

Building An Inclusive Workplace



Offering an inclusive workplace for persons with disabilities does not mean implementing big changes. Consider the following suggestion:

- Welcome diversity and inclusion in your workplace, starting from the top down
 - For example, review policies to assess potential barriers
- Use language that focuses on people, not their disabilities
- Treat all individuals, including those with disabilities, equally
 - For example, ensure that company events, such as holiday parties are accessible for both employees with and without disabilities
- Examine your environment for any potential barriers someone with a disability may face or conduct an accessibility audit in your office
- Demonstrate openness and comfortability in discussing and providing accommodations
- Respect applicant and employee confidentiality
- Provide diversity education and accessibility awareness for staff at all levels



Hire For Talent provides resources on how to lead a Micro-Learning Workshop on Disability Awareness Training for your staff. Check out Tool #10 on page 73 of the Employer Toolkit.

[www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Policy on ableism and discrimination based on disability_accessible_2016.pdf](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Policy%20on%20ableism%20and%20discrimination%20based%20on%20disability_accessible_2016.pdf)

- Involve those with disabilities in discussions about their workplace needs, do not assume what is needed
- Listen, be flexible and ask questions if you do not fully understand
- Promote and adhere to your organization's diversity and inclusion policy (or create one, if you do not already have one!)

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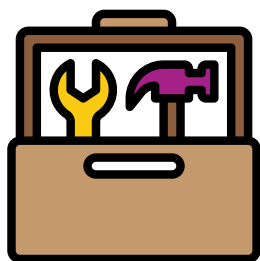


The following subsections provide practical advice on how to start infusing inclusivity into the workplace with respect to recruitment, interviewing, hiring and retention.

Recruiting

Recruiting talent continues to be a pressing issue for many employers. Below are some inclusive recruitment strategies that will assist you in increasing access to skilled and qualified applicants with disabilities:

- Advertise jobs through community–employment disability agencies, campus career offices and co-op offices
- Offer alternative formats of the job posting (Large print, HTML, plain language)
- Provide different ways to receive applicant’s applications, other than the website
- Include details about the interview/workplace location and highlight accessible features
- Identify availability of flexible working conditions, if possible
- Create inclusive job postings, only including qualifications that are required for the job
- Promote your organization as an equal opportunity employer
- Include testimonials that support and showcase diversity and inclusion
- Ensure any information you are requesting for the interview testing (i.e. physical test) is relevant to the job
- If the interview has a written component, prepare alternate formats for candidates to choose from, if applicable
- Provide contact information of someone who can answer questions about the job requirements and who is aware of the organization’s inclusion and diversity policy



Hire For Talent offers great resources in their Employer Toolkit. Visit the following locations for more information and templates on:

[How to Write an Inclusive Job Description](#)

www.hirefortalent.ca/images/pdf/tools/4.2_How-to-Write-Inclusive-Job-Descriptions_EN.pdf

[Steps to Writing an Inclusive Job Posting](#)

www.hirefortalent.ca/images/pdf/tools/4.3_How-to-Write-an-Inclusive-Job-Posting_EN.pdf

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Interviewing

When interviewing a candidate, ensure accessibility where possible. Consider employing the following strategies:

Before the Interview:

- Ensure the interview location is accessible for candidates with disabilities
- Provide information on accessible parking options, and clear directions about the meeting location
- When scheduling an interview, provide a description of the interview location
- Inform all candidates that accommodation requests are available prior to arranging the interview, and provide instructions on how to make a request (i.e. who to send the request to, deadline for the request)
- Give information on the interview style
- Ensure other staff in your organization are aware of proper etiquette and language to use when interacting with persons with disabilities
- Provide clear information and instructions about the selection process
- Assemble an interview panel to reduce individual bias, when possible, ensure that there is diverse representation on the panel

During the Interview:

- Ask the same questions to all candidates, the questions should focus on the person's ability to perform the essential duties of the job
- Do not ask questions that would require someone to disclose their disability, either directly or indirectly
- If an applicant discloses their disability, or a disability related need, be prepared to inform the individual that they have the right to being accommodated to the point of undue hardship
- Check in with yourself. Be aware of your own biases, your personal and cultural assumptions could create an unfair hiring process
- Assess each candidate against the essential requirements of the job and use the same ranking system for each candidate



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Interview Questions:

The Law in Ontario prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, marital status, children, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability and more. The Ontario Human Rights Commission protects job seekers against unlawful questions. An employer's interview questions must relate to the skills and abilities needed to perform the job. Here are some examples of questions that employers are and are not permitted to ask:

Question you can ask:

- How would you perform this particular task?
- Are you able to work full-time hours?
- Are you able to perform the requirements of this position?
- Is the lighting ok? Does this desk meet your needs?



If an individual chooses to disclose their disability during an interview, an employer can ask about their accommodation needs and their ability to perform the essential duties of the job with accommodation. For example, you could ask, "Do you require any accommodations to perform the job functions?"

Questions you cannot ask:

- Do you have any disabilities or medical conditions? What are they?
- How did you become disabled? What is your diagnosis?
- How often do you miss work for doctor appointments?



Learn to reframe your interview questions to be more accessible, refer to [this chart](#) from the Discover Ability Network for some examples.

www.accessibleemployers.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Discover-Ability-Networks-Interview-Questions.pdf

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Onboarding

Once the successful candidate has been hired, there are a few more steps that you want to follow while your new employee adjusts to their workplace:

- Ensure that any accommodations that were discussed and agreed upon are implemented in timely manner
- Complete an Individual Accommodation Plan (IAP)
- Discuss whether the employee requires assistance in the case of an emergency, discuss and record a plan



For samples of an Individual Accommodation Plan and Emergency Response Information Forms, visit pages 137 – 151 in the Conference Board of Canada's Employer Toolkit.

www.conferenceboard.ca/temp/734f25fa-a9a4-4d8a-b398-0f866d265532/7159_AccessibilityToolkit-2015_RPT.pdf

- Reiterate that any personal information disclosed will be kept confidential
- Confirm that any orientation information, and employee information being provided is in a format that is accessible with their disability
- Consider assigning a mentor or point of contact as an added support
- Check in to see if accommodations are appropriate or if changes are required

For more comprehensive checklists on recruitment and onboarding check out these resources from Accessible Employers:



[Accessible Recruitment Checklist](http://www.accessibleemployers.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Accessible-Recruitment-Checklist-Final.pdf)

www.accessibleemployers.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Accessible-Recruitment-Checklist-Final.pdf

[Employee Orientation and Onboarding Checklist](http://www.accessibleemployers.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Employee-Orientation-and-Onboarding-Checklist-Final.pdf)

www.accessibleemployers.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Employee-Orientation-and-Onboarding-Checklist-Final.pdf

[Inclusive Interview Checklist](http://www.accessibleemployers.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Inclusive-Interview-Checklist-Final.pdf)

www.accessibleemployers.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Inclusive-Interview-Checklist-Final.pdf

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Retaining

After successfully recruiting, interviewing and onboarding your new employee(s), make sure you have measures in place to retain them. When you reduce the risk of staff turnover, your whole team will benefit. Managing an employee who has a disability is no different than managing anyone else. Some suggestions for increasing retention include:

- Ensure new employees feel welcome, include them in decisions and social activities
- Provide training on the position, organizational culture and workplace safety
- Ensure that each employee understands his or her job requirements
- Make performance standards clear and hold them to those standards
- Provide regular feedback about their performance
- Identify staff that they can approach if they need help or have questions
- Observe changes in behaviour that may be associated with personal or job related challenges, offer and provide support as needed
- Arrange regular meeting times for ongoing evaluation
- Adjust workplace accommodations and communication style, as required
- Address problems as they arise, as you would with any other staff



If you see behaviour or performance signs that suggest an employee has a mental health concern, take a look at [“How can I approach an employee?”](#) from Mental Health Works

www.mentalhealthworks.ca/how-can-i-approach-an-employee-about-their-mental-illness

Sources:

Hire For Talent: Employer Toolkit — www.hirefortalent.ca

Discover Ability Network: Business, Roadmap — www.discoverability.network/business/roadmap

Employment Accessibility Resource Network: Diversity and Inclusion: Disability Etiquette in the Workplace — www.earn-paire.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Disability-etiquette-Eng.pdf

Mental Health Works: How can I approach hiring to include people with disabilities, including those with mental health problems? — www.mentalhealthworks.ca/how-do-i-hire-someone-with-a-mental-health-problem/