoing support at work.

(Note: These agencies match job seekers with job coaches to help orient them to the work environment.)

- other work search programs such as job finding clubs.

*I did a work experience for credit in high school and that helped me get started in employment.*

(Employee with a mobility disability)

Your service provider may encourage you to explore work options such as job shadowing, volunteer work or a mentoring relationship. They may refer you to another agency that can provide what you are looking for. A service provider may also direct you toward available funding sources for adaptive technology, assistive services or workplace supports.

## Taking Steps Toward Your Goal

- It is important to have both short-term and long-term goals.
- Achieving small steps as you work towards a goal builds self-confidence.

- Going to school or training may be one step towards meeting your long-term goal.
- Remember, having difficulty with one step does not mean you will fail to achieve your plan.
- It helps to see success as you accomplish each goal.

Take one step at a time. A job seeker, whose long-term goal was to obtain full-time employment outside her home, started with a short-term goal of volunteering one day a week and learning to take the city bus in her wheelchair. Accomplishing this gave her a sense of satisfaction and helped her evaluate how feasible her long-term goal was.

## Take Note

Keeping track of your accomplishments, such as phone calls and interviews, in a daily journal or log helps you to see your successes and measure your progress toward achieving your long-term goals.

## Ask Yourself

What strategies have I used to research companies?

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Which of these strategies would work in identifying receptive companies?

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## Finding or Creating Opportunities

All job seekers are interested in finding the right work. The right work or opportunity involves a fit or a match between:

- your skills and abilities and the position requirements
- your style and values and the organizational culture.

## Finding Receptive Companies

You have a greater chance of success in finding work and fitting in when a company is receptive to hiring job seekers with disabilities.

Receptive companies may:

- have a proven track record of supporting a diverse work environment
- have compliance requirements, such as employment equity (see *Appendix B: Legislation*)
- have hired someone you know who has a disability.

Here are some tips for finding receptive companies.

In the case of federally regulated companies, the federal government and some municipal governments, it pays to identify yourself on application forms as a person with a disability. These organizations are making an effort to increase the representation of designated group members among their employees.

1. **Networking** - This is critical in all work searches. To find companies that currently employ individuals with disabilities you will need to talk with other individuals, with or without disabilities, people who work in related and non-related fields, as well as chambers of commerce and professional associations.
2. **Contact agencies that help persons with disabilities** - Agencies whose primary role is to provide services for job seekers with disabilities can help identify opportunities.
3. **Research company publications** - Many companies that are committed to building a

# Down to Work

diverse workplace make reference to their commitment and policies in company and stockholder publications. Public libraries are a good source of this information. See *Appendix A: Resources* for websites to help you in your research.

- 4. Find out about federally regulated companies -** Contact your local Canada-Alberta Service Centre for a list of federally regulated employers and federal contractors. See *Appendix B: Legislation* for information about employment equity.
- 5. Review articles, advertisements and job postings -** Receptive companies often identify themselves as “equal opportunity employers.” Reviewing newspapers, magazines, job postings and websites for employers displaying this information is a good way to target specific companies for further research, even if they are not currently advertising the work you’re looking for.
- 6. Arrange information gathering interviews -** An information gathering interview gives you a chance to learn more about a

company, match your skills with the organization’s needs and expand your network.

## Approaching Non-Receptive Companies

Not every company is receptive to hiring job seekers with disabilities. These companies may not have had the opportunity to hire people with disabilities in the past. Don’t be intimidated when you encounter a company that does not have a proven track record in this area. Focus on how your skills and abilities will benefit that company. You may want to refer to the business case for hiring job seekers with disabilities mentioned in the front of this booklet.

## Creating Opportunities

In order to find the right situation for yourself, you want to be open to the many different work opportunities that exist.

- **Full-time employment -** This involves working for a single employer for more than 30 hours a week.

- **Part-time employment -** This involves working less than 30 hours per week within a specific job for a single employer.
- **Multi-tracking -** This occurs when a person holds more than one job at a time. These can be full-time or part-time positions.
- **Job sharing or work sharing -** This involves two or more people working within a single job description or sharing a single position. This provides both employees with the security of a full-time position and the flexibility of a part-time job.
- **Talent pools -** This is usually an informal arrangement where the people within the talent pool are committed to finding work for members of the pool.

## Resources

*Finding Out: How to Get the Information You Need to Make The Choices You Want*

See *Appendix A: Resources* at the back of this booklet.



## Ask Yourself

How have I handled applications and cover letters in the past?

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What résumé format will I use to best portray my skills and experience?

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What do I want to do differently this time in my work search?

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What full-time, part-time, extra curricular, volunteer, and educational experiences best describe my skills and competencies?

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- **Contract employment** - This is usually based on a pre-set time period.
- **Consulting** - Consultants work on a number of projects at the same time, usually for a pre-set time period or fixed dollar amount.
- **Self-employment** - These are people who develop, market or produce a service or product on their own.
- **Entrepreneurs** - These are self-employed people who employ others.
- **Volunteering** - This allows people to offer their skills and time without pay in exchange for experience or the chance to do something for others.

*My position was created as a result of my counsellor marketing my skills to a bunch of businesses. I had said I wanted to be receptionist or phone clerk and they got me a job as a receptionist.*

(Employee with mobility disability)

*We submit employment proposals and create positions by scoping out opportunities and matching employer needs with clients' skills.*

(Community service provider)

**Volunteering can be a win-win situation, providing you with valuable skills, connections, and work experience while helping to build your self-confidence.**

*You have to do your homework about the type of business and competitors. Take your disability into consideration. How long it takes you to get up and get ready in the morning, for example, and other needs, will impact how you run your business.*

(Self-employed person with mobility disability)

## Resources

*Radical Change in the World of Work: The Workbook*

*Skills Plus Handbook: Discovering Your Personal Career Assets*

*Volunteering: How to Build Your Career by Helping Others*

*Career Digest website-articles on career planning*

*See Appendix A: Resources at the back of this booklet.*

# Down to Work

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*You need to have drive to be self-employed. Customers will look at you before they will hire you to do a job. They may make a decision based on their first impression, thinking that you can't do the job. I tell them that I have competitive pricing and lots of satisfied customers. I say that I may take a little bit longer but I do quality work.*

(Self-employed contractor with mobility disability)

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Other possible approaches that you may wish to consider include:

**Job Carving** - Some employers may be open to redefining current roles or redistributing work. You may suggest that your employer take a little bit from other jobs and create a new position that matches your skills. Potential employers would want to see the business case of how this approach would benefit them or free staff to do other work.

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*One employee has a clearly defined role. The role was custom built based upon his skills.*

(Employer of an individual with a developmental disability)

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**Try a Trial Run** - Many employers have built-in probationary periods for new employees. Suggest one yourself if you feel this would increase the chances of a potential employer offering you work. This time would give the employer and you a chance to measure your skills and abilities against the work that has to be done.

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*I recommend a probationary period of six months. It gives you a chance to do an internal evaluation. It takes six months for the new employee to get accustomed to the work and a shorter probation period wouldn't be fair. It would be giving up too soon.*

(Business owner)

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## Keep Up The Good Work

Work searches take time, often due to factors beyond your own control. During the initial stages you may have lots of energy and optimism. Keeping yourself motivated in your work search may be a challenge over time.

Here are some additional ideas to help keep you motivated.

- Redefine success by looking at the small victories along the way, such as gaining new contacts, getting interview practice, and learning more about a company.
  - Celebrate success through checklists and lists of new contacts. Reframe rejections as positives, such as the number of people who now know about your skills.
  - Keep focused on the plan and revise as necessary. Reflect on how much has been accomplished, not how much more there is to do.
  - Network with other work seekers and with those who have been successful.
  - Keep hopeful; it helps you deal with uncertainty.
- 

*Every job interview, every workplace visit is a learning process and will help you be successful.*

(Community service provider)

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*During my last job search, I received over 200 rejection letters. This seemed really depressing to me. Now I look at it as 200 people that now know me.*

(Job seeker with a mobility disability)

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## Ask Yourself

What should I take into consideration when preparing for an interview?

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How important is self-confidence and self-esteem in a successful interview?

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How will I build my personal comfort in this area?

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## Applications and Interviews

### Applications, Cover Letters and Résumés

The purpose of the application, cover letter and résumé is to get employers interested enough to want to meet you. The process is the same for people with disabilities as it is for other job seekers. However, some unique factors concerning your disability should be considered.

Here are some ideas you can use to your advantage when preparing applications, cover letters and résumés.

- Focus on your strengths and abilities. Choose a résumé format that best allows you to portray your strengths and shifts the focus from any gaps in your employment history. You may find it helpful to ask a career counsellor for assistance in choosing a format.
- Describe transferable skills gained through volunteer positions and other experience.
- Identify how you plan to disclose your disability. See the section on Disclosure for more information.

- Describe how your computer and other technical skills enable you to do the work you are applying for.
- Emphasize personal skills that relate to your work search.

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*In applying for jobs I refer to my vision in the covering letter as I find it creates too much stress to work it into the interview. It's a challenge to know how to lead into it. So I speak to it as a strength, a component of my understanding and my skills developed through professional and personal experience.*

(Service provider and employee with a visual impairment)

## Resources

*Positive Works II*

*Job Seeker's Handbook: An Introductory Guide to Finding Work*

*Job Search: The Product is You - Self Marketing Strategies and Tools*

*Self-Employment: Is it for me?*

See *Appendix A: Resources* at the back of this booklet.

# Down to Work

## Portfolios

Many people use a portfolio when looking for work. A career portfolio is an organized collection of samples of your work that demonstrate your skills, abilities and talents. Your portfolio will help you tell the employer what you can do and back it up. Include information in your portfolio based on the needs of whomever you are planning on showing the portfolio to. Consider the knowledge, skills and attitudes your audience will be looking for. You might find that you include different items for each different audience. Your portfolio will:

- address doubts with actual examples
- demonstrate where you have shown initiative and creativity
- increase your confidence by having concrete examples of your skills and abilities.
- For more information on what to include in your portfolio check out the Internet at [www.alis.gov.ab.ca](http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca). Click on "Tip of the Week" and look under "Archives" for *Portfolios: The Art of Finding a Job*.

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*I was able to use references of employers and customers from before I had my stroke. They could attest to my strong work ethic, good attitude and skills.*

(Self-employed)

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- accommodations - what you require and how much it costs
- disclosure - you should be prepared with a well thought out, concise response that will give you the confidence to be able to handle a difficult question in the best possible fashion.

Practice your responses to direct questions.

- What accommodations will you need to help you in this position?
- How will you perform all the functions of this work with your disability?
- What transportation arrangements do you have? Are they reliable?
- How can you explain any gaps in your employment history?

Following are a number of strategies that will assist you in being ready for anything that may come up in the interview.

- 1. Positive positioning or reframing** - Rather than identifying what is wrong, shift a negative to a positive by repositioning. Focus on what you can do. For example, you would want to frame gaps in your employment history in a positive way, "I took some

## Resources

*Job Seeker's Handbook: An Introductory Guide to Finding Work*

*Job Search, The Product is You: Self Marketing Strategies and Tools*

Career Digest website - article on portfolios

WorkInk website - article on portfolios

See *Appendix A: Resources* at the back of this book.

## Preparing for Interviews

To be successful in your interview, you must anticipate the questions. Prepare yourself for typical "work-related" questions as well as those that go beyond work, whether they are asked or implied. These may include questions about:

- your disability
- its impact on your work abilities and work requirements

## Think About...

- Did I feel comfortable during the interview and in the workplace?
- Did the employer focus on my skills and abilities?
- If I haven't disclosed my disability, how will my employer and co-workers react?
- Will my work schedule provide enough flexibility for me to address issues related to my disability?
- Is my new employer willing to provide the accommodations I need?
- How badly do I want this job? Should I wait for something more suited to my abilities?
- Will the work challenge and interest me?
- Will this job bring me closer to achieving my career goals?
- Will I have trouble getting to and from work?

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time after my accident to reassess and develop the skills and abilities that would allow me to continue to be successful in the workplace."

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*Being an individual who has successfully managed these challenges provides me with a different perspective on life. I bring maturity, and appreciate things that other people take for granted. It builds character and substance and makes me stronger.*

(Employee with a mobility disability)

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**2. Accommodation requirements** - Prepare to discuss any accommodation requirements and identify how things can work. Give specific examples to make it easier for the employer to understand. Research the actual costs and funding available.

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*I would advise a person with a disability to lay all the cards on the table but it isn't necessary to go into details. Employers are most interested in what an employee CAN do.*

(Employer of a person with a cognitive disability)

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**3. Provide examples** - A picture is worth a thousand words, and so are examples. It is much easier to convince a skeptical interviewer with examples and clear descriptions of how you have successfully performed similar work functions in the past.

**4. Focus on skills and abilities** - Although the interviewer will take the lead in directing the interview, be prepared to redirect the discussion back to your skills and abilities related to the position.

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*Spend ten times more talking about your abilities than about your disability. Help the employer see how you can contribute.*

(Psychologist working with persons with disabilities)

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# Down to Work

5. Present the business case - Use the business case to show the interviewer the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities. (See The Business Case for Diversity at the beginning of this booklet)

Pay attention to your self-confidence. Interviews can often be intimidating and overwhelming. If you have been unemployed or out of the workforce for any length of time, you may feel challenged at the thought of going to an interview.

## Resources

*Job Seeker's Handbook: An Introductory Guide to Finding Work*

Alberta Human Resources and Employment website [www.alis.gov.ab.ca](http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca) look under Employment/ Workplace Information for information on employment standards and appropriate notice.

See *Appendix A: Resources* at the back of this booklet.

Here are some tips to help build and maintain your self-confidence.

- Focus on positive experiences you and others have had finding work.
- Refer to your references and what they have said. Recall positive comments from others.
- Focus on your abilities and successes in all areas of life.
- Practice being interviewed and anticipating questions. Practice, practice and more practice!
- Be confident when discussing your skills, abilities and disabilities, and positively addressing any gaps in your employment history.

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*Employers want to know about your skills and attitude. They want to know that you are a go-getter.*

(Employee with a mobility impairment)

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## Accepting An Offer

At last, your hard work has paid off. You've been offered a job. Before you accept the job offer:

- stand back and evaluate the pros and cons of the job
- determine if the terms of employment such as salary, holidays, benefits and any special conditions are acceptable to you.

Any special conditions that were agreed upon should be included in a written job offer. Be sure to confirm these terms of employment in your letter of acceptance.

When you accept a job offer, be enthusiastic about starting. If you are presently employed, submit a letter of resignation to your current employer giving appropriate notice.

If you decide to decline the job offer, be tactful and express your appreciation at being offered the position.



# Down to Work

challenge to maintain your lifestyle balance, but it is crucial to your health and future success at work.

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*People have been incredible, very supportive. They ask if I need anything and will accommodate me. I work regular hours but have to be careful not to get too over tired or too stressed. I do what I can and am allowed to go home early if I need to.*

(Employee with a degenerative illness)

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**3. Access resources** - Internal and/or external resources are available to assist you at work. If your work is stressful or difficult, do not hesitate to use them. Many organizations, particularly larger companies, have internal resources such as abilities committees, human resources advisors, employee assistance, occupational health and safety, or diversity advisors to provide support. External resources may include professional associations, service agencies (disability-related), health professionals, spiritual leaders, and informal and formal support groups.

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*A new job can be very nerve-wracking. You don't know who is watching you and what they might be concerned about. I have traded tasks with co-workers so that I have things that I am better at doing and I take on something of theirs.*

(Employee with a mobility disability)

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**4. Orient co-workers** - Be comfortable discussing your disability with co-workers. You eliminate misinformation by providing accurate facts about your disability. Most disability organizations publish materials that educate people about specific disabilities. You can use these materials to supplement your own information. If you think that this type of discussion would be useful, but are not comfortable in leading it yourself, internal or external resources such as agencies focusing on your specific disability are available to provide assistance.

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*I make an offer to the manager to do an in-service with co-workers. It takes away some of the mystique and fear.*

(Employee with a visual impairment)

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**5. Find a buddy at work** - Early in your employment find a co-worker, a "friendly face" who will provide support and show you the ropes. This "buddy" becomes your first ally and can, in turn, lead to the development of other allies at work. This strategy has been identified as one of the most critical methods to build success. This kind of buddy or ally is different from a more formal buddy relationship arranged by a supervisor.

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*Find one person to connect with, off the bat. Ask that person to help you get through the hoops of starting out. Be a little honest with them.*

(Employee with a mobility disability)

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**6. Identify requirements for success** - As a new employee, take the initiative to make your needs known. Everyone needs to learn how to work together. You may need to ask co-workers about things that will help build or improve the working relationship. These can include: finding an accessible meeting location if you have a mobility impairment; suggesting alternate ways for people to leave



# Conclusion

**W**hether you are looking for full-time or part-time work, or exploring opportunities through volunteering or self-employment, the right work situation is out there waiting to be found.

Hopefully, this booklet has helped you lay the groundwork to market your abilities and achieve your long-term career goals. We've covered such topics as being comfortable in talking about your disability and overcoming challenges by communicating with others. Deciding how much, if at all, to talk about your disability, and understanding what accommodations you need and how much they cost.

As you and many others in the workplace know, you and other persons with disabilities possess a high level of skill and determination needed to overcome challenges and succeed in life. You have a great deal to offer to employers — so let them know it.

Good luck.





# Resources

## Human Resources Development Canada

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### *Aboriginal Disabilities Information Centre*

The Information Centre provides disabled Aboriginal people with information on agencies, contact people and organizations. This centre will:

- provide resource information to Aboriginal, Metis, and non-Aboriginal people with disabilities
- determine the needs and make the appropriate referrals to community services, support programs and government agencies.

Contact information:  
Box 33, Suite #130  
9700 Jasper Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4C3  
Phone: 448-3711 (in Edmonton)  
toll-free: 1-877-448-3711  
(in Alberta)

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### *Opportunities Fund*

The federal Opportunities Fund aims to help persons with disabilities who are not eligible for Employment Insurance-funded programs prepare for, find and secure work. The Fund finances a wide range of employment activities for people with disabilities who are unemployed, including those who face severe disadvantages to securing employment.

These kinds of employment activities would include:

- encouraging employers to hire persons with disabilities
- helping persons with disabilities start their own businesses
- providing work experiences leading to ongoing employment
- developing abilities and skills which help persons with disabilities find employment
- contributing to the integration of persons with disabilities into the workforce by offering specially adapted services for their particular needs
- improving access to employment and employment services with specifically tailored assistance.

General information and information for sponsors can be found on the Internet at: [www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/bcph-odi](http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/bcph-odi). Information can also be obtained from your local Human Resources Centre of Canada (HRCC) or Canada-Alberta Service Centre (CASC).

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### *Youth Employment Strategy*

This Government of Canada strategy includes additional support for youth (15 to 30 years of age) facing multiple barriers to employment. For more information, contact the Youth Info Line at

1-800-935-5555 or browse the Youth Resource Network at [www.youth.gc.ca](http://www.youth.gc.ca)

## Provincial

### Alberta Human Resources and Employment

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Assistance is available for Albertans making career, education and work search plans. Service centres are located throughout the province. Visit a multi-media resource centre with books, directories, audio and video tapes, and Internet access providing information on occupations, education and training programs, and work search. Attend a group workshop to help you explore career, training and employment options. Some offices have career planning workshops designed specifically for people with disabilities.

Discuss appropriate disability-related employment supports that will help overcome barriers caused by your disability with a career consultant, employment and client support services worker or caseworker.

These services are available through your local Career Development Centre or Canada-Alberta Service Centre, or through your career counsellor or caseworker.



# Resources

## Websites

There is a huge amount of information on job search, as well as information for and about persons with disabilities on the Internet. Each website listed below provides links to other websites.

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### *Adolescent Employment Readiness Project*

<http://griffin.multimedia.edu/~aerp>

Information on résumés, interview protocol, disclosure, health maintenance, employment aids and human rights, written in an informal style.

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### *Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission*

[www.aadac.com](http://www.aadac.com)

This website describes the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission's services and products. In addition, information and statistics are presented on alcohol, drugs and gambling topics.

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### *Alberta Human Resources and Employment*

[www.gov.ab.ca/hre](http://www.gov.ab.ca/hre)

Information on employment standards, proper notice and other workplace information, including a fact sheet outlining disability-related employment supports that may be available.

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### *Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS)*

[www.alis.gov.ab.ca](http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca)

The Internet gateway to career, learning and employment information in Alberta.

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### *Canada-Alberta Job Order Bank Services (JOBS)*

[www.alis.gov.ab.ca/employment/LookingForWork/](http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca/employment/LookingForWork/)

Internet access to help job seekers look for work opportunities.

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### *Canadian Abilities Foundation*

[www.enablelink.org](http://www.enablelink.org)  
Includes a directory of Canadian and international diversity links and diversity organizations; *Abilities* magazine.

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### *The Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work*

[www.ccrw.org](http://www.ccrw.org)

CCRW offers workshops on developing partnerships with employers, addressing the issues of hiring people with disabilities and the return to work process for injured workers.

Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work — Job Accommodation Services. Provides information on job accommodations to employers, job seekers and service providers. Toll-free number 1-866-227-9527

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### *Career Digest*

[www.ab.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/common/careerdigest\\_E.shtml](http://www.ab.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/common/careerdigest_E.shtml)

A series of articles on career planning, work search and work maintenance.

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### *Disability Links*

[www.disabilitylinks.ca](http://www.disabilitylinks.ca)

Single point access to programs and services offered by federal, provincial and territorial governments for persons with disabilities.

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### *Equal Opportunity Ontario's Gateway to Diversity*

[www.equalopportunity.on.ca/enggraf/resource/magrack.html](http://www.equalopportunity.on.ca/enggraf/resource/magrack.html)

A Government of Ontario site for sharing ideas, experiences and resources on equal opportunity in the workplace. The Abilities section provides employer information on recruiting and interviewing, and information for job seekers with disabilities.





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*WORKink - The Virtual Employment Resource Centre*  
<http://ab.workink.com>

A wide range of services including:

- Services for work seekers — job postings, résumé databases, training opportunities, lists of agencies, and WORKink chat rooms and online counsellors.
- Services for employers and professionals — articles, Ask a Disability Specialist, links to résumé databases, success stories.

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*Youth Resource Network of Canada (YRNC)*

[www.youth.gc.ca](http://www.youth.gc.ca)

This site is an initiative of the Youth Employment Strategy of the Government of Canada and its partners, preparing youth for a career with information on the employment world such as the choices of careers, training and education, job offers and more.

## Publications

*A Way with Words: Guidelines and Appropriate Terminology for the Portrayal of Persons with Disabilities.* Human Resources Development Canada, Office for Disability Issues (1998).

*Achieving Success: Employment Services for Persons with Disabilities.* Human Resources Development Canada, British Columbia/Yukon Region (1998).

*Beyond Traditional Job Development: The Art of Creating Opportunity.* Bissonnette, Denise. Milt Wright and Associates, Inc., Chatworth, CA (1994).

*Bridging the Gap: Government of Canada Programs and Services of Interest to Canadians with Disabilities.* Human Resources Development Canada, Office for Disability Issues (1998).

*CaPS Tips on... for People with Disabilities* (series). University of Alberta Career and Placement Services (2000).

*The Career Planner.\** Alberta Human Resources and Employment (1998).

*Changing Course Midstream.\** Alberta Human Resources and Employment (1998).

*Finding Out: How to Get the Information You Need to Make The Choices You Want.\** Alberta Human Resources and Employment (1999).

*Getting to Yes - Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In.* Fisher, Roger and William, Ury. Penguin, New York (1991).

*Health and Activity Limitation Survey (HALS),* Statistics Canada, (1991). (Survey updated every 10 years)

*In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues, A Vision Paper.* Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Social Services (1998). [http://socialunion.gc.ca/pwd/unison/unison\\_e.html](http://socialunion.gc.ca/pwd/unison/unison_e.html)

*Job Search: The Product is You - Self Marketing Strategies and Tools.\** Alberta Human Resources and Employment (1998).

*Job Search Handbook for Persons with Disabilities.* Ryan, Daniel J. JIST Publishing, Indianapolis, IN (2000).

*Job Seeker's Handbook: An Introductory Guide to Finding Work.\** Alberta Human Resources and Employment (1998).



# Resources

## Videos

*Job Interviewing for People with Disabilities*  
Cambridge Educational (1999).

*Job Search Tactics for People with Disabilities*  
Cambridge Educational (1999).

*Résumés and Applications for People with Disabilities*  
Cambridge Educational (1999).

*The Ten Commandments of Communicating with People with Disabilities*  
Resource guide and video.  
Irene M. Ward and Associates (1996).



Two programs introduced by the Government of Canada ensure equal access to employment opportunities for all Canadians by directly obligating and assisting employers to implement Employment Equity:

- The Legislated Employment Equity Program
- The Federal Contractors Program

Federally regulated employers are subject to the regulations of the Legislated Employment Equity Program. Contractors with 100 or more employees and goods and services contracts with the federal government of over \$200,000 are subject to the Federal Contractors Program. <http://info.load-otea.hrhc-drhc.gc.ca>

## Provincial Legislation

### Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship

The Alberta *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act*, [www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca](http://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca) outlines what constitutes discrimination in the area of job applications, advertisements and employment practices.

Section 7 of the Act states that:

7(1) No employer shall

(a) refuse to employ or refuse to continue to employ any person, or

(b) discriminate against any person with regard to employment or any term or condition of employment,

because of the race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical disability, mental disability, marital status, age, ancestry, place of origin, family status or source of income of that person or of any other person.

Section 8 of the Act states that:

8(1) No person shall use or circulate any form of application

for employment or publish any advertisement in connection with employment or prospective employment or make any written or oral inquiry of an applicant:

(a) that expresses either directly or indirectly any limitation, specification or preference indicating discrimination on the basis of race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical disability, mental disability, marital status, age, ancestry or place of origin of any person, or

(b) that requires an applicant to furnish any information concerning race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical disability, mental disability, marital status, age, ancestry or place of origin.

The Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission provides the following information to assist in defining employment applications:

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#### *Physical Disability*

It is not permissible to request an applicant to provide any information about the general state of his/her health, appearance, height, weight or to request a general medical history or examination as part of the pre-employment inquiries. Nor can an applicant be required to disclose information about specific





# Legislation

*culturalism Act*. Section 8 is concerned with the nature of pre-employment inquiries. An employer can make any post-employment inquiries that are necessary as long as these are not used in contravention of Section 7. It is best to phrase these inquiries in a manner which reduces the possibility of the information being used, or perceived as being used, to the new employee's disadvantage.

**Note:** A complaint must be filed with the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission within one year of the alleged incident.

The Commission provides information sheets on topics such as:

- Mental or Physical Disabilities and Discrimination
- Employment: Duty to Accommodate
- Stereotyping, Prejudice and Discrimination

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## *Duty to Accommodate*

The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that an employer has a legal duty to take **reasonable** steps, in policies or conditions of work, to accommodate an employee's individual needs. This duty applies to all grounds of discrimination covered under the *Alberta Human Rights*,

*Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act*. However, this legal duty does not apply if the only way to resolve the problem will cause the employer undue hardship.

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## *Undue Hardship*

The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that the employer's hardship must be "substantial in nature." For example, a physically disabled employee, as part of their job duties, may be required to carry boxes up a flight of stairs. If the business has no elevator, it may be deemed an undue hardship to expect the employer to install an elevator to accommodate the employee. However, it may be possible to have another employee do that task. In exchange, the disabled person could assume one or more of that employee's regular tasks.

Accommodation which is reasonable in one case may not be reasonable in another. Every case should be handled in an individual manner.

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## *Union Agreements*

Unions or union contracts cannot prohibit an accommodation that is considered reasonable, even if that accommodation contravenes a collective bargaining agreement.

An employee must consider an accommodation that is deemed reasonable. Accommodation requires give and take by both the employer and the employee.

In some cases, an employer may not be required to accommodate employees if the discriminatory rule or condition of work can be shown to be **reasonable and justifiable** as with a bona fide occupational requirement (BFOR).

Contact the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission at:

Northern Regional Office  
8th Floor, Standard Life Centre  
10405 Jasper Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4R7  
Tel: (780) 427-7661  
Fax: (780) 427-6013

Southern Regional Office  
310, 525 - 11 Avenue SW  
Calgary, Alberta T2R 0C9  
Tel: (403) 297-6571  
Fax: (403) 297-6567

In Alberta, outside of Edmonton or Calgary call toll-free 310-0000

Deaf or hearing impaired  
Edmonton: (780) 427-1597 TTY  
Calgary: (403) 297-5639 TTY  
Elsewhere call 1-800-232-7215  
for message relay service

More information is available through an automated fax request line at (780) 422-8723.



# We'd Like to Hear From You

## Employment Series for Persons with Disabilities:

Tips for Job Seekers

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Did you find the information in this publication useful?

In what way?

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How could we improve it?

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Do you have any suggestions for other products that would be of value to you?

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People, Skills and Workplace Resources  
12th Floor, Seventh Street Plaza, South Tower  
10030 - 107 Street  
Edmonton, AB T5J 3E4  
Fax (780) 422-5319



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