

Employment Programming for Persons with Disabilities

Background

An important part of HRDC's mandate is to ensure that all unemployed persons with disabilities, who wish to be integrated into the labour market, receive the necessary assistance to find and maintain suitable employment. The purpose of this overview is to identify the range of supports available to unemployed persons with disabilities through HRDC's employment programs.

Disability Supports

For clients with disabilities participating in employment programs, HRDC may cover the cost of technical aids, modified office furniture and equipment, attendant and other specialized services to ensure that participants are permitted the opportunity to succeed. Additional resources may include, for example, sign language interpreters for deaf participants, intervenor services for deaf-blind participants, reader assistance for visually impaired participants, specialized work-training assistants for developmentally challenged or learning disabled participants, personal support workers, audio cassettes, Braille or large print materials, specialized transportation and/or computers.

(Note: The disability support cannot be for services or equipment that the client would require for personal use on a regular basis such as a wheelchair or hearing aid. The disability support must be required for, and directly related to, the employment intervention.)

In all HRDC employment interventions, except for Skills Development, accommodations for persons with disabilities are provided by the employer/co-ordinator. Purchase of such accommodations may be reimbursed by HRDC. Equipment which costs more than \$250 and which is purchased with HRDC funding is considered a capital asset. The rules for the purchase and disposal of capital assets apply.

Human Resources Investment Fund

Programming for Persons with Disabilities Who are Eligible for Employment Insurance Benefits

Unemployed individuals with disabilities, who fall into one of the following two categories, may be eligible for one or more of the four employment insurance benefits listed below:

- a) Individuals for whom an employment benefit period has been established or has ended within the 36 months prior to the date of requesting assistance;
- b) Individuals for whom a claim for maternity or parental benefits has been established within the 60 months prior to the date of requesting assistance. After the benefit period the individual must have remained out of the labour market in order to care for the newly born or adopted child and is now seeking to re-enter the labour force.

1. Skills Development (SD) helps individuals obtain the skills necessary for employment, ranging from basic to advanced skills, by providing them with direct financial assistance to enable them to select, arrange and pay for their own training.

Agreements are generally for up to 52 weeks, but may be approved for a period of up to three years.

Skills Development: Eligible clients with disabilities, who receive funding to purchase skills training, are also eligible for any disability supports necessary for accessing that training. Assistance, negotiated on an individual basis with a program official, may be provided to cover all or part of incremental costs due to participation such as expenses relating to disability needs.

The costs of special devices, aids or special assistance required by participants to take a course are paid directly to the client. The funds provided for disability supports are taxable. (Please see attachment regarding Tax Deductions from Lump Sum Payments)

2. Targeted Wage Subsidies (TWS) enables employers to hire individuals who face barriers to employment by offering temporary wage subsidies.

The amount and duration of the subsidy is negotiated based on the specifics of the barriers to employment that the client faces. Under normal circumstances, the wage subsidy should not exceed 60% of the total wages paid to the individual for the period of the agreement. A higher percentage may be considered for a client with a disability. Agreements may be approved for a period of up to 78 weeks.

In appropriate circumstances work hours may be shortened to accommodate the needs of participants with disabilities in Targeted Wage Subsidies.

3. Self Employment Benefit (SEB) provides EI eligible individuals with financial support, planning assistance and mentoring while they get their businesses up and running.

The normal maximum duration of support is 52 weeks. The maximum duration is 78 weeks for clients with a disability that will affect their ability to make the business sustainable in one year. EI eligible participants may be eligible for personal supports, such as assistance for disabilities, transportation etc.

4. Job Creation Partnerships (JCP) provides EI eligible persons with work experience on projects developed in partnership with the community.

Projects may be approved for a period no greater than 52 weeks. Participants with disabilities may be eligible for personal supports such as equipment or attendant services.

Human Resources Investment Fund Programming for All Unemployed Canadians Including Canadians with Disabilities

Employment Support Measures:

The **Employment Assistance Services (EAS)** measure is designed to provide all unemployed Canadians, including unemployed persons with disabilities, with services to help them find and keep jobs. Each EAS project should be designed to accommodate persons with disabilities. Services may include labour market information, employment assessment, employment counselling, job placement services and employment-related workshops such as “How to conduct an Effective Job Search”, “Dealing with Conflict in the Workplace”, “Time Management” etc. They may also provide access to the tools needed for effective job search, e.g. fax machines, computers, photocopiers, and telephones or provide assistance with the preparation of resumes, covering letters etc.

EAS may provide the services of job developers to assist those job ready persons with disabilities who need assistance with job search functions such as finding opportunities, making calls and attending interviews.

Specialized employment assessments may be provided for persons with disabilities: for example, to determine whether the person has the necessary aptitudes or stamina, physical or emotional, to take on certain tasks or positions. Service providers may request and receive funding to provide or purchase necessary disability supports and specialized services required by participants in their EAS programs. Funds for disability supports may not be disbursed directly to the participants of EAS. At the end of the project, the disability supports may, at the direction of HRDC, be distributed to organizations serving the disabled community.

The purpose of **Local Labour Market Partnerships (LLMP)** is to work with partners to help communities, employers and workers improve their capacity to address human resource requirements and to implement labour force adjustments. LLMP may indirectly benefit individuals with disabilities. Under this measure, communities, agencies and associations may receive funding to develop solutions to specific employment issues that face persons with disabilities.

Programming for Persons with Disabilities Not Eligible for Employment Insurance Benefits

Opportunities Fund

The intent of **Opportunities Fund (OF)** is to provide people with disabilities who do not have a recent attachment to the workforce with the opportunity to access the types of programs that are funded out of the Human Resources Investment Fund. The Opportunities Fund Terms and Conditions defines a person with a disability as "...a person who self-identifies as having a permanent physical or mental impairment that restricts his or her ability to perform daily activities." Potential participants need only self identify.

In theory, Opportunities Fund may be used to support Employment Assistance Services (EAS) type activities for Opportunities Fund participants. However, this is not considered the best use of the limited Opportunities Fund budget. A better use of Opportunities Fund is to directly support participants to access benefits such as TWS, JCP, SEB and SD for which they would not otherwise be eligible. An EAS project targeting all people with disabilities, whether they are Opportunities Fund eligible or not, could be funded through the Human Resources Investment Fund.

Youth Initiatives

HRDC encourages the use of the full range of the Youth Initiatives to assist Youth at Risk in preparing for, obtaining and maintaining employment and in making a successful transition into the labour market thereby resulting in increased employment. The focus in Ontario Region remains the Youth at Risk client group.

A high proportion of youth at risk is youth with learning disabilities, addiction and mental illness in addition to other more visible disabilities. Disabled youth also make up a high proportion of homeless youth.

The needs of youth with disabilities should be considered in the design of each project.

Note: Assessment and recommendations for the remediation of disabilities, including learning disabilities, may be funded through HRIF - Employment Assistance Service which is available to all unemployed Canadians including unemployed youth.

In appropriate circumstances work hours may be shortened to accommodate the needs of participants with disabilities in Youth Internship agreements.

Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities (EAPD)

EAPD is a partnership between the federal and provincial/territorial governments. Under bilateral agreements signed with all provinces the Government of Canada will contribute 50 per cent of the cost, up to a maximum, of eligible provincial/territorial programs and services.

The goal of the EAPD initiative is to enhance the economic participation of working age adults with disabilities by providing federal funding to provinces for a range of provincial programs and services.

Canada Pension Plan (CPP) - Disability – Vocational Rehabilitation

The CPP Disability Vocational Rehabilitation Program is designed to help people who receive a CPP disability benefit return to work. Vocational rehabilitation services are provided for selected clients who can benefit most from the program. A vocational rehabilitation specialist in the client's community works with them to develop an individual return to work plan. This may include career counselling, upgrading, retraining and developing job search skills. When a client has successfully completed the program and has regained the capacity to work, an active job search period is provided to assist the client in securing employment. This job search period is closely monitored and is approved to continue to a maximum of 12 months. Participants will get their regular CPP disability benefit during the time they participate in the program. Their benefits continue during their job search period and if they find a job, CPP disability benefits will continue for the first three months after work begins. However, if they don't find a job, the benefit will stop at the end of the job search period.

Special Considerations

Canada Pension Plan Allowable Earnings

The Canada Pension Plan supports clients who are trying to return to the work force. The program provides services and return to work incentives.

An individual on CPP – Disability Benefits can earn up to \$3,900 from work in the 2002 calendar year without informing HRDC and without losing benefits. This amount may change in future years.

Aboriginal Clients with Disabilities

The 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey revealed that 31 per cent of Aboriginal adults reported some form of disability – almost twice the national average. The disability rate among young adults was almost three times higher for Aboriginal people than for non-Aboriginal people. As First Nations, Inuit and Metis people take on more responsibility for services to people in their own communities, it is important to address these inequalities by working in partnership to find common solutions to common problems regardless of jurisdiction.¹ Aboriginal persons with disabilities place a priority on programs and services that are designed, developed and provided by Aboriginal people, in a manner that respects the principles of their cultural frameworks. HRDC has a responsibility to consider the needs of Aboriginal clients in its planning processes. Including Aboriginal clients and representatives in consultations is a first step. Communities may use LLMP to conduct inclusive consultations on the structure of employment supports for persons with disabilities.

Eligible Aboriginal persons with disabilities may be served through Human Resources Investment Fund or Opportunities Fund Interventions. In addition, the holders of Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreements have been allocated some funds to provide supports for persons with disabilities.

¹ In Unison 2000 - Persons with Disabilities in Canada, p. 11.

HOW DOES THE SUPPORTING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE (SCPI) HELP THE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

For clients with disabilities who are homeless, SCPI can provide much needed help. Significant proportions of those who are homeless are suffering from mental or physical disabilities. SCPI aims to alleviate the hardships of those who find themselves absolutely homeless by enhancing the capacity of communities in delivering effective, community-based solutions to alleviate homelessness. This includes improved access to emergency shelters or transitional housing facilities. This translates into making more shelters wheelchair accessible or having the expertise of medical staff on hand to help those who are mentally or physically challenged. As this initiative promotes the provision of services, organizations receiving SCPI funds can improve or develop new support services for the homeless or those who are at-risk of becoming homeless. This refers to a wide range of assistance and includes preventative and remedial therapies, activities and materials including counseling, medical treatment, crisis intervention, psycho-social rehabilitation and addiction treatment, referral, advocacy, employment programs and life-skills training, as well as clothing and transportation.