

Disability and the workplace – transcript

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Disability and the workplace

Turn sound on.

Turn closed captioning on.

Career Centre University of Toronto Mississauga.

Navigating the module

Module content: Shown in tab to the left under the heading Module content & Transcripts. Cannot be used for navigation.

Video Transcript: Located to the left under the heading Module content & Transcripts. You will see the complete transcript while the video is playing.

Resources: To download additional documents and an annotated bibliography, go to the resources tab on the top left of your screen under the module title.

Print: Print tab, above on the right to print or save everything that appears on the screen.

Exit: Use Exit tab, located above to the right of Print Screen tab. You may exit the module at anytime. When you return to the module you may be prompted to resume the module. The resume prompt depends on whether you cleared your browser history. Clearing the browser history will restart the module from the beginning.

Keyboard user: Press the tab key to move to the selection and press the space bar.

Disability and the workplace

Video transcript:

What do you think of when you hear the word disability? Injury. Impairment. Illness. Condition. Disabilities may be visible such as a person with a cane to navigate vision loss, a person in a wheelchair or invisible, such as a person who experiences anxiety or has a learning disability. You may have a disability or know someone who does. Our understanding of disabilities is evolving.

Barriers to accessibility prevent people with disabilities from fully taking part in the social and economic life of our communities.

Barriers can include: Physical barriers, Information and communications barriers, Systemic barriers, Attitudinal barriers.

Having a disability is not a barrier; however, a given work context may present barriers to people with disabilities. For example, a person with social anxiety does not experience a barrier when working independently but does when required to do a presentation for a meeting.

In some contexts, disabilities can also present great strengths. For example, a person on the autism spectrum may be able to maintain extreme focus and attention to detail.

By completing this module, you will gain a better understanding of the issues and an appreciation for how everyone can contribute to achieving the organizations' goals.

What you'll get from this module

Whether or not you have a disability, chances are you may work with someone who does. By working through each topic you'll learn about becoming a better co-worker.

Select the topic by clicking on it or use the tab key to navigate to it, and press the space bar to select it. At the end of each topic you will be returned to this page to make another selection.

When all the topics are completed, you will be taken to a summary page.

Disabilities and the workplace module content

- Disclosure and accommodation: What's the difference.
- Legal rights: Knowing your rights can impact disclosure decisions.
- Considering disclosure: When in the hiring process should a disability be disclosed.
- Be part of the solution: Request for self, co-worker, employee and supervisor.
- Benefits to organizations: What persons with a disability can offer.

Disclosure and accommodation

Video transcript:

Disclosure and accommodation, we'll start with some definitions.

Disclosure: This simply means telling others about a disability or its impact. In employment contexts, it might mean discussing a disability or its related barriers on the job.

Disclosure - when and to whom. A worker might disclose to a variety of parties like supervisors, human resources personnel, union reps, co-workers, and sometimes clients and customers.

A worker might also choose to never disclose this information at work. The decision to disclose belongs to the person who lives with the disability.

Accommodations: These are the strategies, aids and alterations in work conditions used in employment, education, social service and commercial settings. This ensures that a person can overcome a disability-related barrier in order to participate fully and benefit fully.

Consider this example - changing a break time to allow a worker to take medication or ordering special software to make it easier to read documents on a computer.

Workers with disabilities are legally entitled to necessary accommodations and employers are legally required to provide them. Accommodation requests often involve disclosing the impact of disability.

Summary – Disclosure and accommodation

Disclosing and requesting accommodations are choices made by the worker with the disability.

Disclosure may be a constructive step in requesting accommodation.

If you notice differences in tools, schedules or other aspects of co-workers' work, it may be due to an accommodation.

Legal rights

Workers with disabilities are protected by law. Here's how they work. This information can be useful advocating for yourself or co-workers with disabilities.

Legal rights in Ontario

Video transcript:

The most important Ontario Law that promotes equal opportunity, dignity and inclusion is the Ontario Human Rights Code (The Code).

It spells out the rights of workers and the obligations of employers.

The Code requires organizations to prevent and remove barriers and provide accommodations for disabilities.

This duty to accommodate applies to all employers providing paid positions as well as unpaid internships and volunteer positions.

The principle of accommodation

The principle of accommodation is included in the Ontario Human Rights Commission - Meeting the accommodation needs of employees on the job. This principle involves three factors:

Dignity

Each person must be accommodated in way that most respects their dignity, including privacy, confidentiality and autonomy.

Individualization

Each person's needs are unique. Each accommodation request must be considered on a case by case basis.

Inclusion

Involves preventing and removing barriers so that all persons have access to their environment and face the same duties and requirements with dignity and without impediment.

AODA and the workplace

In addition to the individual rights granted under the Ontario Human Rights Code, organizations have a responsibility to comply with the Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

Organizations will become accessible and barrier free in terms of the services and building by 2025.

(If working with electronic version) Links for websites about disabilities and legal rights can be accessed from the Resources tab in upper left. (Transcript: information is located at the end of the document)

Reflection: legal rights, obligations and you

You have reviewed legal rights and responsibilities as they relate to people with disabilities.

How can this information help you support co-workers or people you supervise who may have disabilities?

Considering disclosure

Disclosure and accommodations go hand in hand because the need to signal a disability-related barrier is required to request an accommodation.

The decision is complex and depends on individual circumstances, career goals and the employer.

When to disclose

If you decide to request an accommodation, keep in mind you don't need to reveal your diagnosis or any medical details. Just reveal you have a disability, how the disability creates a barrier that interferes with doing your best work and that you are requesting an accommodation for it.

Let's explore when, how and to whom. You will be presented with a number of situations, one for each stage of the hiring process.

If you currently do not have a disability, think about how you might respond if you were injured or ill and as a result, required accommodation. If you have a close friend or family member with a disability, imagine them in the scenario.

Networking event

You are attending an industry specific networking event. The event is being held in a room at a conference centre. 75 - 80 people are expected to attend this event. This event includes a speaker and face-to-face networking.

What are the barriers that might require an accommodation?

At the interview

You have been invited to a job interview at the potential employer's office. You have checked out the location during your interview preparation.

If you need an accommodation to do well in the interview, what concerns might you have in disclosing to the employer at this stage?

If not requesting an accommodation will prevent you from doing well in the interview, then maybe this is the time to ask.

At the job offer

Your interview went really well. The employer has called you in for a second interview, then offers you the job!

Assume you have not disclosed any disability-related barriers. What might be some advantages and disadvantages to do so at this stage?

Advantage: The employer may appreciate your being candid and you can clarify what you need.

Disadvantage: Trust may be damaged if the employer thinks you should have told them sooner.

Advantage: The employer can put any accommodations in place before you start which should make for a smoother and more productive start.

Disadvantage: The employer may have concerns that your disability may impact your ability to do the essential job functions. You may need to clarify and reassure the employer.

Advantage: The employer has all but selected you. They are very positive about you as a candidate and you may be less likely to encounter negative attitudes at this point.

Disadvantage: If the job offer is withdrawn you may be able to take legal action.

After starting the new job

Now you have started your job. Things are going well, but you have encountered a disability-related barrier that an accommodation could eliminate, allowing you to do your best work.

Assuming you have not already done so, should you initiate a discussion about it, now that you have started your job?

Advantage to disclosing:

Disadvantage to disclosing:

Never disclose

The decision to disclose a disability-related barrier and request an accommodation can be complicated and highly personal. Some choose to keep this information to themselves.

What some students with disabilities have said.

- My disability does not present any barriers for the work I'm currently doing.
- Regardless of what's going on, I feel this information is private and best kept to myself.
- I'm unsure of my employer's reaction and until I have a better understanding of my workplace, I will keep it to myself.
- Although I might benefit from an accommodation, the risks of asking outweigh the potential benefits.

Tips about disclosing

- Be well informed, prepared and confident for a discussion about accommodations.
- Request a private meeting and ensure there will be enough time.
- Offer to work with the employer to get the accommodation in place.
- If you have assistive devices of your own that will help, offer to bring them (at least initially).

Be part of the solution

Video transcript:

The workplace is changing. Some organizations are actively encouraging diversity in the workplace. Accommodating people with disabilities contributes to a diverse workplace and the organization benefits.

At any point in your life, you may experience the impact of a disability that requires you to approach your employer about accommodation. Even if you never experience this situation you can be an encouraging and supportive co-worker, by not making any assumptions about who may or may not have a disability in your workgroup. Should a co-worker disclose to you, treat this information with the utmost confidentiality and respect. Remember it is their choice to disclose.

Assessing the employer

When considering the potential employer how do you assess whether the organization is disability positive? Check the organization's website or their job postings for accommodation statements.

However, diversity icons or the tag line on the website isn't always indicative of what's going on at the departmental or unit level within the organization.

This topic presents types of accommodation and cost of providing them.

Types of accommodations

Examples of low and no cost accommodations:

- changes in start time or break times (e.g. medication, paratransit schedule)
- ergonomic keyboard or mouse (e.g. repetitive strain injuries, musculoskeletal issues)

- providing visual or memory aids (e.g. concussion, learning disabilities)
- more frequent check ins (e.g. anxiety, communicative disability)

Find out more about accommodations using the Job Accommodation Network's (JAN) Searchable Online Accommodation Resource (SOAR)

(in the electronic module) Link is included in the Resources tab in the upper left under the module title. Transcript: Jan link is located at the end of this document under Resources

Costs of accommodations

Many people think of installing a ramp or a wheelchair accessible washroom at great cost when the word accommodation is mentioned. In reality most accommodations are low cost or no cost in terms of needing to buy or build something.

Typically, accommodations are simple and low cost:

- average accommodation cost is \$500.
- 60% of employers spend nothing and still provide the accommodation.ⁱ

What the research saysⁱⁱ...

Lower training costs

90% of people with disabilities did as well or better at their jobs than non-disabled co-workers.ⁱⁱⁱ

Significantly reduced turnover reported by major organizations.

Less productivity loss

63% lower employee time away from work due to accidents.

40% lower safety incident rate.

Reflection

Now that you know more about disability in the workplace and the accommodations for it, briefly describe how you could use this knowledge.

Benefits of hiring people with disabilities^{iv}

Stats Canada estimates that 11% of Canadian adults experience a disability. The probability of disability rises as we age. More than one in four 20 year olds will experience at least a year out of work during their working lives due to a disability. (U.S. Social Security Administration)

Employers are beginning to realize that they need the skills and talents of individuals with disabilities. Studies show that there are many other benefits to hiring and retaining workers with disabilities.

Benefits for the employer

Workers with disabilities are loyal: staff retention is 72 % higher among persons with disabilities (Deloitte).

Workers with disability have lower absenteeism

85% of employees with disabilities rated average or above on attendance. (A DuPont Corporation study).

Workers with disabilities had fewer absences than their coworkers. (International Telephone and Telegraph surveyed a 2,000 employee plant).

Better safety records

Twenty years of surveys by Du Pont clearly show that employees with disabilities meet or exceed the safety and attendance records of their coworkers. (Canadian Manufactures and Exporters).

Increased diversity and innovation

Research suggests that more diverse work teams, which include persons with a disability, create a wider range of solutions to business issues and are often more innovative and creative.

Talent and skills in a tightening labour market

Employers often talk about the skills gap. Persons with disabilities have education training and skills that can directly contribute to the success of companies and organizations.

Social responsibility and connecting with a wider customer base

Persons with disabilities represent a large consumer base. Hiring to reflect this can enhance the company's reputation and social responsibility. (Conference Board of Canada Business Benefits of Accessible Workplaces June 2014.)

Reflect on the benefits to employers

Which of the benefits listed below were new perspectives for you? Select the ones that were new.

- Workers with disabilities are loyal – lower turnover
- Talent and skills in a tightening labour market
- Better safety records
- Lower absenteeism
- Increased diversity and innovation
- Social responsibility and connecting with a wider customer base

Summary

Final thoughts about disability and the workplace

You may live with a disability at some point in your life and/or work with those who do. Accommodations for disability-related barriers are protected by law. Most accommodations are low or no cost to the employer. Helping to create a supportive disability positive environment is in the best interests of the company and its employees.

Concerned about a disability and how it might play out in your career? Make an appointment with a career counsellor.

Interested in reading more about disability and the workplace?

Download the annotated bibliography for this module. (in this transcript resources are located at the end of the document)

Your key points to remember

When asked about identifying possible barriers at a networking event that would require accommodation you responded -

This is your response to how you could use the knowledge about accommodating disabilities in the workplace -

You have now completed the Disability and the Workplace module. If you are interested, check out the other modules available in this Experiential Learning series.

- Working in Teams
- Working Effectively with your Supervisor
- ✓ Disabilities and the Workplace
- Networking in the Workplace
- Diversity and Inclusion

Resources for Disability and the Workplace

Need more information and ideas about networking at work? The following are resources the Career Centre looked at to support the information presented in this module.

Ability First Statistics

Ability First Coalition

Highlights: perceived cost of accommodation; employee turnover, performance, safety records

<http://abilityfirst.ca/why-hire-employees-disabilities/statistics>

Employer benefits from making workplace accommodations

Solovieva TI1, Dowler DL, Walls RT.

Highlights: a study to assess disability accommodations and the benefits for the employer

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21168806>

Meeting the accommodation needs of employees on the job

Ontario Human Rights Commission

Highlights: duty to accommodate; principle of accommodation; employee responsibilities

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/8-meeting-accommodation-needs-employees-job>

The Benefits of Disability in the Workplace

Judy Owen

Highlights: review of what is happening in the U.S.A workplace and the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/judyowen/2012/05/12/a-cost-benefit-analysis-of-disability-in-the-workplace/#3eecb9c83501>

Additional Resources

Askjan.org <https://askjan.org/soar.cfm>

Disability-related Accommodation – OHRC <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/9-more-about-disability-related-accommodation>

Duty to Accommodate OHRC <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-ableism-and-discrimination-based-disability/8-duty-accommodate>

Policy on ableism and discrimination based on disability

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-ableism-and-discrimination-based-disability>

The Act (AODA) <https://www.aoda.ca/the-act/>

UTM Career Centre Resources for students with disabilities

<https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/about-us/services-resources/resources/resources-students-disabilities>

Working Together: The Code and the AODA

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/learning/working-together-code-and-aoda>

ⁱ <http://abilityfirst.ca/why-hire-employees-disabilities/statistics>

ⁱⁱ Canadian Business SenseAbility from Abilities First website

ⁱⁱⁱ Statistics Canada 2001 quoted on Canadian Business SenseAbility from Abilities First website

^{iv} Source: <http://abilityfirst.ca/why-hire-employees-disabilities/statistics> (this site presents information from a number of different studies individually mentioned in the body of the document)