Employment
Series for
Persons with
Disabilities

# tips for

# Service Providers











This booklet is for service providers who work with persons with disabilities.

It will enhance your counselling practices by helping you:

- understand how hiring persons with disabilities makes good business sense
- consider your attitudes, beliefs and concerns, and how they may impact your work with persons with disabilities
- use appropriate language to communicate with persons with disabilities
- evaluate how accessible your office and services are
- apply your counselling practices to meet the needs of clients with disabilities
- explore work search topics, including disclosure and accommodation
- develop strategies to support a successful transition to work
- connect with further resources, information and legislation.

# **Acknowledgment**

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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 Catalogue Item #437188

### 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

Aussi disponible en français sous le titre La série sur l'emploi pour les personnes handicapées: conseils pratiques destinés aux prestataires de services

Fondation canadienne pour l'avancement de la carrière #202 - 411 Roosevelt Ottawa, ON K2A 3X9 Téléphone (613) 729-6164 Télécopieur (613) 729-3515 Courriel ccdffcac@istar.ca

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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 people 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 clients with disabilities. They provide specific information and strategies related to employment for persons with

disabilities to support the skills and techniques you already use when counselling.

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 crossdisability perspective. When appropriate, references are made to specific types of disabilities.

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

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

Appendix B: Overview of Disabilities provides a general understanding of the different types of disabilities.

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

# **Notes**

# Introduction

Today, more employers are hiring persons with disabilities and more individuals with disabilities are entering the workforce. This booklet provides practical tips and answers to typical concerns and questions for service providers who are unfamiliar working with persons with disabilities. It also acts as a refresher for those already doing so.

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.

If you are unfamiliar with providing job search and career development services for persons with disabilities, this booklet will help you explore your beliefs and attitudes, take you through the process from job posting to retention, and provide you with helpful tips, practical approaches and suggestions.

If you already have experience working with persons with disabilities, this booklet will provide additional suggestions and ideas to enhance your practices.

Why are businesses looking to 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.

In 1991, 4.2 million Canadians, 16% of the population, reported some level of disability.

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

Why are service providers working with persons with disabilities? The following trends may have influenced a shift in the clients you work with.

- Changing demographics have impacted the pool of available workers.
- Job seekers who have difficulty finding work in today's healthy economic

- times may have barriers that affect their employability.
- Persons with disabilities are working towards full participation in the labour market and society.
- Increased flexibility in government and other sources of funding may encourage persons with disabilities to maximize their employment opportunities without jeopardizing their medical and financial benefits.

You play a vital role in connecting your clients to the work-place. Service providers are aware of the strengths and contributions that persons with disabilities offer, as well as their goal of full participation. You help persons with disabilities meet their goals.

# The Business Case for Diversity

As a service provider, it is essential to understand your role and how to effectively provide support and services for persons with disabilities. Since you are the bridge between your client and the employer, it is also critical for you to understand the business case for employers to diversify their workforce.

# **Diversity at Work**

Diversifying an investment portfolio is considered a vital strategy for smart investors. The same applies to the workforce. For employers, diversity means incorporating a variety of different people within the organization to achieve strength through balance.

Today's work environment has changed. Technology, company structures and markets are different. Companies have seen the move from a homogeneous culture, where people were like-minded and of similar backgrounds, to a more diverse culture, where people come from a variety of backgrounds, have a wide range of skills and operate in a world virtually without borders.

Diversity goes beyond employment equity. Employment equity is a legal requirement focusing on four "designated" groups that have traditionally been under-represented in the workforce - persons with disabilities, Aboriginals, visible minorities and women. (See *Appendix C: Legislation* for more information).

# 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).

# Organizational Culture

Companies are becoming more aware of the role of organizational culture in building a successful business. Organizational culture is the framework for how things are done in a company. Many organizations are moving toward corporate cultures committed to:

# **Notes**

- greater teamwork and employee involvement
- more creativity and innovation
- work/life balance and respect for employee interests and needs
- ongoing learning, development and continuous improvement
- improved communications
- · diversity.

For these to be effective, organizations need to follow through on what they say. Hiring individuals with disabilities is not only consistent with the values of most organizations - it clearly demonstrates their commitment to diversity and employment equity.

# **Good Business Sense**

Here are six sound reasons for businesses to incorporate diversity 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.

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

(Employee with a mobility disability)

3. Public image -

Hiring persons with disabilities gives a company a positive image in the community.

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)

- 4. Larger resource pool Persons with disabilities offer
  skills and expertise often
  overlooked or underutilized in
  the past. New technologies
  and increased access to postsecondary 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. Automatic doors installed
  to assist persons with disabilities also help other employees
  and customers with heavy

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)

- loads or children in tow. Larger print, larger computer monitors and improved lighting reduce eyestrain. Ergonomic chairs and workstations cut down on health complaints, and flexible work arrangements and teleworking also increase the job satisfaction of all employees.
- 6. Being prepared for the future As our 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.

# Beyond the Bottom Line

Employees with disabilities interviewed for this booklet often responded that they thought employers should hire persons with disabilities because they are just like anyone else - they have skills, are motivated and will make good employees.

Supervisors interviewed for this booklet noted additional benefits in the workplace such as other employees viewing all their co-workers as distinct individuals.

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)

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)

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

(Retail supervisor)

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)

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)

# Think About...

- What were my first experiences with persons with disabilities?
- How often did I see persons with disabilities?
- Did I have any friends with disabilities?
- When I was growing up, what were some of the messages, spoken or implied, that I received about persons with disabilities? ("Don't stare at people who...", or "Stay away from...")
- Did people around you express pity for people with disabilities? Did they talk about being disabled as a "test" or a "punishment?"
- Did people express surprise or amazement if a person with a disability was able to do something independently?
- What recent experiences have you had with persons with disabilities? How might they influence your attitude towards others?

he following sections cover important information for you to think about before you begin working with persons with disabilities: self-awareness, communication and the accessibility of your services.

# **Self-Awareness**

Self-awareness is the basis for working with people who are different from yourself. Only by becoming aware, can you put their situation and needs into perspective.

We all carry with us past experiences, education and upbringing as we move from one situation to another. These can be a positive base for adding new teachings. They can also hinder us from learning new ways of doing things and developing new attitudes.

People's attitudes upon learning of my disability can make it difficult for me to move to the next step of explaining how my needs can be accommodated.

(Individual with a visual impairment)

Disabilities confront us with our frailties.

(Psychologist who works with persons with disabilities)

# Messages

The beliefs and assumptions we carry with us are often in the form of messages or sayings, images, and language. These are messages we picked up at home, in school, in the community, and from the media - and can be either positive or negative.

Answering the questions in the colour bar on the side will get

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 prejudges a person's ability, skills and personality based on unfair assumptions. To be fair, an individual should be judged on his or her merit regardless of race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical and mental disability, marital status, age, ancestry or place of origin.

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you thinking about the messages that have remained with you over time.

People feel discomfort at having to deal with something they don't understand.

(Educator with a visual impairment)

### **Concerns**

As a service provider working with persons with disabilities, you may have heard some common concerns expressed by employers and members of the public. Consider the following misconceptions.

- Persons with disabilities can't keep up with other workers.
- There are only certain kinds of jobs 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 on the job.
- I don't know how to talk to a person with a disability.
- My staff wouldn't want to work with a person with a disability.

- I don't know how to supervise a person with a disability.
- It's too expensive to hire a person with a disability - all the 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.

Part of the challenge is educating oneself and getting 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)

By understanding how your beliefs can affect, and possibly interfere with, your attitudes and behaviour towards persons with disabilities, you're more likely to reserve judgement and not 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)

As a service provider new to working with persons with disabilities, you may have some of your own concerns.

- How do I do an employability assessment?
- What additional questions do I ask?

Learn about persons with disabilities as skilled, productive workers, as post-secondary graduates, and as active members of their community.

Learn about the ways other organizations, which specialize in employment services for persons with disabilities, have handled the challenges you face as a service provider.

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- Will it cost more for people with disabilities to attend training because they may require longer to learn?
- Will they be able to keep up with the other group members if I refer them to a workshop?
- Will there be a narrower range of employment options for them?
- Will it be harder for me to find suitable placement opportunities?
- Will my agency meet its performance outcomes, if higher levels of support and intervention may be required?

# **Take Action**

Explore your beliefs, attitudes and questions by getting more information, having positive new experiences with persons with disabilities, and contacting other community agencies working with persons with disabilities.

Some of the ways you can do this include:

- talking openly to a client by stating you don't know all the answers, but are willing to look for information
- reading material or visiting websites about disabilities and persons with disabilities
- attending diversity training or disability awareness training

- talking openly to co-workers with disabilities
- inviting a guest speaker from a community agency that specializes in community education
- attending professional development meetings with agencies that offer employment services for persons with disabilities
- becoming involved in an association that specializes in this field
- researching the literature, using the Internet, and networking with other professional service providers and agencies to learn best practices.

Here's some advice from service providers on working with persons with disabilities.

Be patient with yourself. You can't get everything out of a book; it comes with experience.

(Service provider who has 12 years experience working with people with disabilities)

Use the resources you have available. Ask more experienced counsellors.

(Service provider)

Expect to learn more than you can ever teach.

(Social worker)

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Learn by talking to people, hearing what they go through. For example, [in helping the client plan] you may need to understand the toiletting routine of an individual with a spinal cord injury because that person requires an aide to assist several times a day.

(Psychologist working with persons with disabilities)

Don't try to be all and do all. Remember what you are there for and refer to other appropriate service providers once you have identified the [client's] issues.

(Counsellor with a disability-specific organization)

Know your limitations and be open and honest with your clients. Take care of yourself. You have to be healthy yourself and have a wellness plan. You don't want to "buy into" their problems and start providing solutions.

(Service provider in small community)

Take as much training as possible to understand the physical and mental effects of common disabilities.

(Social worker working with clients with disabilities, many with addictions)

Listen to the clients, be patient, believe in their abilities, and support them.

(Employment counsellor working with persons with disabilities)

Don't avoid addressing your feelings. Say, for example, "I'm feeling threatened by your behaviour ... " It's better than letting it go, because that person needs to know how he is perceived or comes across.

(Career counsellor)

# **Communication**

# Respectful Language

We often take the words we use for granted and don't think about how they sound to other people. Language reflects attitudes and stereotypes. Words commonly used ten or 20 years ago are not necessarily acceptable today.

Some words falsely give the impression that persons with disabilities are weak, deserve pity, and cannot be contributing members of society. Here are some examples.

Say	Instead of
Has a disability	Coping with a disability Suffering from Afflicted with
Uses a wheelchair	Confined to a wheelchair Wheelchair victim or case
Has a mobility impairment	Crippled
Has seizures	Has attacks, fits, spells
A person with a developmental disability, or a person who is developmentally delayed	Mentally retarded
A person with a mental illness	Crazy, mad, loony
A person who is not disabled	Normal

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If you're unsure about what words to use ask the person what their preferences are. You will find, as in any group of people, that not everyone has the same opinion. As long as you treat a person with respect and show your willingness to learn, your efforts will be appreciated.

In many cases there is no need to refer to a person's disability. Don't mention it if it is not relevant to the conversation. Simply say, "He has great computer skills." Don't add, "... and he's a paraplegic."

Remember, when in doubt, that most people who have disabilities are more than willing to discuss their disability, if approached in a positive manner. (Employee with a mobility

This next section provides examples of current language use, as well as tips for appropriate communication practices in the workplace.

impairment)

 "Disability" or "impairment" refers to a condition which interferes with normal body structure or function.

- The term "handicap" is no longer used to refer to a person, but to a social and/or environmental barrier that prevents an individual from full participation in normal everyday activities.
- When talking about persons with disabilities, refer to the person first and then the disability. For example: a person with a disability; a person who has a mental illness; a person who is deaf, hard of hearing, or has a hearing loss; a person who is developmentally delayed.
- Avoid using terms like: the deaf; the blind; an epileptic; and a schizophrenic. Instead say: people who are deaf; people who are blind; a person with epilepsy; and a person who has schizophrenia.

### **Resources**

A Way With Words: Guidelines and appropriate terminology for the portrayal of persons with disabilities.

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

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# **Communication Tips**

At the best of times, communication is a complex skill to master. Here are some helpful tips.

- Think about the language you use.
- Don't patronize people with disabilities. Don't tell someone with a disability you admire their courage and strength unless they've done something that you would compliment anyone on.
- Look at the person when addressing them. Avoiding eye contact only increases discomfort or tension.
- Speak directly to the person, even if they are with an attendant or interpreter.
- Focus on work-related topics, just as you would with employees who don't have disabilities. Remember that a person is more than their disability. The disability is unimportant unless you are discussing accommodation.
- Treat people with disabilities as individuals.

 Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use expressions such as "See you later" or "Got to be running along" that seem to relate to the person's disability. There is no need to avoid common phrases or use special language.

Here are some further things to consider, based on certain types of disabilities.

# **Mobility**

- Ask first if you can be of assistance and listen attentively to their reply. Do not reach for walkers, wheelchairs or any other assistive devices, as they are part of an individual's personal space.
- When having more than a brief conversation with a person in a wheelchair, sit down and face them.
   Imagine how you would feel looking up at someone all day. Plus, it evens the power between the two of you.
- Don't be afraid to shake hands with a person with a disability. People with limited hand use or with a prosthesis can usually shake hands. Shaking hands with the left hand is also acceptable.

 For those who cannot shake hands, touch the person on the shoulder or arm to welcome them and acknowledge their presence.

# **Visual Impairments**

- Speak in a normal tone of voice. It is not necessary to shout.
- Announce your arrival and your exit.
- Do not be afraid to use common words such as "look" and "see."
- Do not pet a blind person's guide dog unless invited. The dog is responsible for the safety of its owner and should not be disturbed while working.
- When you first meet, identify yourself by name.
- If identifying distance and direction, use "left" or "right" and "front" or "behind" and the appropriate number of paces.

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# **Hearing Impairments**

- Ask the interpreter to sit next to you or behind you so you can maintain eye contact with the person with the disability. The interpreter should not be seated near bright lights or windows.
- Always speak to the person, not the interpreter.
- Use written notes and information to supplement verbal communication or to provide basic information.
- Ask one question at a time to be clear and understood.
- During group discussions, make sure that only one person speaks at a time.
- Do not be afraid to use common words such as "hear" or "listen."
- Speak in a normal tone of voice, slowly and clearly.
- Ask how they prefer to communicate. Many people who are hard of hearing use a combination of methods to understand spoken language, including lip reading and interpreting body language.
- You can let a person who is deaf or hard of hearing know you wish to speak to them by gently touching them on the shoulder or elbow.

 Ensure there is good lighting to assist the person lip reading. Do not sit in front of or next to bright lights or windows as this creates a silhouette.

# Speech Impediments or Non-speaking

- If you can't understand the person, ask them to repeat themselves. If you are still unable to understand, ask the person to spell or write the words.
- Avoid trying to complete the person's sentences. Be patient.
- Speak in a normal tone, using everyday language. There is no need to speak loudly. It helps to face the person while speaking.
- Have a note pad and pencil handy.

# **Developmental Disabilities**

- Use clear language and keep instructions simple.
- Avoid abstract concepts.
- When asked to clarify a question, use concrete examples.
- Do not talk in "baby talk", broken English, or raise your voice.

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- Use alternate forms of instruction, such as colour coding or pictures.
- Ask them to repeat instructions to you or to demonstrate their understanding of your instructions.

# **Learning Disabilities**

- Use a variety of methods to communicate, such as writing, speaking, drawing diagrams or demonstrating what needs to be done.
- Eliminate distracting sounds and background noises as much as possible.
- Allow more time to go over items you want to cover.
- Focus on one thing at a time. Avoid jumping from one topic to another.

# Mental Health Disabilities

- Respect the client's desire for confidentiality and be clear on what that confidentiality entails.
- If you observe changes in a client's behaviour that causes you concern, talk to them and ask if you can help.

### Resources

The Ten Commandments of Communicating with People with Disabilities.

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

# **Accessibility of Your Services**

Accessibility includes more than physical access to facilities and services. It also means awareness of the availability of services within the community. If your organization's services are intended to be available to everyone, it is important for you to be aware of how accessible and user-friendly they are for persons with all types of disabilities.

There may be organizations and/or consultants in your community who can help you assess your facilities and services for their accessibility and make recommendations for improving them.

The following checklist can help you identify areas that you are doing well in, as well as some areas you may need to improve. This checklist may also be useful for clients researching an agency or service.

Rate your office or organization on the accessibility of your services.

Accessibility Checklist	Doing Well	Need to Improve
Accessibility Services are available in alternate formats (e.g. Braille, sign language, large print)		
Services are accessible in alternate formats (e.g. on an Accessible website, telephone device for deaf)		
Location Location has "safe" and "accessible" entry and elevator Check:		
<ul> <li>Ramp (The best gradient is 1:20; this means for each 20 cms there is 1 cm increase in height. A steeper gradient of 1:12 is acceptable. The ramp should have a non-slip surface, be well lit and have handrails)</li> <li>Wheelchair accessible parking close to the front entrance</li> <li>Elevators have low buttons and Braille markings</li> <li>Adapted washrooms with wide doors and grab bars</li> <li>Public telephones are accessible (coin slot -1.22m above floor level) and have volume control</li> <li>Signage is in large font and contrasting colours</li> </ul>		
Timing Scheduled events/meetings provide ample time for:		
<ul><li>Booking transportation to and from event</li><li>Booking interpreters (sign and oral)</li><li>Arranging for captioning on videos shown</li></ul>		
Start and end time is adhered to in order to facilitate transportation that has been scheduled		
Social events are scheduled to maximize participation and to facilitate preplanning		

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Accessibility Checklist	Doing Well	Need to Improve
Written materials Utilize:		
<ul> <li>Plain language concepts</li> <li>Large font</li> <li>Alternate formats (e.g. Braille, cassette tape)</li> </ul>		
Registration form Includes:		
<ul> <li>Request for access needs (e.g. accessibility, alternate formats)</li> <li>Request for allergy identification</li> <li>Request for assistive devices preferred</li> <li>Attendant requirements</li> </ul>		
Seating arrangements		
<ul> <li>Room large enough for easy wheelchair movement</li> <li>Table or desk tops are at a suitable height for wheelchair users</li> <li>Seating location suitable for persons with visual or hearing impairments</li> <li>No steep slopes</li> </ul>		
Staff		
<ul> <li>Are easily identified, available to answer questions, and can guide clients to the correct locations, facilities, and resources available</li> <li>Assist with computer access and on-line technologies</li> <li>Familiarize clients with visual impairments to their surroundings</li> </ul>		
Speakers/Trainers/Facilitators		
<ul> <li>Have adhered to suggestions for written materials</li> <li>Speak using plain language, and avoid jargon and acronyms</li> <li>Provide frequent opportunity for physical movement to avoid prolonged sitting</li> <li>Keep presentations within scheduled time frames</li> </ul>		

Checklist adapted and used with the permission of DAWN Ontario (DisAbled Women's Network Ontario) from *Access Checklist* (1993). http://dawn.thot.net

<b>Ask Yourself</b>
What do I do to make sure that the first meeting with a client goes well?
What steps do I follow to build a positive relationship with a client?
What do I think might be different about building a relationship with a client with a disability?
What do I need to do to address these differences and be prepared to work with a client with a disability?

he following sections provide important information on building strong client relationships, helping them to develop and implement a work search plan, and assisting in the transition to a work environment.

# **Building a Relationship**

How you build your relationship with a client with a disability is very similar to that of working with any other client. However, your attitudes and beliefs will play a key role in your interactions.

The following basic steps are designed to help you assist persons with disabilities in developing an action plan.

# Getting to Know Your Client

Getting to know your client and putting them at ease begins the moment they arrive at your office. Tips include:

 arrange your office or interview room so a wheelchair can fit in; or select an alternate space if the office

- is not large enough
- organize the space so there is nothing your client could trip on
- get out large print materials or any visuals you might use
- have a paper and pen ready in case you want to draw diagrams or write notes for your client to take away
- be aware that your client may have to pre-arrange transportation and may have no control over arrival or departure times.

# Meeting Your Client

Here are some tips when meeting a client for the first time.

- If their disability is visible, don't jump to conclusions about what they can or cannot do. Focus on the person and withhold judgement.
- Don't hesitate to shake hands and introduce yourself. Let the other person determine the strength and duration of the handshake.
- Use the same eye contact you would with other clients.
- If your client needs assistance getting to your office, offer to help. If you are not sure how, don't be afraid to ask.

Focus on the person not the disability.

# **Getting Started**

Generally, the more background information you start with, the better you will be able to shape your discussion. As a service provider, there will be times when you may know nothing about your client and only find out about their disability in the course of your discussion. Or, you may know that your client has identified their disability on an intake form, or that they have an extensive file with medical reports and various assessments.

In the course of your initial interview, you may want to:

- ask a few questions to get a sense of your client's background
- mention confidentiality.
   Explain that you will ask them to sign a release form if you need more information from other sources
- explain why you are asking the questions you are. Your openness will encourage openness on the part of your client

 admit if you do not know about their particular disability or a medical term.

Most clients are comfortable explaining their disability and accommodation needs, particularly if they know this will be helpful in finding work. Additional information to help you discuss disclosure and accommodation with your clients is included in this booklet.

Make it as easy as possible for the person with the disability to say what needs to be said - open the door.

(Service provider with a disability)

# Remember the Whole Person

Every aspect of their life impacts their employability.

This statement is true for all job seekers. For individuals with disabilities, there are often heightened impacts. Transportation, housing, support systems and finances are often more complex and challenging.

Even if you have your client's complete file, you will want to get a sense of the person beyond what a file will tell you. Ask the same questions you would ask other clients, such as what brings them to your office and questions about their background, education and work experience.

Other questions could include the following.

- Have there been times when you have had a successful experience in a workplace?
   What worked well for you?
- Have you had a problem in some areas?
- What specific things are preventing you from getting employment?
- How does your disability affect you in a working environment? What difficulties does it pose?
- Are there any restrictions on the work you can do? Or on how much you can work?
- Do you need any adaptations or worksite accommodations?
- Do you have any health issues that need to be addressed or that I should know about?

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The most effective approach for me is dealing with it out in the open; openly discussing their barriers, how employers are going to look at them, and what they can do to improve. Skirting around the issue is very ineffective and sometimes damaging.

(Social worker)

# Working Effectively With Your Client

- Listen for clues If a client says they have Grade 8, ask if they need help filling out a job application. If they say no, but you are unsure, you might give them something to write to see how they do. Ask what kinds of things they find difficult.
- Be observant Notice how your client responds to questions, their comfort level with you, and how they compensate for their disability. If they are uncomfortable with a question, leave it and come back to it later if it is important. If a client seems reluctant to admit their disability, go over their past with questions

- about education, work experience, hobbies, and assessments done. This information will be useful in developing action steps later on.
- Include support systems It may be relevant to find out who your client's supports are and get them involved in the process.
- Things to avoid Don't ask unnecessary questions about their disability or express amazement at what your client is able to do. Don't minimize their disability by saying things such as "You don't look disabled" or "You'd hardly know you're hearing impaired."

# Roles and Responsibilities

Both you and your client should be clear about what you hope to accomplish by working together. In some cases, the client may have been referred to you by another service provider and may not be sure why they are seeing you.

 Explain your role. Is it to make a referral, provide financial assistance, assist with a work search, provide career counselling, or assist the client in other areas of their life?

- Be clear about what you can and cannot do in regard to obtaining work for your client.
- Indicate what sort of commitment and participation you expect from the client.
- Recognize your own limitations. If you feel unsure or uncomfortable, ask someone else in your office with more experience or expertise to help you.
- Know your community resources. This will help you make appropriate referrals.

When in doubt, refer. Don't try to be everything to everyone.

If there are areas that are beyond your role, refer your client to an appropriate service.

# Assessing Client Readiness

Is your client ready for training or employment? This may depend on whether your client has previous work experience, is new to the labour market, or has experience but is newly disabled. If you determine that they are not ready to develop an action plan leading to training or employment, or are not appropriate for your services, you may need to refer the client back to the referring agency or professional or make a referral elsewhere in the community.

As a service provider you may have to ask questions which you are not comfortable asking. These could be specific questions such as:

- Is there anything in particular that you need help with?
- Do you have any special toiletting needs?
- Do you have a medication regime that you need to follow?
- What support systems do you have?

Questions like this shouldn't be a problem if you have developed a good rapport with your client and let them know why you are asking.

You will also need to ask your client what they need to have in place in order to take training, to look for or go to work on a regular basis. These could include some or all of the following topics.

- Supports What people do they have to encourage them? Do family members support their plan to work? Identify friends or support group members who will listen to them and provide encouragement. Are there other community supports they can access?
- Transportation Have they checked out transportation options, special arrangements and costs? Some of these options include low floor buses, car pooling, transportation services for the disabled, and vehicle modification.

# **Ask Yourself**

How do I work with clients who have unique experiences or gaps in their work history that may impact the hiring process? How do I assess the stability and readiness of clients in order for them to make successful career action plans? What advice do I give them?

- Health Do they have any health concerns that need to be dealt with before they enter the workforce? Are they stable on any medication they take? Do they have the stamina required for fulltime or part-time work? Do they have disability-related health issues to deal with on an ongoing basis? Does their health care professional think they are able to work?
- Child Care Do they have adequate arrangements in place? Do they have a backup plan if the caregiver or child is sick?
- Assistive Technology Do they have the technology or assistive devices they need for everyday living, as well as for learning and work? These could include voice-activated computers, hands-free telephones, or telephone devices for the deaf. If not, would they be able to effectively communicate what they need?
- Accommodation Are they aware of any accommodation they may require in a workplace or training situation?
   Can they offer suggestions to meet their needs, such as

- ramps, lighting, visual emergency alarms, or automatic doors?
- Funding/Financial Support Do they know what sources
   of funding are available to
   them or a potential employer?
   How will your client's current
   financial support be affected
   if they start working?
- Residency and Telephone -Are they in a stable living situation where they have access to a telephone?
   Can employers leave messages for them?
- Communication Strategy What strategies have they
   developed that enhance their
   ability to communicate with
   others? Using e-mail, lip
   reading, or working with
   individuals or in small groups
   may work well for them.

Respecting a person's right to privacy is of vital importance. Addressing personal issues should be done with tact and with a clear explanation of why the information is required.

I was a little insulted when my employment counsellor asked me if I had stable accommodation and access to a telephone. I may be unemployed but I've been independent and supporting myself for a long time.

(Job seeker with a mobility disability)

# Addressing Feelings

As with any clients, you will encounter a range of attitudes and emotions. A client's attitude may appear to be a problem but, once you get to know them, you may find that it stems from past failures, low self-esteem or frustration.

Persons who are recently disabled and adjusting to their new situations may need to work through feelings of loss, anger or frustration before they are ready to look for work. They may require professional help dealing with their feelings of loss or grief, and may need to be referred to another type of service or agency at this time.

Fears faced by clients with disabilities are not unlike those faced by anyone who may have been out of the workforce for a period of time or who may have had negative employment experiences. These include:

- · fear of change
- · fear of failure
- fear of not being able to do what is expected or not being able to do it at the expected speed
- fear that past mistakes or negative past experiences will be repeated
- fear of not getting a job or of losing one because of disability-related health issues
- fear of not being able to get to work on time because of how long it takes to get ready or having to depend on specialized transportation services
- fear of being a "token" person with a disability and not being valued based upon skills
- fear of not having support on the job
- fear of being left out or ostracized at work

 fear that any employment earnings may jeopordize medical benefits and/or income support from government or other sources.

You will want to ask your client about any concerns or fears they may have in obtaining or keeping work. Once these fears are identified, the two of you can discuss strategies for effectively dealing with them.

Clients may be risking a lot to try new things. They may not admit it, but choosing to compete again, especially when they may have had painful failures, could be very frightening. Cooperative planning and clear communication of goals and means are essential.

(Social worker)

# **Ask Yourself**

How have my client's disclosed their disabilities in the past? What were the results?

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

How might these experiences apply to the topic of disclosure?

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

# **Disclosure**

Disclosure of a disability may be the biggest question for your client in their work search process. They must think about disclosure both to you, as service provider, and to employers. Disclosure to a service provider may occur during the initial contact or later during the interview process. Disclosure to employers may occur at the initial contact or application stage, the interview stage, or at the time of the offer.

At some point the question of disclosure will likely come up, particularly if the disability is a visible one. Clients with disabilities that are invisible have the option of not disclosing at all, but must still consider what is the best choice for them.

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

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)

# To Disclose or Not To Disclose

Before helping your client decide if, when and how to disclose their disability, have your client 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.)

Once your client has reached a decision, ask yourself one last question. Will disclosing their disability at this time and in this way help them reach their goal of getting work?

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

(Psychologist working with persons with disabilities)

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 job. 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)

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)

# When and How Much To Disclose

There are a number of decisions to make when assisting your client with the disclosure issue. Disclosure to employers may occur as early as the initial contact or application, once employment commences, or at any time in between - and there are pros and cons for each step. There is no right answer. It is a very personal choice that your client must be comfortable with.

# **Disclosure Options**

You may wish to review this chart with your client to help them evaluate their options and plan their disclosure strategies.

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

Options	Advantages
Third party referral	A recommendation from someone the employer knows can increase the chances of being invited for an interview
	Employer is immediately aware of your situation
Written application (résumé, cover letter, or	The employer may appreciate your willingness to be forthcoming and open
application form)	The employer may be actively recruiting for a diverse work force
When the interview is scheduled	Employer has already expressed an interest in interviewing you
Somedaled	Employer can prepare for interview (accommodations)
	A better opportunity to explain your situation
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 their questions
After receiving an offer	If your disability will not adversely affect your ability to do the job, the employer cannot withdraw the offer

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

# **Notes**

# Advice For Your Client When Disclosing

- 1. Keep it short and simple.
- 2. Plan what to say.
- 3. Use examples.

# Tips and Advice on Disclosing Disabilities

If your client has had little success in disclosure situations, or feels uncomfortable, try role-playing the disclosure process. Here are some tips.

- Be positive. Have your client focus on their skills and qualifications and not presenting their disability as a weakness.
- Help them be prepared to address any concerns employers express, even if they are not expressed directly.
- Ensure that your client knows what workplace accommodations they may require, including information on availability, cost and funding programs the employer can access.
- Anticipate the employer's reaction and possible questions to your client's disclosure and role-play how they will answer the questions.

# **Accommodation**

# What is Accommodation?

Accommodation is the identification and implementation of work processes, tools and technologies that will be used to assist your client to be successful in the work environment. Your role as service provider may include helping your client identify their accommodation needs, research and apply for equipment, and put workplace accommodation strategies in place.

It may not be done the same way as other people do it, but the outcome is the same.

(Employee with a mobility disability)

# Financial Assistance for Worksite Accommodations

Financial assistance for employers to make worksite accommodations may be available from the federal and provincial governments.

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

# What is reasonable accommodation?

An employer has a legal obligation to take reasonable steps to accommodate an employee's individual needs. For example, ensure that washrooms are accessible.

For more information on Duty to Accommodate, see *Appendix C: Legislation*.

Accommodation is all about improving employee productivity. Often this is done through technology and process-related supports and interventions such as upgrading computers with new keyboards and software, providing ergonomic furniture, and incorporating flexible work schedules to accommodate personal and professional commitments.

Accommodation for individuals with disabilities is no different.

- Most accommodations cost very little and can be easily introduced.
- Although government funding is available, most employers consulted in the preparation of this booklet identified that accommodation costs were

minimal and the majority chose not to pursue funding.

- Accommodation is a collaborative process between the employee and the supervisor and at times may also include co-workers.
- Accommodation is an ongoing process of making adaptations as necessary to improve productivity and working conditions.

Remember that the costs of accommodation are pretty minimal.

Often there are simple solutions.

(Employee with a mobility impairment)

Some of the types of accommodations include:

- making workplace facilities accessible
- modifying work schedules
- restructuring jobs
- acquiring or modifying equipment or devices
- providing support services or qualified assistants
- changing job locations
- retraining and/or reassigning employees
- reorganizing the workspace for easier movement.

# Why Consider Accommodation?

You can view accommodation as compensation for a person's disability. Or more appropriately, you can view it as an enhancement of a person's ability. Most worksites require some degree of accommodation to make people comfortable and productive. For example, raising the height of a desk or chair is a type of accommodation.

With an aging workforce, many organizations are looking into alternate work relationships and accommodations in order to retain skilled and experienced workers. Here are some examples.

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.

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What process do I usually follow in helping a client to develop a plan? How do I think that process would be different for a client with a disability? What exercises or instruments do I like to use? How do I think they might apply to clients with disabilities?

- As increased demands are placed on productivity and effectiveness, new technologies are introduced daily. Working at home or in satellite offices is becoming commonplace.
- Tasks, or parts of tasks are being reassigned on a temporary or permanent basis based upon skills, interests and abilities.
- Workplaces are introducing larger computer monitors, improved lighting and ergonomic chairs to reduce work stress.

An employee with MS has a heavier load of tasks which require 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)

Reassignment 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)

# Developing a Plan with your Client

As a service provider who helps clients develop action plans, you probably have a tried and true model or process you use. This being said, there are three issues you should consider when working with persons with disabilities.

## 1. Whose plan is it?

It is important to keep in mind when outlining the roles of client and service provider that planning is a collaborative process. The client may want you to decide what to do, how to do it, and then carry out the plan. Some service providers may take over and plan for the client, perhaps consciously or unconsciously, feeling that the client is unable to do so. This tendency may be based on stereotypes of people with disabilities or a lack of experience with independent individuals who are successful in a competitive labour market. While clients may need help with transportation or getting dressed, it does not mean that they need to be taken care of in every aspect of their lives.

It is important for the client to take ownership of the plan.

Clients won't commit to doing something if it is not their plan. You can make suggestions, talk about the next steps, but you have to remember whose plan it is.

(Career counsellor)

2. Promoting independence
Being successful at employment, self-employment or
training requires a certain
degree of independence.

One service provider identified the benefits of independence as: "greater choices, greater freedom, no social worker to report to, no more eviction notices, feeling better about yourself, contributing to the community, a positive role model to their children, increased self esteem, more money, and less dependency on others."

Here are some ways you can promote independence for your clients.

 Communicate the expectation of responsibility. You want your clients to do things on their own.

- Expect your clients to follow through on checking out resources, doing research.
   Give homework assignments.
- Encourage your clients to drop off some of their own résumés to gain experience, and to call businesses and do follow-up calls with potential employers.
- Encourage clients to face situations, not hide. Support them in their decisions and show you have faith in their abilities.
- Let your clients know it's okay if they don't agree with you. Ultimately it's their decision that matters. Your job is to let them know the options and consequences.
- Encourage clients to be independent through employment, training, activity, support, insight, acceptance, and living life.

Provide support for each client based on interests and needs. Have clients do as much as they are capable of doing and we will support the rest.

(Community service provider)

# 3. Referring Clients Depending on your role as a service provider you may be

service provider, you may be involved in:

- developing part of the plan with your client or helping them to identify a goal
- referring your client to an agency that provides nonemployment related services if your client requires additional supports outside the mandate of your agency. It is important for you to know the local agencies, services and educational institutions that can provide the specific training and/or job placement a client may require
- encouraging clients to participate in "mainstream" services such as career planning and job search workshops, a job finding club or self-employment program, where appropriate.

When referring clients, encourage them to research the program or service the same way they would an occupation. Help your clients understand that there may be several agencies or organizations in their community that provide similar services and that one may be a better match for them than another. When researching an agency, suggest they ask about or observe:

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- the track record with placements and retention
- the types of clients participating
- program or service components
- location of facility and ease of access
- general atmosphere and "feel" of the place and the staff.

# **Counselling Approaches**

Kanchier outlines 15 counselling approaches that are particularly effective with persons with developmental or cognitive disabilities. Some of these apply to working with persons with other types of disabilities as well.

- It's especially important to establish a warm, supportive, trusting environment and to avoid anxiety-producing situations (testing conditions) and pressure.
- 2. Work with other professionals to establish your client's precise training needs.
- Encouragement and positive reinforcement are vital. So are patience and support. Build recognition, praise, progress charts and special rewards into activities.

- Consider your communication mode. Check frequently with your client for understanding. Repeat instructions. Review what's been said. Use familiar and concrete language.
- 5. Use concrete, hands-on, experiential materials such as audiovisual materials, on-the-job experience, role-playing.
- Bring all learning into the here and now and restrict it to what can be directly observed. For example, if your client is working toward a goal, create a graph or chart to help him or her measure progress.
- 7. Don't over-stimulate the client.
- Break tasks into small components and help the client master each step before moving on. Use demonstration techniques.
- Build in opportunities for the client to practice and to overlearn the tasks they try.
   Clients with developmental disabilities may not do well the first time they try something, but with enough practice, they can approach the performance of non-disabled individuals.

- Keep sessions brief, but frequent and sequentially related. Provide homework for your client.
- 11. Work frequently with your client and over a period of time. Group experience can be particularly helpful with clients with developmental disabilities as opportunities to practice verbal expression, explore occupational interests and discuss personal problems and coping techniques.
- 12. Help your client identify interests, abilities and needs and how they relate to work environments.
- 13. Expose your clients to job and workplace information and other life roles by showing pictures and slides, by visiting businesses and industries.
- 14. Adapt or modify material necessary to use with developmentally disabled clients. Be creative and don't be afraid to experiment.
- 15.Use a range of resources.

Taken from *What Works*. See *Appendix A: Resources* at the back of this booklet.

# The Career Development Process

The typical career development process consists of steps such as getting to know yourself, exploring possibilities, setting goals, and taking action. The following may be of use when working with clients with disabilities.

# **Developing a Personal Profile**

Identifying skills and strengths is no different than for clients without disabilities. The process used to identify strengths, skills and interests may have to be in a written or oral format depending on your client's disability.

Topics to explore include:

- past experience with employment or volunteer work
- how decisions were made in the past
- how life experience and selfconcept have influenced career choices

- how lifestyle options have been approached
- environmental factors that affect the person and their choices
- other challenges that might affect learning and career development.

The only real difference may be in addressing your client's special needs and experiences. Focus on abilities and skills, and the client's solutions for meeting the challenges presented by the disability. Your clients with disabilities will have developed skills derived from meeting daily challenges. These skills include:

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

# **Long-Term Goals**

Clients often have specific career goals in mind. Discuss these goals and help them to research the education and skills required, where the education is available and what it would cost, and the labour market demand for that occupation.

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Once your client has more information, you will need to discuss any impact their disability may have on the training or the work. For example, it may be impossible for your client to take full-time studies, so the training or education could take longer to achieve. The work itself may also present particular challenges.

Sometimes a client's dream may seem unrealistic, and the research they do does not deter them. In situations such as this, the client may need to take the next steps in order to find out whether this dream really is achievable or not. For example, you may be convinced a client cannot get accepted into the program they have chosen. Only after they have applied and are rejected will they be willing to consider other options.

Clients may have unrealistic expectations of themselves. I have to help them think it through, while at the same time making them feel good about themselves and gently exploring other options.

(Social worker)

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 PhD. with a visual impairment)

### **Short-Term Goals**

The dream or long-term goal that seemed unrealistic may be useful in generating ideas for related types of work. For example, a person with a developmental disability may dream of being a veterinarian. Their agency places them in a veterinary clinic where they carry out specific tasks they can handle and learn more about the demands of being a vet and working around animals. As a result, their new, more achievable goal, is to become a zoo attendant.

If you are working with a client who is newly disabled, help them identify past successes they can draw on. This may be difficult if they still have strong feelings of regret about the

things they cannot do anymore. A referral to a program that provides individualized support may be helpful.

# **Explore Options**

Encourage your clients to explore options. The days when people with disabilities were only considered suitable for certain types of jobs or training are long gone. The criteria used to evaluate employment generally in our society, such as income level, resulting opportunities, security, and quality of working life can be used to evaluate the quality of employment of persons with disabilities.

Alternative forms of employment and alternative approaches to training, such as distance education and on-line courses, may be of interest to your clients. Explain the options clearly to them and help them to review the pros and cons of each, based on their own situations and needs. Other programs or services to consider include:

- on-the-job training
- apprenticeships
- self-employment program or entrepreneurial workshops to

- help develop business plans and do research
- supported employment through agencies that provide job development and ongoing support at work.
   These agencies match individuals with job coaches to help orient them to the work environment
- other work search programs such as job finding clubs.

Other alternatives that clients may want to try when exploring work options include job shadowing, volunteer work, or a mentoring relationship. There may also be funding sources available you can refer your clients to. These could cover such things as adaptive technology, assistive services, or education and workplace supports.

# 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.

# **Achievable Steps**

As a service provider, your goal is to set clients up for success. This is particularly important for clients with disabilities as they may have low self-esteem or have experienced setbacks and frustration in the past.

Identifying manageable and achievable steps towards a goal helps to build a client's confidence. Recovery will be easier if only one step proves to be a roadblock rather than the whole plan.

We look at their end goal and talk about what we have to do. It's important to identify small increments - achievable goals. They need to feel success. They may have experienced quite a bit of failure and frustration in the past. Disappointment isn't so shattering if they take small steps. (Community service provider)

If your role as a service provider includes ongoing client support, you can have them report on accomplishments or follow-up to see how they are doing.

Ask Yourself
How do I encourage my clients to explore and develop job opportunities?
——————————————————————————————————————
How do I think my response to the first question would differ if I was working with a
client with a disability?
What strategies do I currently suggest to my clients to research companies?
Which of these strategies would work in identifying receptive companies?

Some clients need to take small steps. For example, one client is taking a college course and learning to take the city bus in her wheelchair.

(Career counsellor)

### **Resources**

What Works: Career Building Strategies for Special Needs Groups

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

Multiple Choices: Planning Your Career for the 21st Century

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

# Finding or Creating Opportunities

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

- client skills and abilities and position requirements
- client style and values and organizational culture.

# Finding Receptive Companies

There is a greater likelihood of success in helping your clients to find work and fitting in when a company is receptive to hiring individuals 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 C: Legislation)
- have hired someone you know who has a disability.

# - Getting Down to Work

Here are some ways you can help your clients go about finding receptive companies.

- Networking This is critical in all work searches. To find companies that currently employ individuals with disabilities your clients 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.
- Contact agencies that help persons with disabilities -Agencies whose primary role is to provide services for individuals with disabilities will be helpful in identifying opportunities.
- Research company publications Many companies that are committed to building a diverse workplace make reference to their commitment and policies in company and stockholder publications.
   Public libraries are an excellent source of this information. See Appendix A: Resources for websites to help your clients in their research.

- 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 C: Legislation for information about employment equity.
- 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 your clients are looking for.

In the case of federally regulated companies, the federal government and some municipal governments, it pays to have clients identify themselves as having a disability. These organizations are making an effort to increase the representation of designated group members among their employees.

 Arrange information gathering interviews -An information gathering interview gives your client a chance to learn more about a company, match their skills with the organization's needs, and expand their network.

#### **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.

### Applications, Cover Letters and Résumés

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

### **Ask Yourself**

What advice and guidance do I provide my clients in regard to applications, cover letters, and résumés?

What do I think might be different when working with someone with a disability?

What factors do I take into consideration when assisting clients in preparing for an interview?

Are these factors any different for individuals with disabilities?

How important is self-confidence and self-esteem in preparing for and participating in a successful interview? How do I help clients in this area?

When preparing cover letters, résumés and applications, here are some things your clients should consider.

- Focus on strengths and abilities. Choose a résumé format that best allows them to portray their strengths and shifts the focus from any gaps in their employment history.
- Highlight transferable skills gained through volunteer positions and other experience.
- Identify how they plan on disclosing their disability. See the section on Disclosure for more information.

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

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.

# **Preparing for Interviews**

To be successful in their interview, your clients must anticipate questions. Help them prepare for typical "work-related" questions as well as those that go beyond work, whether they are asked or implied. These may include questions about:

- · their disability
- the impact their disability has on work abilities and work requirements

# - Getting Down to Work

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

# Strategies for Success

The following strategies can help your clients get ready for the interview. Have them practice their responses to direct questions.

- What accommodations will you need to help you in this position?
- How can you perform all the functions of work with your disability?
- What concern might an employer have about hiring you? What will you do to overcome these fears?
- Do you know about devices that can assist you in doing your job in a way that meets your employer's expectations?
- What has worked well in the past?

- Do you know of other persons with disabilities doing similar jobs and how they adapted?
- What transportation arrangements do you have? Are they reliable?
- How can you explain any gaps in your employment history?

## Positive positioning or reframing -

Rather than identifying what is wrong, shift a negative to a positive by repositioning. Focus on what your clients can do. For example, you would want to frame gaps in their employment history in a positive way, "I took some time after my accident to reassess and develop the skills and abilities that would allow me to continue to be successful in the workplace."

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)

## Accommodation requirements -

Have your clients prepared 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.

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)

#### Provide examples -

A picture is worth a thousand words, and so are examples. It is much more effective for your clients to convince a skeptical interviewer if they give examples and clear descriptions of how they have successfully performed similar work functions in the past.

#### Focus on skills and abilities -Although the interviewer will take the lead in directing the interview, have your clients prepared to redirect the discussion back to their skills and abilities related to the position.

Notes

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)

Present the business case -Have your clients use the business case to show interviewers the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities. (see The Business Case for Disabilities at the front of this booklet)

#### Resources

Job Seeker's Handbook

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

Portfolios: The Strongest and Least used Interview Tool. WORKink website

Special Issue on Portfolios. Career Planning and Adult Development Journal

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

#### **Portfolios**

Many people use a portfolio when looking for work. Your clients may find a portfolio very useful to demonstrate their skills, experience and suitability for the work. You may wish to help your client organize samples of their work related to what the employer will be looking for. While traditionally a folder or binder, a portfolio could be on disk, video, or on the Internet. A portfolio will:

- address employer doubts with actual examples
- express initiative and creativity, depending on the type of work
- give your clients a greater sense of confidence by having concrete illustrations of skills and abilities.

#### **Self-Confidence**

Interviews can often be intimidating and overwhelming. If a client has been unemployed or out of the workforce for any length of time, they may feel challenged at the thought of going to an interview.

Here are some tips to help build and maintain their selfconfidence.

# **Getting Down to Work**

- Focus on positive experiences they or others have had finding work.
- Refer to what their references have said.
- Provide reminders of positive comments from others.
- Focus on their abilities and successes in all areas of their life
- Have them practice being interviewed and anticipating questions.
- Be prepared to confidently discuss their skills, abilities and disabilities, and positively address any gaps in their employment history.

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

(Employee with a mobility impairment)

## **Keep Up The Good Work**

In an article in *Abilities Magazine*, two out of three individuals reported they had stopped looking for work even though they said they still wanted a job, and only 14% felt that they had a reasonable chance of finding work.

Work searches take longer for individuals with disabilities than others, largely due to factors beyond their own control. As a service provider, there is a greater need for you to assist your client in keeping motivated and keeping up the search. Here are some tips your client can use.

- 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.
- Keep focused on the plan and revise as necessary.
   Reflect on how much has been accomplished not how much there is to do.
- Network with other work seekers and with those who have been successful.

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

(Community service provider)

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)

## Other Employment Options

Sometimes work opportunities present themselves in a variety of ways. By being open and willing to consider work alternatives, your clients will be able to choose an employment route that allows them to make their best contribution and meet the needs of their disability.

In order to find the right situation you may want to help them look at the flexibility that comes with the following opportunities.

- part-time employment
- multi-tracking
- job-sharing or work-sharing
- talent pools
- contract employment
- consulting
- self-employment
- entrepreneurship
- · volunteering.

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As a service provider, you could use your referral networks or work in partnership with appropriate agencies that provide job development services, to look at other employment options for your clients such as:

- job carving some employers may be open to redefining current roles or redistributing work to create a new position
- trial run some employers may consider a probationary period to give the job seeker a chance to demonstrate their skills and abilities against the work to be done.

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 a receptionist or file 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) 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)

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)

# - Getting Down to Work

# Making the Transition to Work

Many employed and selfemployed persons with disabilities have made successful transitions into the workforce because of one or more of the following factors.

- Their work was a good match to their abilities and vocational interests.
- Their disability was an asset in discharging some aspect of their work responsibilities.
- Their résumés reflected relevant "life experience."
- They had successful role models.
- They had the opportunity for low-risk work practice prior to employment.
- They received training in identifying and addressing the attitudes and stereotypes of others.
- The employee, and their employers, had access to appropriate follow-up support for 6 to 12 months after placement.

From Achieving Success: Employment Services for Persons with Disabilities. See Appendix A: Resources at the back of this booklet.

You may want to review how you currently incorporate these factors into your services, particularly when working with individuals with disabilities.

#### Helping Your Client Succeed At Work

The following strategies may help your client to be successful in their new work.

Find a buddy - Encourage your client, early in their employment, to find a co-worker, a "friendly face" who will provide support and show them the ropes. This "buddy" becomes the first ally they have 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.

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)

Network - Networking was a large part of your client's work search. Maintaining this network will be helpful in remaining connected, and as a safety net for future work searches.

Maintain balance - Your client will likely be very happy to have found a position and be very committed to doing a good job. Balance is important. Overcommitment and focus on the new job may adversely impact their attention to health and wellness, support systems and leisure activities. As a person with disabilities, there may be greater risks if ongoing health maintenance issues require regular attention. It may be a challenge to maintain their lifestyle balance, but it is crucial to their health and future success at work.

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 overtired or too stressed. I do what I can and I am allowed to go home early if I need to.

(Employee with a degenerative illness)

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Access resources - Internal and/or external resources are available to assist your client on the job. Encourage them to identify who and what these resources are, and not to 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 (disabilityrelated), health professionals, spiritual leaders, and informal and formal support groups.

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 coworkers so that I have things that I am better at doing and I take on something of theirs.

(Employee with a mobility disability)

## Conclusion

s a service provider helping persons with disabilities look for full-time or part-time work, or explore the opportunities available through volunteering or self-employment, you are aware of the valuable contribution these individuals can make to any organization.

Today, more businesses are also becoming aware of this fact. Your clients have repeatedly shown the skills and determination needed to overcome challenges and succeed in life making them exactly the type of hard-working and dedicated employees that businesses are looking to integrate into their workforces.

You play a vital role in making a successful connection between the job seeker with a disability and the workplace. This booklet was written to answer many of your concerns or questions and support your efforts in helping persons with disabilities meet their employment goals.

# Appendix A:

Notes	

he following resources provide disability-specific general information, training availability, answers to questions, and additional sources of information and assistance.

## **Organizations**

### **Agencies**

There are many agencies that operate on national, provincial and community levels.

- Agencies that specialize in working with and advocating for a specific disability group or disease and often provide public education.
- Agencies that work with a cross-section of persons with disabilities to assist them in developing skills and accessing education and employment.

These agencies likely know of local consultants or organizations that provide diversity or disability awareness training, if they themselves do not.

Agencies are usually listed in the telephone directory under Associations or Societies. The reference

librarian at the local library can often help to identify local resources.

# Colleges and Universities

Local colleges and universities offer programs and services for students with disabilities and many have faculty who specialize in disability-related issues and research. The employment or student counselling offices can also provide information and contacts.

# **Government Funding Sources**

#### **Federal**

A listing of programs, services, and funding sources offered by the Government of Canada can be found in *Bridging the Gap:* Government of Canada Programs and Services of Interest to Canadians with Disabilities. This publication can be obtained by phoning 1-800-665-9017 or by faxing the Enquiries Centre, Human Resources Development Canada at 1-819-953-7260. Bridging the Gap can also be found on the Internet at www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/bcph-odi/ documents/bridge\_gap/index.shtml

## Resources

#### Human Resources Development Canada

## 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, Métis, 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)

#### 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 Information can also be obtained from your local Human Resources Centre of Canada (HRCC) or Canada-Alberta Service Centre (CASC).

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

#### **Provincial**

#### Alberta Human Resources and Employment

Assistance is available throughout the province for Albertans making career, education and work search plans. Alberta Human Resources and Employment also provides disability related employment supports that will help overcome any barriers caused by a disability.

If employees require disability related supports, including workplace modifications, they should contact the closest Career Development Centre or Canada-Alberta Service Centre to discuss the required supports. A career consultant will then contact the employer to discuss the employee's needs.

Call the toll-free RITE line 310-0000 for the location of the office nearest you.

# Appendix A:

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Career Information Hotline
Consultants provide information
on career planning, work search
skills, educational options,
occupational descriptions,
educational funding and referrals.
Call the Hotline at 422-4266
(in Edmonton) or toll-free
1-800-661-3753 (in Alberta).
Deaf or hearing impaired
individuals in Edmonton call
TDD 422-5283. Elsewhere call
1-800-232-7215 for message
relay service. You can also e-mail
the Hotline at info@alis.gov.ab.ca

Canada-Alberta Job Order Bank Services (JOBS)

A free job order bank service for Alberta employers and job seekers. Employers can phone or fax their job vacancies to JOBS. Information about work opportunities is made available to job seekers in three ways: on the Internet www.alis.gov.ab.ca/employment/ LookingForWork/, on a toll-free telemessage, and at JOBS kiosks around the province. Employers can post openings by calling Canada-Alberta JOBS at 427-5627 (in Edmonton) or toll-free 1-800-999-1546 (in Alberta). Alberta job seekers can call the telemessage at 917-4899 (in Edmonton) or toll-free 1-800-727-2925 (in Alberta).

#### **Municipal**

There may be resources (such as a community service directory) and services at the local level through public libraries and departments dealing with social services or parks and recreation.

# Hospitals and Health Services

Medical libraries and resource centres, and specialists working with a particular disability may be resources. They may bring in guest speakers or have resources which they make available to other professionals and families of persons with disabilities.

Alberta Aids to Daily Living Program (AADL)

AADL helps people who have a chronic disability or illness and those who are terminally ill, to receive authorized basic medical equipment and supplies for more independent functioning in a home or home-like setting. For more information contact:

Alberta Aids To Daily Living Seventh Street Plaza 2nd Floor, 10030 - 107 Street Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3E4 OR your local Regional Health Authority

## Resources

### **Websites**

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

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.

Alberta Alcohol and
Drug Abuse Commission
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.

Alberta Human Resources and Employment 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.

Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS)

www.alis.gov.ab.ca
The Internet gateway to career,
learning and employment
information in Alberta.

Canada-Alberta Job Order Bank Services (JOBS) www.alis.gov.ab.ca/employment /LookingForWork/ Internet access to assist employers find workers in Alberta and help job seekers look for work opportunities.

Canadian Abilities Foundation www.enablelink.org Includes a directory of Canadian and international diversity links and diversity organizations; Abilities magazine.

The Canadian Council on

Rehabilitation and Work 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

Career Circuit
www.thecircuit.org

Career Circuit is an Internetbased network of youth service agencies across Canada; a database of career resources and free CD-ROM of selected resources; and free, practical training material to support youth service.

Career Digest
www.ab.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/
common/careerdigest\_E.shtml
A series of articles on career
planning, work and work
maintenance.

Counsellor Resource Centre www.crccanada.org.ca
A forum for career development and employment counselling specialists throughout Canada to share best practices and exchange information.

DAWN Canada www.dawncanada.net The DisAbled Women's Network of Canada provides resources and information for women with disabilities. Phone 204-726-1406.

# Appendix A:

Notes	

Disability Links
www.disabilitylinks.ca
Single point access to programs
and services offered by federal,
provincial and territorial
governments for persons with
disabilities.

Employers Online
http://employers.gc.ca
A one-stop information source
designed to help small to medium size business employers save
time in meeting their human
resource related needs and developing their business management skills. The site is a joint
initiative of Human Resources
Development Canada and
Industry Canada. NOTE: Includes
good employment equity
information.

Equal Opportunity Ontario's Gateway to Diversity www.equalopportunity.on.ca/e nggraf/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.

Human Resources Development Canada, Alberta/NWT/Nunavut Labour Market Information www.ab.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/lmi In addition to labour market information, this site has external links to websites of interest to persons with disabilities, employers, job seekers and entrepreneurs.

Human Resources Development Canada, Office for Disability Issues

www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/bcph-odi Information on HRDC programs and services for job seekers and employers.

Sections "For Job Seekers with Disabilities" and "For Employers of Persons with Disabilities." Fact sheets on planning and hosting accessible meetings and conferences, job accommodation, and representing persons with disabilities.

Indie, The Integrated Network of Disability Information and Education

http://laurence.canlearn.ca/ english/learn/accessguide/indie /index.html

A comprehensive resource for persons with disabilities worldwide. Can do a search of information ranging from adaptive

## Resources

technology, sites sorted by disability types and disability organizations to resource centres and libraries.

Premier's Council for Persons with Disabilities www.premierscouncil.ab.ca Many links to additional sites of interest.

WAEN - Wide Area
Employment Network
www.waen.org
Has an employer and recruiter
help centre with Frequently
Asked Questions.

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 on-line counsellors.
- Services for employers and professionals - articles, Ask a Disability Specialist, links to résumé databases and success stories.

### **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).

Employment Equity Career Counselling Study Guide. Government of Canada. Public Service Commission, Employment Equity Career Counselling Office, Life-Role Development Group and Canadian Career Development Foundation (1999).

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

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

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).

Job Strategies for People with Disabilities. Witt, Melanie. Peterson's Guides, Princeton, NJ (1992).

# Appendix A:

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Job-Hunting Tips for the So-Called Handicapped or People Who Have Disabilities. Bolles, Richard Nelson. Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, CA (1991).

Multiple Choices: Planning Your Career for the 21st Century.\*
Alberta Human Resources and Employment (1999).

Positive Works II.\* Alberta Human Resources and Employment (1998).

Self-Employment: Is it for me?\* Alberta Human Resources and Employment (1999).

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Career Planning and Adult
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12, Number 4. Winter (199697).

"Strategies for Working With Clients With Disabilities." Building Tomorrow Today, Consultation Proceedings, Grant MacEwan Campus, Edmonton. Mathew, Blessie. (1999).

The Ten Commandments of Communicating with People with Disabilities. Resource guide. Irene M. Ward and Associates (1996). What Works: Career Building Strategies for Special Needs Groups.\* Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development and Human Resources Development Canada, Alberta/ NWT/Nunavut Region (1999).

Working Together: A Tool Kit for Diversifying Our Workforce.
Human Resources Development Canada (1995).

\* For copies of these publications look in The Career Shop catalogue www.alis.gov.ab.ca/careershop.

Albertans can contact the Career Information Hotline 422-4266 (in Edmonton) 1-800-661-3753 (in Alberta)

E-mail: info@alis.gov.ab.ca

Deaf or Hearing impaired call TDD 422-5283 (in Edmonton) elsewhere call 1-800-232-7215 for message relay service

## Resources

### **Videos**

Changing Perspectives
Video and CD-ROM focused
towards employers interviewing
and hiring persons with
disabilities. EmployAbilities
(2000). For more information
call (780) 423-4106.

Disability Awareness
CD ROM is available from the
New Brunswick Easter Seal
March of Dimes (CRCD)
E-mail crcd@nbnet.nb.ca

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).

# **Appendix B:**

Notes	

he following is a general overview of different types of disabilities. For more detailed information, we recommend that you consult the appropriate community organizations. See *Appendix A: Resources*.

# Cognitive Disabilities

# Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities affect the way individuals of average to above average intelligence receive, process and express information. They can have an impact on learning, performance and behaviour.

 The term learning disability refers to a mixed group of disorders that stem from information processing problems presumed to be caused by neurological dysfunction. The processing problem affects learning and results in uneven development.

- The difficulty may occur in a wide range of areas such as reading, written and/or spoken language, reasoning, or mathematics.
- Individuals may experience difficulty with time management, attention span, listening and taking notes simultaneously, and understanding verbal and/or nonverbal messages.

Examples of supports include flexible work assignments; access to word processors, typewriters and tape recorders; extended training periods; a distraction-free workplace; implementing a "buddy" system with other employees; and using written, demonstrated, or typed instructions.

## Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Individuals with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) face special learning challenges. FAS results in various degrees of brain damage and problems with language and math, maintaining attention, memory, and social and moral development.

## Overview of Disabilities

Examples of supports include finding the preferred form of communication, elimination of distracting noises, use of tape recorders and computers, job restructuring, and giving clear instructions.

### **Brain Injury Disorder**

Damage to the brain can occur as a result of accidents, falls, disease, tumours, strokes, and cardiac arrest. Although brain injuries can result in physical disability, cognitive, emotional, speech and behavioural problems may have a greater effect on the individual and family. Brain injury from trauma is the leading cause of death and disability for Canadians under 34 years of age.

Examples of supports include finding the preferred form of communication, elimination of distracting noises, use of tape recorders and computers, and job restructuring.

# Developmental Disabilities

Developmental disabilities refer to substantial limitations in present functioning, characterized by significantly below average intellectual functioning. A developmental disability manifests before age 18. Related limitations in adaptive skill areas may include: communications, self-care, home living, social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics, leisure, and work.

Examples of supports include giving clear instructions, limited environmental distractions, use of checklists and diagrams, job restructuring, support systems, and job coaches.

## Hearing Impairments

Many people with hearing impairments have some residual hearing or can lip read. Individuals with hearing impairments may be:

- Deaf Individuals who are unable to hear or recognize speech even with a hearing aid.
- Hard of hearing Individuals who have mild to severe partial hearing loss; those who can hear only portions of words.

Examples of supports include hearing aids, amplified telephone handsets, use of a sign language interpreter, giving written instructions instead of oral ones, and telephone device for the deaf.

# **Appendix B:**

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### Mental Health Disabilities

Mental health disabilities are a result of underlying conditions. Some are the results of disturbances in the functioning of the brain, such as chemical imbalance and are unrelated to external trauma. Some illnesses are brought on by an isolated external event. Some conditions may be resolved after a short period of time, while others may be chronic and last through a person's lifetime. Serious mental health problems may limit an individual's activities, however being treated for a mental disorder does not necessarily affect an individual's activities.

Types of mental health disabilities that may be considered long term and require adaptive functioning are:

- schizophrenic and paranoid disorders
- mood and anxiety disorders.

**Examples of supports** include access to mental health professionals and reliable support systems.

## **Mobility**

Physical disabilities are limitations of movement which restrict an individual's ability to move around (mobility), to perform manual tasks or to participate in certain activities. Persons with physical disabilities may use a wheelchair, cane or other assistive device. A physical disability can be present at birth (spina bifida, cerebral palsy), or can be caused by a disease (multiple sclerosis), or may be the result of an accident (spinal cord injury). There are varying degrees of impairment. One in 12 Canadians of working age has a mobility restriction that affects their daily activities.

Two examples of physical disabilities are:

- Loss of extremities (hands/arms), through amputation or congenital conditions.
- Paraplegia or quadriplegia, where a certain per cent of the body is paralyzed and the person uses a wheelchair.

Examples of supports include wheelchair ramps, accessible washrooms, computers, telephone headsets, and prosthetic devices.

# Overview of Disabilities

### Progressive/ Degenerative Illnesses

Conditions or diseases such as lupus, multiple sclerosis, myalgic encephalomyelitis (chronic fatigue syndrome) which may be slowly progressing and/or in remission. These may affect an individual's energy level, strength and ability to concentrate.

**Examples of supports** include flexible hours and reduced stress.

### Substance Abuse Disorder

Substance abuse is the recurrent use of substances such as alcohol or other drugs resulting in problems carrying out obligations at work, at school or at home.

- Disabilities that can arise from the chronic use or abuse of alcohol or other drugs are mood and sleep disorders, social or interpersonal problems, and poor or deteriorating health.
- Commonly abused substances are legal drugs such as medication and alcohol and illegal drugs such as marijuana, heroin and cocaine.

The process of recovery from substance abuse, a lifelong process, begins once an individual enters treatment or independently stops using substances.

**Examples of supports** include reliable support systems and a balanced lifestyle.

## Visual Impairments

Over 85% of those with visual impairments have some degree of useful vision:

- Totally blind Individuals with no light perception.
- Legally blind Individuals with 1 to 10% of their vision; they may have limited areas of sight, light and shadow perception, colour distinction or tunnel vision.
- Impaired vision Individuals who have lost an eye or have diminishing eyesight.

Examples of supports include Braille scanners, large type publications, voice-activated software, large computer monitors, and guide dogs.

# **Appendix C:**

Notes	

his section provides general information on the programs and legislation that directly relate to hiring and working with individuals with disabilities.

## Federal Legislation

# **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**

Section 15 (1) guarantees persons with disabilities the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law and without discrimination by government, their agents and delegates. http://canada.justice.gc.ca

# Canadian Human Rights Commission

The Canadian Human Rights Commission deals with discriminatory behaviour such as:

- differential treatment of an individual or a group of individuals based on a prohibited ground
- all forms of harassment

 systemic discrimination: a seemingly neutral policy or practice which in fact is discriminatory.

The Canadian Human Rights Act applies to federal departments, agencies, Crown corporations, and federally regulated industries. http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca

#### **Employment Equity**

The goal of employment equity is to create a level playing field in the workplace for everyone in society through the reduction or removal of barriers that accidentally or intentionally prevent some people from getting a job or promotion. Employment equity is a process to compensate for employment disadvantages experienced by some groups.

Employment equity identifies under-representation or concentration of, and employment barriers to, four "designated groups" of people:

- Persons with disabilities
- Aboriginals
- Visible minorities
- Women

# Legislation

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.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/

# Provincial Legislation

### Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship

The Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act,

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:

#### 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

# **Appendix C:**

Notes

specific occupation-related impediments, defects, or disabilities.

It is permissible, though, to require a job-related medical examination prior to an employment offer being made. It is acceptable to request a declaration by the applicant such as "I understand that a job-related medical examination may be required and that the offer of employment may be contingent upon a satisfactory job-related medical examination."

Apart from the application form itself, employers can, through the use of a complete job description, ensure that potential applicants are given enough information to assess their own suitability for the job. It is acceptable to set out specific details in any employment advertisement or posting about the nature and extent of any physical requirements of the position's duties. This is known as a bona fide occupational requirement (BFOR). If applicants are aware that due to a physical disability they are unable to perform the duties of the job, then they should not apply.

### Mental Disability

Section 8 of the Act prohibits any questions or reference to an applicant's mental condition. The applicant does not have to provide any information regarding the state of their mental health.

In order to have an applicant undergo a psychological or psychiatric test or evaluation, the job in question must be directly related to the need to have such information previous to an offer of employment being made. For example, applicants for police officers could be required to submit to such tests or evaluations due to stressful, demanding aspects of the work.

As with physical disabilities, applicants should not be prejudged on how they can perform the duties of the job due to any mental disability. Applicants should be evaluated on their skills or abilities. If they meet the requirements of the position, then they could be considered as potential candidates for hiring.

If applicants do not have the necessary skills for the job and there is no reasonable way to accommodate them, then the employer does not have to consider them for employment.

# Legislation

Pre- and Post -Employment Inquiries

A distinction is drawn between pre- and post-employment inquiries in the Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act. Section 8 is concerned with the nature of pre-employment inquiries. Thus, 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

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.

#### 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 his/her 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.

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

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.

### **Employment Standards**

Alberta's Employment Standards Code describes the minimum rights and obligations of employers and employees. This includes rights and obligations related to payment of wages, hours of work and overtime pay, vacations and vacation pay, general holidays and general holiday pay, termination of employment and maternity and adoption leave.

Section 67 of the Employment Standards Code gives the **Director of Employment** Standards the authority to issue a permit to an employer of an individual with a mental handicap to pay that individual a wage that is less than the minimum wage. The Director must be satisfied that the proposed employment arrangement is satisfactory to both the prospective employer and the employee. This arrangement provides persons with a mental handicap an opportunity, that may not otherwise be available, to enter and become a productive member of the workforce.

A permit is not required where a mentally handicapped person:

- participates in a job placement through an evaluation and training centre
- whose work-related activities are a part of a day program or an assessment and work training program
- is a participant in a rehabilitation or therapeutic program.

These activities are not considered to be work as contemplated by the Employment Standards Code, therefore the provisions of the Code do not apply.

When a permit is required, the amount of the wage must be agreed to by the individual or parent or guardian, the employer, and the agency if one is involved.

For more information refer to the Alberta Human Resources and Employment website at www.gov.ab.ca/hre or call the province-wide Employment Standards information line at (780) 427-3731 (in Edmonton) or toll-free 310-0000 (in Alberta).

Deaf or hearing impaired call TDD/TDY 427-9999 in Edmonton. Elsewhere call 1-800-232-7215 for message relay service.

# We'd Like to Hear From You

## **Employment Series for Persons with Disabilities:**

<b>Tips for Service Providers</b>	Date
Did you find the information in this publication useful?	Would You Like to Receive a Catalogue of Our Products? ☐ Yes
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Do you have any suggestions for other products that would be of value to you?	Alberta Human Resources and Employment 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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