

A guide to hiring people with disabilities

ABILITY

Dispelling Myths

INCLUSIVITY

The Untapped Labour Pool

A Guide for Employers

Eliminating Barriers
SKILLS

Opportunities



onevoicenetwork.ca



Who is One Voice Network?

One Voice Network was established in 2008 to support agencies that provide employment services to job seekers with disabilities and employers who wish to become equal opportunity employers. **One Voice Network** offers centralized access to information about employing job seekers with disabilities. By removing barriers and improving communication and access to information, **One Voice Network** increases the potential for local employers to tap into this employment pool.

One Voice Network is a collaboration of over 20 service providers who can support employers in developing job postings, pre-screening qualified candidates, interviewing, hiring and integrating a new employee. This free service aims to bring awareness of the many qualified job seekers with disabilities in York Region.

One Voice Network service providers and their contact information are listed in the back of this guide for your convenience or you can visit www.onevoicenetwork.ca for more information.



The Untapped Labour Pool

A Guide for Employers

A guide to hiring
people with disabilities

"Do not form a value judgment based on disability. Do not allow attitude to impose a handicap on a person. Instead, see the capability within."

*Lieutenant Governor, David Onley,
May 19, 2010*

Purpose of the Guide

People with disabilities have skills, abilities and experience that can add value in your workplace. By expanding your search for talented employees and making your workplace accessible, you create a win-win situation. You find the right person with the right skills for the job. You create an inclusive atmosphere where anyone can work and be productive - and you allow employees of all abilities to compete in the marketplace.¹

This guide has been written specifically for small and medium sized businesses in York Region and takes you through a step-by-step process on how to advertise, interview, hire and integrate candidates from this diverse group of people. We know that your time is valuable, and have presented the information in a concise and easy to read format.

The guide is not intended to provide detailed information about all possible situations. Each situation is unique, depending on the nature of the business, its workforce, physical premises and the nature of an employee's disability. We encourage you to review the information in this guide and then to seek further guidance relevant to your particular situation, if required. We have included a list of York Region resources in the appendix to assist you.

¹ www.accesson.ca

CONTENTS

The Untapped Labour Pool

A Guide for Employers

Table of Contents	Page
<i>Introduction</i>	2
<i>Good for your Business</i>	3
<i>What is a Disability?</i>	7
<i>Your Workplace</i>	10
<i>The Recruiting Process</i>	15
<i>Integration into your Workplace</i>	23
<i>Accommodations</i>	29
<i>Employer Incentives</i>	37
<i>Terminating Employment</i>	41
<i>Discrimination, Human Rights and Disabilities</i>	43
<i>Resources</i>	46
<i>One Voice Network Links</i>	47
<i>Appendix</i>	48
<i>Universal Symbols of Accessibility</i>	49
<i>York Region Statistics</i>	50

Introduction

York Region has become one of Canada's fastest growing municipalities. As the consumer market increases, so will the demand for skilled workers. At the same time, many employees are nearing retirement age. We will clearly be faced with an increasing shortage of skilled workers.

Where will York Region employers find employees with the required skills to support increasing sales?

Many employers have never considered hiring a job seeker with a disability, even though this segment of the labour market represents a largely untapped resource. Statistics Canada identifies that over half of all working age people with disabilities are currently unemployed.

Job seekers with disabilities are often overlooked due to incorrect assumptions about skills, performance or the costs of accommodations, increased insurance or workers compensation. Some employers fear that an employee with a disability would disrupt the 'company culture'.

In reality, there are many intelligent, skilled workers with disabilities with as much desire to achieve their full potential as any non-disabled person.

Hiring an employee who has a disability makes good business sense for a number of reasons:

- **Increased productivity.** A DuPont survey found that 90% of employees with disabilities rated average or better in job performance and 86% had an average or better attendance record.²
- **Reduced staff turnover and training costs.** A recent Pizza Hut study found that workers with a disability are 5 times more likely to stay on the job than those without disabilities. Tim Hortons franchise owner, Mark Wafer, notes that the average tenure of his employees who have a disability is over 6 years, compared to an average of less than 1 year for non-disabled employees.
- **Increased sales.** Friends and family members of an employee with a disability are all potential customers. The employee can help spread the word about your products within this community.

² Disabilities to Possibilities. A guide to hiring, training retaining people with disabilities". 2007. Link-up Employment Services. p1-14.

Good for Your Business

"Beware of missing chances;
otherwise it may be altogether
too late some day."

Franz Liszt

Hiring a person with a disability – Why is it good for my business?

Ontario Lieutenant-Governor David Onley has noted that people with disabilities make up 15.5% of Ontario's population. When you consider their immediate family members, this means that more than 50% of Ontarians either have a disability themselves or have a close family member with a disability.

Is this significant to your business? Yes. It means people with disabilities and their families are the majority of consumers in Ontario.

From an economic viewpoint, it makes sense to seriously consider hiring employees with disabilities.

SCENARIO

Gwen, who is profoundly hard of hearing, recalls her frustrating job search after graduating from university. She finally landed a job when a friend put in a word for her at his workplace.

She still works at the business 24 years later, earning a decent salary which has enabled her to purchase a home, a car and household goods. And she has had the satisfaction of being a valued part of the workforce.

John, the owner of the business, recalls that he frankly had doubts about hiring a person with a disability, but gave her a chance on her friend's recommendation. He has never regretted the decision, adding that Gwen has been a valuable employee and a significant contributor to the growth of the business over the years. He also notes the financial contribution that Gwen has made to the local economy, through the taxes she has paid and her support of local businesses.

Myths

A successful business person would not think of starting or expanding a business without having good information. Good business decisions are based on facts, not assumptions.

Yet opportunities to hire qualified individuals who are capable of performing the required duties are often overlooked because of incorrect assumptions. Misconceptions about disability are so ingrained that they are often mistaken for fact.

Here are some key misconceptions, along with the real facts.

Myth: An employee with a disability is more liable to get hurt on the job. My Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) premiums might go up.

Fact: Insurance rates are not based on whether workers have disabilities.

- Rates are based on workplace hazards and the business' accident record.
- Employees with disabilities actually tend to be more aware of safety issues in the workplace, possibly because their disability has given them a greater appreciation of health and safety.

(Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons)

Myth: Accommodations cost too much. I can't afford to hire and accommodate an employee who has a disability.

Fact: Many basic accommodations cost little or nothing.

For example:

- An employee with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) requested a weekly TO DO list from her manager to help her prioritize and stay on task. This enabled her to be a very productive employee.
- An employee with learning difficulties due to a head injury posted visual reminders and work samples at his desk to refer to when completing complicated tasks.
- Relocating large potted plants and other bulky obstacles provided easier access for a wheelchair user throughout his workplace.

Studies show that only about 15% of employees with disabilities need accommodations that actually incur a cost. Of those, over half cost \$500 or less. And only 3 out of 100 employees with disabilities required accommodations costing more than \$1,000.³

Myth: Employees who have a disability are less productive and absent more often than other staff.

Fact: Studies show:

- 90% of employees with disabilities rated average or better on job performance than their co-workers.
- 86% of employees with disabilities rated average or better on attendance.⁴

Myth: Someone will always have to help “them”.

Fact: Not true. Most employees with disabilities have adapted to their disability. With accommodations (if needed) and proper training on the job, individuals with disabilities can work unaided.⁵

Myth: I can’t discipline or fire an employee with a disability. I might be accused of discrimination.

Fact: Unsatisfactory performance or behaviour is handled in the same manner for all employees.⁶

Myth: You have to be careful when talking to a person with a disability because “they” get upset if you use the wrong word.

Fact: Treat all employees with the same respect and dignity, as you would like to be treated yourself.

Myth: Persons with disabilities don’t have the education I need.

Fact:

- More than half of individuals with disabilities have high school diplomas and over a third have post-secondary education.
- Individuals do not expect to be hired for a position that requires skills that they do not have.⁷

³ Disabilities to Possibilities. A guide to hiring, training retaining people with disabilities”. 2007. Link-up Employment Services. p1-11.

⁴ Ibid. p.1-14.

⁵ Premier’s Council on the Status of Disabled Persons <http://www.gnb.ca/0048/index-e.asp>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

What is a Disability?

“You don't have to be disabled to
be different because everybody is
different.”

Kim Peek

*Laurence Kim Peek was the inspiration for the
character of Raymond Babbitt, played by
Dustin Hoffman in the 1988 Oscar-winning
movie Rain Man.*

Visible and Non-visible Disabilities

When people think of disability, they often think of wheelchairs, ramps or white canes - devices that readily identify a person with a disability. It's obvious when a person has an amputation, paralysis, lack of physical co-ordination or a speech impediment.

Some disabilities are not as obvious or they may occur sporadically. These 'invisible' disabilities include:

- Mental health conditions such as depression or bipolar disorder.
- Cognitive or intellectual conditions such as learning disabilities, Down Syndrome or Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- Physical conditions such as multiple sclerosis, diabetes, epilepsy, severe allergies or heart conditions.

The degree of disability varies from person to person. One person may fully recover from a mild stroke while someone else may experience paralysis down one side of his or her body and require a much longer recovery time.

A disability can happen to anyone at any time. Some people are born with a disability while for others it may result from illness or accident. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can occur after a traumatic experience such as a death of a family member or an accident. Disabilities may develop as a person ages. In fact, employees in your current workforce may develop a disability or medical condition as they age.

Definition of Disability

The Ontario government's definition includes both visible and invisible disabilities:

- Physical disability or disfigurement,
- Developmental disability,
- A learning disability, or one related to understanding or using symbols or spoken language, or
- A mental disorder.

Martin has been employed by a small non-profit agency for fifteen years, conducting counselling sessions with adults who have addictions. Over time, Martin developed a condition that has caused his eyesight to deteriorate, making it more difficult to read documents and write reports. Martin felt that if he didn't get some kind of help, he would not be able to continue doing his job. He was afraid to discuss this with his supervisor for fear of losing his job.

*Martin contacted the **One Voice Network**, who connected him with an employment service provider. As a first step, the employment service provider referred Martin to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) for a vision assessment. The CNIB recommended specialized software that would enable Martin to read his computer monitor more comfortably.*

When Martin felt ready to talk with his employer about the situation, the employment service provider supported him by attending the meeting. Although Martin was considered a valuable staff member, the cost of the accommodation would cause financial hardship for the non-profit agency.

The employment service provider suggested contacting the Ontario Disability Support Program, Employment Supports (ODSP) to inquire if Martin qualified for financial assistance to purchase the software. Where a person is at risk of losing a job because of disability, ODSP will review the case to see if financial assistance would, in fact, help the person retain employment. Martin provided the ODSP Employment Supports program with a letter from his employer confirming the financial hardship this purchase would cause. Martin was deemed to be eligible to receive assistance with the purchase of the required software. This accommodation allowed Martin to continue his work, providing a win-win for employee and employer.

Your Workplace

"Disability is all about adaptability."
Unknown

Understanding Barriers

A barrier is any visible or non-visible obstacle that keeps a person from participating fully in the workplace.

The challenges faced by people are often caused more by preventable barriers than by the disability itself.

Barriers fall into several categories:

- Attitudinal
- Systemic
- Physical and architectural
- Communication and information
- Technology

Attitudinal Barriers

While an employer may agree that everyone should be able to access employment opportunities, many people have hidden reservations or biases or inaccurate beliefs that can dissuade them from seriously considering an applicant with a disability. Doubts can stem from misconceptions about productivity, safety and fitting in with the rest of the staff.

Co-workers' attitudes can also make it difficult for an employee to remain successfully employed. They may think it is too much work to try to accommodate and work with an employee who has a disability. This can make the employer feel that it is less troublesome to hire a non-disabled person. For example, people may avoid individuals with speech impediments due to the extra time and patience it takes to understand what is being communicated.

Systemic Barriers

"Systemic" refers to the policies and practices (the "rules") that an employer has in place for staff to follow. Some policies or procedures pose a barrier for some persons. For example:

- refusing to adjust break times to allow for an individual to administer insulin to control their diabetes
- a hiring process that is not accessible to people with disabilities.

John has dyslexia. He has found that supervisors and co-workers sometimes mistakenly judge him as having low intelligence due to the different manner in which his brain processes information, which affects his ability to read, spell and do numerical work quickly and accurately.

When applying for his current position as Event Co-ordinator at a communications and media relations firm, John decided to disclose his learning disability before the interview, hoping that by being open he would avoid the negative attitudes experienced in past interviews when he requested more time for psychometric or other types of testing. The interviewer was open to giving John more time for his tests and providing them in written format, as John's resume and education were impressive. John was able to successfully demonstrate his expertise and was hired.

John's responsibilities involve attention to timelines, coordinating staff and accounting for a monthly budget. His manager asked John what accommodations he required to be successful, since John was the best source of information. John requested that information be presented in written format, or even better, electronically, to help him organize information and tasks in ways that are easier for him to process. He also requested a reading pen (costing as little as \$200), which reads a highlighted word out loud and gives the definition, and a text enlarger to assist in reading. He uses readily available tools such as spell check to check the accuracy of his work, lists and calendars to ensure work is done in a timely and correct order, and a quiet area to read at his own pace, without distraction, to aid in comprehension.

Simple accommodations have enabled John to perform his duties as expected, making him more confident that he is evaluated on his performance and abilities rather than his modes of communication. John is a capable and supported staff member, who in turn, is able to reach his full potential and contribute to the organization in a positive way.

Physical Barriers

Traditional building design can pose access challenges. For example, a main building entrance that has steps but no wheelchair ramp, narrow doors and hallways, or elevators too narrow for a wheelchair or scooter.

Physical barriers include designs that do not take into account the needs of different people.

- Furniture layout may prevent a wheelchair user from entering a meeting room.
- Low lighting in a foyer and elevators may make it difficult for a person with low vision to navigate safely.

Communication and Information Barriers

Giving and receiving accurate information is essential in any business. Communication barriers would include but are not limited to:

- Information that is not written or spoken in plain language.
- Sending and receiving communication in a single format i.e. phone vs. email.
- Fonts that are too small or contrast that is too low for people with low vision.
- Websites not designed with various abilities in mind or compatible with assistive device software.
- Signs that are not clear or easily understood.

Technology Barriers

Modern technology has the potential to help people with disabilities, but it can also present barriers. Potential technology barriers should be considered and prevented where possible.

Systems designed to receive and/or deliver information, such as websites, software applications and telecommunication systems, should ensure equal access for everyone and should support communication in a manner that takes disabilities into account. Technology that presents a barrier would include:

- Websites that do not support screen-reading software for people who are vision impaired or illiterate.
- Touch screen panels that do not support text to speech software, making them inaccessible to someone who is blind.

The lack of technology can also be a barrier for some people. Information given verbally should also be sent by email or text messaging so that employees with hearing loss will be included in the communication.

Working Towards Inclusiveness

The thought of trying to make your small business barrier-free and inclusive may seem overwhelming. However, you may already be using resources that make your organization inclusive and accessible and just don't realize it.

Workplace assessments

A workplace assessment is a review of various aspects of a business to determine where employment barriers exist. Your **One Voice Network** service provider can assist with this. For more information, visit the **One Voice Network** website www.onevoicenetwork.ca and browse the accessibility checklists.

A major plus in using and implementing an accessibility checklist is that your employees, visitors, customers - everyone - benefits when you create an inclusive environment.

A full accessibility audit is probably unnecessary when you are considering hiring a person with a disability for the first time. What you will need to do is to familiarize yourself with the barriers specific to that kind of disability. Your **One Voice Network** service provider can help determine whether any of these barriers can be removed, or whether the prospective employee will require other accommodations. See the Accommodations chapter elsewhere in this guide for further information.

Future plans to expand or relocate?

If you plan to expand or renovate your workplace to accommodate a growing business, that is an ideal opportunity to improve accessibility. It is less costly to build accessibility features into your renovation plans than to have to retrofit later.

If your business will be moving to larger premises, take accessibility into account when looking at potential locations. Before signing a lease or purchase contract, ask about having accessibility built in. Moving a business is costly and time-consuming. It makes sense to include accessibility when making plans to relocate the business.

The Recruiting Process

“For success, attitude is equally as
important as ability.”

Harry F. Banks

The Recruiting Process

When your business needs to fill a position, the following tips can help you broaden your search and be inclusive in reaching more candidates.

Writing the job description

A job description includes both essential and non-essential duties of a position. Knowing which duties are essential helps when assessing a candidate's suitability for a job.

- An essential duty is one that is critical to fulfilling the purpose or outcome of a particular job.
- A non-essential duty is a task that the employee could do but is not considered critical to the job's outcome.

Identify any critical qualifications or experience necessary for this job. This is different from the qualities that would be desirable in a candidate. Ask yourself:

- How often is the duty performed?
- How much time is spent on each duty?
- How does the duty fit with the others performed in the job?
- How would the job change if the duty were removed?

Creating the job posting

To ensure that a job posting is accessible to the largest number of potential applicants, you should:

- Use a simple font, large enough to read easily
 - Verdana, Tahoma and Arial fonts are recommended
- Provide several ways for applicants to contact the company for more information, e.g.:
 - phone number
 - email address
 - website address (if your website has a 'contact us' page)
 - fax number
- Request a current resume instead of using application forms. This gives a more complete picture of candidates' skills and experience, while removing barriers for some disability types.
- If an application form is necessary, ensure it is available in alternate formats upon request (such as large print).
- State clearly that your business is an equal opportunity employer.
- State that individual accommodations will be provided to applicants selected for interviews.

Example of an equity statement

(Your company name) welcomes all applicants. Accommodations for interviews and assessments will be provided to qualified candidates upon request.

Getting the word out

In order to reach this labour pool of qualified candidates, you could connect with agencies that provide employment support services to people with disabilities. Building relationships with them will enable agency staff to understand your needs.

Service providers located through the **One Voice Network** will provide you with pre-screened qualified candidates and support during the interview, hiring and training process, if required, at no cost to you.

Representatives from these organizations can also support you in the development of your job posting.

The Interview

Getting ready for the interview

Whether or not a job applicant discloses a disability ahead of time, being prepared will help ensure a comfortable interview environment.

- When contacting candidates selected for an interview, ask if they have any accommodation needs for the interview.
- Employers are obliged to provide reasonable accommodations to any candidate. Some examples are:
 - Candidates using a computer to do a test as opposed to hand written
 - Providing a test in large font
 - Additional time to write a test
 - A quiet room for the interview.

Bob has difficulty comprehending written information. Applying for a position involving janitorial duties, he was told that a written test was required before meeting the interviewer.

Bob asked if he could take the test orally instead of writing it. Bob was accommodated by being given the opportunity to complete the test orally.

He successfully secured the position and has been working for the organization for five years.

THE RECRUITING PROCESS

- Train the interviewer and front-line staff greeting job candidates on how to interact with people with disabilities.

Sue, a wheelchair user, applied for a clerical position. When she arrived for an interview, the receptionist - clearly unsure of how to welcome Sue - called the manager to announce that the candidate had arrived. When the interviewer greeted Sue, he moved a reception chair to accommodate Sue's wheelchair, allowing Sue passage to the interview room.

As with any candidate, clearly understand what you can and cannot ask during an interview. The Ontario and Canadian Human Rights Commissions can provide you with questions that can and cannot be asked, along with ways to phrase questions.

Avoid questions about...

- a person's marital status;
- the nature or severity of a person's disability;
- the condition causing a disability;
- any prognosis or expectation regarding a disability;
- whether the person will need treatment or special leave because of a disability;
- a person's age;
- information about medical condition, its remission, or treatment;
- the workers' compensation history of the applicant.
- a person's religion

During the interview

Non-disabled interviewers, who do not have previous experience with disability, are often uncomfortable at the prospect of interviewing jobseekers with disabilities. This may stem from uncertainty about the appropriate things to say or do.

Jobseekers with disabilities are nervous, too. In addition to selling himself or herself as the right person for the job, there is the additional challenge of overcoming wrong assumptions about abilities and disabilities.

When greeting a candidate with an obvious disability, use common sense and courtesy.

THE RECRUITING PROCESS

Examples;

Open the door as you would with any candidate. Ensure there is room to move into the room if the person is using a cane or wheelchair.

If the candidate offers his/her left hand for a handshake, use whichever hand you have free to shake it. (It is okay to use your right hand. The person will be used to this.)

Conducting a comfortable interview is always important with any candidate. Incorporating these tips will help when interviewing candidates with disabilities:

- Sincerely ask “Is there anything we can do to make this interview more comfortable for you?”
- Make some small talk at the beginning to get past the initial nervousness (weather, traffic, etc.) Look at the person and make eye contact (even if the candidate is unable to make eye contact in return for some reason).
- If you have concerns about the person’s ability to perform the job, keep an open mind and focus on the applicant’s skills and abilities. People are creative and adapt to different ways of performing tasks. Give the candidate a chance to talk about this.
- Ask only questions that are job-related. For example, you cannot ask about health problems. However, you may ask about the person’s physical abilities if, for example, the job involves moving heavy objects.
- If the candidate has little or no work experience, perhaps there are past volunteer experiences they could discuss. Try to ask questions that will draw out responses that provide an idea of personality, capabilities and suitability for the job.
- Ensure you speak directly to the candidate, even if an interpreter or assistant accompanies him or her.
- If the candidate gives short answers or seems unsure of what you’re asking, it may be due to the disability or culture and not a sign of intelligence. Try rephrasing the question and allow time for responses.
- Avoid interrupting or finishing the candidate’s sentences.

Sometimes the appearance or mannerisms of candidates with certain disabilities may be misinterpreted, causing the interviewer to have doubts about hiring the person.

Examples;

Certain types of learning disabilities may impact a person's verbal reasoning skills. Allow extra time to hear the candidate's answers.

An individual with high functioning Autism or Aspergers Syndrome may speak intelligently but be unable to maintain eye contact or appear to fidget.

If you are forming an unfavourable opinion of a candidate, *challenge yourself*: is it a valid response to what the candidate is saying, or is it really a reaction to an aspect of his or her impairment (e.g. a facial tic, shakiness, or disfigurement)? This can help you focus on listening to the content of the candidate's answers to your questions rather than your own 'inner conversation'.

Applicant testing

- Give tests that will show how well the candidate can do the job.
- Make sure the same test and clear instructions are given to all candidates.
- Ask all candidates if they need any accommodations for the interview and any related tests ahead of time. For example, you may have to give the test verbally, or provide a computer for candidates to do the test.⁸

Assessing Suitability

When evaluating a candidate's suitability:

- Focus on skills and abilities. Ask for credentials only when necessary to do the job (e.g. electrical certification, law degree or accounting diploma).
- Assessments should measure the candidate against the essential duties of the job (e.g. a keyboarding test or physical test).
- Ask how candidates will fulfill job requirements instead of asking if they can fulfill them.

Persons with disabilities are accustomed to doing some things differently from others – don't assume a candidate can't perform a task.

You are under no obligation to hire a person with a disability who is not the best qualified candidate to perform the essential functions of the job, even with reasonable accommodation.⁹

⁸“www.ontario.ca/DontWasteTalent”

⁹“Business Takes Action. A practical guide to accommodation, accessibility and disability in Ontario”. 2009. Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, Ontario Division. p. 26.

Hiring

The *Offer of Employment* should be available in formats as identified by the candidate.

- The offer should include information that reasonable accommodations for disabilities will be provided during employment.
- As with any new employee, ask “How can I assist you to be successful in this workplace?”

Disclosure

Applicants and employees are not obligated to disclose a disability.

If a new hire (or returning employee) has disclosed and requests the disability be kept private and confidential, this must be respected. A request for confidentiality may pose challenges in managing co-workers’ perceptions that the employee is receiving special treatment. When employers create comfortable non-threatening work environments and co-worker relationships, the employee may feel less vulnerable in opening up about the disability.

When disclosure does occur, contact your **One Voice Network** service provider for advice on managing staff perceptions and any necessary awareness training.

Susan has been successfully employed by the same business for ten years. Her personal life during this time has been very busy, raising three teenage children and also caring for Susan's aging mother.

Since her mother's diagnosis with a terminal illness, the past year has left Susan physically and emotionally drained, trying to care for her family and her ailing mother while continuing to work. When her mother recently passed away, Susan experienced a deep sense of despair.

Since then, Susan has taken more sick time than usual due to her struggle with depression. She was afraid to disclose the real reason for fear of being fired. When she overheard co-workers discussing their struggles with depression, she decided to tell them about her illness. They supported her decision to speak with her supervisor, as well as to consult professional help through grief counselling.

Her supervisor consulted the Canadian Mental Health Association website to review accommodations for people with mental health problems. He also participated in an e-learning program to understand more about mental health, how it can affect the workplace and how best to support an employee experiencing a mental health problem.

As a result, Susan is now confident that she has a good support network at her workplace. She and her co-workers are more productive, take much less time off work and feel secure in knowing that their employer is supportive of their well-being.

Integration into your Workplace

“We all have a disability of some kind;
all are lacking in one way or another...

I haven't met anyone yet who isn't
handicapped in some way. So what's the
big deal? Don't hide your deformity.

Wear it like a Purple Heart.”

Georgiann Baldino

Orientation and training is needed when any new employee comes on board. When a person with a disability is hired, some planning may be needed to ensure a good start. This section discusses several considerations with respect to integrating employees with disabilities into your workplace.

Your **One Voice Network** service provider can support you, your staff and your new employee during this transition at no cost to you.

SCENARIO

Having a mentor was great at my new job! I was able to go to her and ask extra questions without feeling stupid. She let me do my job and knew that I would come find her if I needed help. She never made me feel dumb. The other people there started to ask me to teach them sign language too when they saw us at break time having fun. Now everyone is trying to learn a little bit of sign and I feel more included.

Before the First Day

If a new hire has disclosed a disability and requests accommodations or job supports, here are some strategies to work with. Open conversations and flexibility are key.

Talk with the new hire:

- Ask all new employees what they require to be successful at their job.
- Don't make assumptions. Let the employee educate you, as he or she is the expert.
- If an employee is unable to express what supports are needed, contact your **One Voice Network** service provider for advice.
- Feel free to ask questions when you don't understand or require clarification. You need to understand in order to effectively support the employee.
- Be flexible and be open to new ways of doing things when necessary.

Creating an Inclusive Work Environment

- Address any concerns staff may have around how to interact with the new employee or a co-worker returning to work with an acquired disability. Your **One Voice Network** service provider can assist you with managing perceptions and any awareness training. Let the new employee know that this training is being offered and ask if he/she would like to be present.

The outcome of the training will assist in ensuring that the employee is supported and able to perform his or her job successfully.

- Supervisors and co-workers will need to understand how to support the employee in performing his or her job well.
- Ensure that occupational health and safety rules are being met in the workplace. This may include simple things such as keeping hallways clear of boxes and keeping wastebaskets under desks instead of in the open. This simple practice makes the workplace safer for everyone.

Orientation and Training

All employees benefit from orientation when they join a new work environment. Policies and practices vary with every workplace so orientation is needed to help new employees. Here are some things to consider.

- An experienced employee may train the new employee as well as explain the workplace culture (e.g. how people work together, unwritten rules). Ideally, this person is someone comfortable working with a variety of people.
- Explain formal policies, procedures and practices.
- Informal practices (coffee and lunch breaks, washroom breaks, cleaning up in the lunchroom, etc.)
- Filling in timesheets, who to call if you're going to be absent, etc.,
- Explain job safety and workplace security procedures.
- Discuss and put into place, if necessary, a plan for evacuating the employee with a disability during a fire or other emergency drill if different from other employee emergency evacuation plans. The local fire department may be able to give advice on your evacuation plans.
- Ensure the employee knows that questions are expected and welcome as part of the learning process and that it is important to keep open lines of communication.

- Allow for adequate training time. Some training tasks may take longer depending on the employee. (e.g. if there is a communication barrier that slows down information exchange).

SCENARIO

*Andrew, who has Asperger's Syndrome, was guided in his employment search by a **One Voice Network** service provider. With the service provider's assistance in helping to prepare for the interview, he was successful in obtaining a position with a popular fast food restaurant. The service provider then worked with the employer to ensure that Andrew's job duties were appropriate for him.*

*When he began his training, the service provider assisted Andrew with one-on-one job coaching, enabling him to comfortably learn his tasks and gain confidence in his ability to do the job. The role of the **One Voice Network** job coach is to gradually decrease, and eventually withdraw, the level of support as an employee becomes more experienced. Andrew proved to be a hard worker during all of his shifts and after a period of time no longer required the job coach.*

*Several months later, the employer assigned Andrew some different tasks as part of his work duties. Andrew had difficulty completing these new tasks and became visibly upset. The employer called the **One Voice Network** service provider, who quickly came to the restaurant. The service provider identified that the new tasks involved busier shifts, as well as more interaction with customers - both of which were overwhelming for Andrew.*

At the employer's request, the service provider arranged for a local agency that supports persons with Autism and Asperger's Syndrome to provide an awareness training session for the management and staff of the restaurant. This helped them to understand that loud, fast-paced interactions are too stressful for persons with autism or Asperger's to manage effectively.

The employer now ensures that Andrew is assigned off-peak shifts when the work environment is less busy and noisy. Andrew is able to perform his duties well under these conditions and is considered a successful, valuable employee.

Building Inclusive Relationships

Successful retention of a new employee requires an open and comfortable workplace atmosphere.

- Include all new employees when staff goes for coffee or lunch or after-work events.
- Ongoing casual conversations with all staff - whether one-on-one or chance encounters in the hallway - makes people feel included and want to identify with your business.
- See the employee with a disability as a person with interests and hobbies, not “that guy with the disability.”
 - *Rob is an avid basketball fan and attends many Raptors games. He also plays wheelchair basketball every week.*
 - *Cindy enjoys knitting beautiful sweaters. Someone assists her in choosing wool colours. She is also a member of a blind theatre group and frequently has a major role in their annual productions.*
 - *Frank excels in downhill skiing and does it “his way” using adaptive ski equipment to accommodate his physical disability.*
- Employees with hidden disabilities may fear consequences (being let go or treated differently) if they disclose. It’s important to build an environment of trust and support before an employee can feel safe in disclosing.
- Respect the confidentiality of employees’ personal situations.
- Performance management should focus on performance and achievements on the job, not on a disability. Identify any training needs or areas where job modifications may be needed.
- Make sure all employees have the chance for learning and personal development.
- Retain and promote staff using the same criteria for everyone. Information about new assignments or job openings should be available to all employees.
- Policies and practices should reflect the diversity of your work place and should evolve as your workplace and the people in it change.
- Use language that focuses on a person’s ability, not their disability.

John remembers hiding his disability when he was hired full-time after finishing school. He had heard stories of people being let go from different organizations when they disclosed their disabilities. He said, "I knew I wouldn't be hired if I disclosed. It was difficult sometimes on the job because some of my co-workers would notice occasional clumsiness and make "spaz" jokes about it. Little did they know."

After three years on the job, hiding the disability was taking more and more energy. John felt he had proven himself with good performance reviews and decided it would be easier to be open about the disability. He disclosed and hoped for the best.

John's supervisor, Joe, recognized that not all staff were receptive to John's disability. He consulted with John to see how this could be managed. John and Joe held a staff meeting and addressed questions and concerns. The co-workers were then more at ease due to a better understanding of the facts.

John commented, "Thanks to my supervisor, it became a more comfortable working environment for me. I was lucky - it could so easily have gone the other way."

Workplace Accommodations

“How the problem is defined determines
the direction of the solution.”

Unknown

Work-Life Balance

Employers often negotiate arrangements with individual employees. In today's ever-changing world, employees are often stressed in meeting various demands on personal and work lives (including long rush-hour commutes for many). Such stress can impact work performance.

The smart employer recognizes the economic benefits of flexible work arrangements. Also referred to as accommodations, they can allow employees to achieve a better 'work-life balance', reducing stress levels while maximizing productivity.

Examples of everyday 'work-life balance' arrangements:

- An employer permits employees to set their own start and end times for their workday, as long as they work for 8 hours and are always present during the 'core hours' of 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. This flexibility allows employees to better accommodate childcare drop-off and pickup, transportation and personal appointments.
- An employee is allowed to work 15 minutes longer at the end of the day in lieu of 15 minutes personal prayer time during working hours.
- An employee who is a superb athlete with Olympic potential requires flexible hours to accommodate his training schedule.
- Two mothers, wishing to work part-time, share a job and take responsibility for ensuring all tasks are performed on time.
- An employee taking a night school course related to her job needs to leave work earlier on school days to get to class on time. She comes in earlier on those days to fulfil her work hours.

Accommodations

Accommodation is a way to remove barriers for someone with a disability so that they can work effectively. In most cases accommodations are inexpensive and involve workplace flexibility rather than employer costs. Workplace accommodations can be varied and include a wide range of solutions. Just like an individual's type and degree of disability varies, so does the accommodation to help them be productive in the workplace.

Accommodating Employees with Disabilities

The Ontario Human Rights Code states that where it is impossible to remove barriers in the workplace without undue hardship, alternate arrangements or 'accommodations' must be made in order to enable qualified individuals with disabilities to do their jobs successfully.

What Kinds of Accommodations can an Employee ask for?

There is no set list of reasonable accommodations to choose from. The process of finding an accommodation should be based on the employee's needs and the resources available to you, the employer. If you operate a small or medium sized business, you may not be able to provide the same type of accommodation as a large organization.¹⁰

Some employees with disabilities may require little or no workplace accommodations while others may require more.

An accommodation that meets the needs of one person with a disability may not be suitable for another. In determining what accommodations are needed, the best expert is the employee. When uncertain, ask your **One Voice Network** service provider for assistance in evaluating appropriate accommodations.

Accommodations can range from everyday office items such as a photocopier, pen and paper, "post it notes" or a magnifier to more specialized technical or assistive devices, electronic aids, software or the services of a note-taker or interpreter.

Two Words, Different Meanings

The terms 'accommodation' and 'accessibility' are sometimes used interchangeably, but they are actually two very different concepts. In order to successfully remove barriers, it is critical we understand the terminology:

Accessibility refers to how easily a product, service, environment or facility can be used by all people, within the widest range of abilities.

Accommodation, in employment, refers to an adjustment to a job or work environment that makes it possible for an individual to perform job duties. This 'adjustment' essentially provides a way around a barrier.

Note: *Accommodations* are intended to reduce or eliminate the impact of an employment barrier on a worker with a disability. *Work-life balance arrangements* are intended to maintain productivity levels by enabling employees to manage personal and work demands.

¹⁰ adapted from www.mentalhealthworks.ca/employees/faq/question9.asp

Return to Work

Experienced employees are a valuable asset to your business. Employers need to protect the investment they've put into developing their employees' knowledge and skills.

Productivity is lost when an employee requires time away from work as a result of injury or an acquired disability. Flexible accommodations help retain your investment by assisting the employee with a disability to return to work.

Who is Responsible for Employee Accommodations?

Accommodation is a shared responsibility; the employee and employer should co-operate in the process. They should exchange relevant information and look at accommodation solutions together. Your **One Voice Network** service provider can work with you through this process.

The *Ontario Human Rights Code* sets out these guidelines.

The person with a disability has a responsibility to:

- Tell the employer or union what their disability-related needs are as they relate to their job duties.
- Provide supporting information about their disability-related needs, including medical or other expert opinions where necessary.
- Participate in exploring possible accommodation solutions.

As an employer or union:

- Accept requests for accommodation from employees in good faith.
- Request only information that is required to provide the accommodation. For example: You need to know that an employee's loss of vision prevents them from using printed material, but you do not need to know the cause of the disability.
- Take an active role in examining accommodation solutions that meet individual needs. Your **One Voice Network** service provider can advise you.
- Deal with accommodation requests as quickly as possible, even if it means creating a temporary solution while a long-term one is being developed.

WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS

- Maximize confidentiality for the person seeking accommodation and be respectful of his or her dignity.
- Cover the costs of accommodations, including any medical or other expert opinion or documentation required. Your **One Voice Network** service provider can help determine whether financial support is available to help with these costs.

Undue Hardship

Employers are required by law to provide reasonable accommodation for an employee up to the point where it causes undue hardship to the employer.

The *Ontario Human Rights Code* prescribes three considerations in assessing whether an accommodation would cause undue hardship.

These are:

- cost of accommodation
- outside sources of funding, if any
- whether it affects the health and safety of the employee or others in the workplace.

It is up to the employer to provide evidence that providing an accommodation would create an undue hardship.

How disabilities can affect daily work activities and examples of workplace accommodations

This section describes disabilities that can affect a person's daily activities at work, along with examples of possible accommodations. Accommodation needs vary depending on the individual's degree of disability, the nature of the work and so on.

Agility: Difficulty bending or picking up heavy items.

- Provide a reaching tool. Cost: under \$50.
- If not an essential duty of the position, limit the picking up of heavy items. Cost: \$0.
- Provide a low stool to minimize stooping. Cost: under \$25.

Developmental: Cognitive limitations due to a developmental disability or disorder such as Down syndrome or autism.

- Provide list/checklist as guideline. Cost: \$0.
- Reporting to only one supervisor to eliminate multiple requests and confusion. Cost: \$0.
- Extra training or "job coaching" to enable memorization of routine. Cost: \$0.

Hearing: Difficulty hearing what is being said in a conversation, in a meeting or on the phone.

- To accommodate an office employee who is deaf for whom telephones are inaccessible, a free instant messaging system was installed on all computers in the department. This enabled the employee to contact colleagues directly. Cost: \$0.
- The workstation for an employee with deafness was positioned so that he could see people approaching. Cost: \$0.
- Purchasing a phone amplifier accommodated an employee with moderate hearing loss. Cost: under \$80.

Learning: Difficulty learning because of a condition such as an attention deficit, hyperactivity or dyslexia.

- For an employee with a learning disability, a weekly 'check-in' meeting with his manager was used as an accommodation tool to provide positive reinforcement, to review tasks which were improving and those which needed more attention, and to discuss training needs. Cost: \$0.

WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS

- For an employee who has dyslexia, provide extra time to process written materials in a quiet area. Cost: \$0.

Memory: Limited in activities due to periods of confusion or difficulty remembering things (e.g. as the result of a brain injury).

- For an employee with memory difficulties, desk filing systems and a generous supply of post it notes were provided to allow her to organize her desk in her own way. This allowed her to post reminders to herself and file things in order of priority when indicated to her. Cost: under \$25.
- Provide an agenda/calendar with checklists. Cost: under \$10.

Mental Illness: Limited in the activities that one can perform due to the presence of an emotional, psychological or psychiatric condition, such as a phobia, depression, schizophrenia, or an alcohol or drug addiction.

- An employee with an illness requiring long-term medication requires occasional short periods of accommodation to adjust to changes in dosage or treatment. Cost: \$0.

Mobility: Difficulty walking, using stairs or standing for long periods.

- Provide high stool if position requires standing (possibly with wheels). Cost: under \$50.

Pain: Limited in activities due to constant pain, or pain that reoccurs in situations such as prolonged sitting at a desk.

- May require frequent short breaks to move around instead of the normal break routine. Cost: \$0.
- For carpal tunnel syndrome – provide ergonomically adapted key board and mouse. Cost: up to \$150 for keyboard, up to \$75 for mouse.

Speech: Difficulty speaking or being understood

- Could use a short message service (SMS) implemented on a personal communication device such as a cell phone or blackberry. Cost: up to \$20 per month.
- Employee could use email to send clear communications.

Vision: Difficulty reading ordinary print or emails.

- For an employee with a visual disability who works with blue prints, an 8x11 inch magnifier was provided to him to hold over the documents at his desk. Colleagues would also use the photo copier to enlarge documents before submitting them to him for approval. Cost: under \$10.
- For an employee with a visual disability working in a kitchen environment, a toolbox labelled with his name in large print was used to hold his own kitchen and chef knives and other chef utensils required for his job duties. The toolbox enabled him to assume responsibility for the proper storage and sanitization of his instruments and did not require him to cross the kitchen area at peak busy times to locate his personal work tools. Cost: under \$20.

Visit the **One Voice Network** website at www.onevoicenetwork.ca to find out more about assistive devices and where they can be purchased.

Employer Incentives

"Label jars ... not people."
Unknown

Employer Incentives

Various government programs are in place to assist individuals with disabilities to prepare for and obtain employment. These initiatives offer various incentives to employers to encourage them to hire and train persons with disabilities who face barriers to employment.

The information listed in this section describes programs currently available at time of printing. Government programs may change eligibility rules or cease to exist or be replaced by newer updated initiatives. Your **One Voice Network** service provider will have up-to-date information about current government incentives for employers.

As of August 1, 2010 under the new Employment Ontario employment supports model, local Employment Ontario offices will have funds to support the hiring of job seekers with disabilities at a local level. Employers should contact their local Employment Service Centre for details.

*Government funded employer incentives, like any program, require accountability and the paperwork that goes along with that. Your **One Voice Network** service provider can assist with the formal process of applying for funding to employ and train job seekers with disabilities.*

1. Opportunities Fund for Application Information for Organizations and Employers

The Opportunities Fund is a program designed to help people with disabilities prepare for and obtain employment or self-employment. It also assists people to develop the skills they need to keep a new job.

The Opportunities Fund can assist employers in the private sector with financial supports to help people with disabilities overcome the barriers they may face as they enter the job market.

To be eligible, an individual must:

- Self-identify as having disability.
- Be unemployed.
- Be legally entitled to work in Canada.
- Be in need of assistance to prepare to enter the job market, to find a job, to get a job or become self-employed.
- Not have received Employment Insurance benefits within the last 36 months (or maternity/parental benefits within 60 months).

Your **One Voice Network** service provider can help determine if your potential employee is eligible for a wage subsidy.

Options available to employers and organizations under the Opportunities Fund

- The provision of a wage subsidy.
- Payment for skills training/education and associated materials.
- Payment for work-related adaptive devices.

Community Coordinator Project

- Funding for this program is currently being administered by the Ontario March of Dimes (OMOD).
- Ontario March of Dimes can assist employers with the following:
 - Direct Placement
 - Direct Placement with a wage subsidy
 - Work Experience
 - Skills for Employment

How to apply

For more information or to apply for funding to promote the employability of job seekers with disabilities in your community, call the toll-free number 1-866-607-1336 or visit your local Service Canada Centre.

2. Service Canada - Skills Link

The Skills Link program aims to foster an environment in which young Canadians can obtain valuable employment skills by providing employers with funding to hire and train individuals who face barriers to employment.

These barriers can be the result of disability. The program also targets youth from single parent families, Aboriginal youth, recent immigrants, youth living in rural and remote areas and high school dropouts.

Eligible employers include businesses (including small and medium) and not-for-profit organizations.

Potential employees must be:

- 15 to 30 years of age.
- In need of assistance to overcome barriers to employment
- out of school.
- Canadian citizens, permanent residents, or individuals with refugee status.
- Legally entitled to work according to provincial/territorial legislation and regulations.
- Not collecting Employment Insurance benefits.

For More Information:

<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/epblyi/yep/newprog/skillslink.shtml>

Or contact your local Service Canada centre.

Terminating Employment

“The only disability in life is a
bad attitude.”

Scott Hamilton

Terminating Employment

If you have any concerns about the work performance of an employee with a disability, proactively contact your **One Voice Network** service provider for advice and creative attempts to resolve the situation. Your **One Voice Network** service provider may be able to investigate if performance can be improved. For example, a different approach to training or coaching may give the employee a clearer understanding of the expected performance goals.

Should an employee with a disability continue to inadequately perform the job duties even with reasonable appropriate accommodations, you may feel there is nothing more you can do. Your **One Voice Network** service provider can guide you through the termination process.

The procedure for dismissing an employee with a disability is the same as for any other employee:

- Document your actions and make sure you can back them up, based on current legislation.
- Keep records, have employees discuss concerns and document responses.
- Make sure you have considered all options in looking for ways to support employees.
- Work with your **One Voice Network** service provider throughout the process.
- If necessary, consult with legal advisors concerning laws that apply to you and your workplace.

(Adapted from www.accesson.ca)

SCENARIO

Jack is a young man with learning disabilities. He was hired by a large organization with responsibilities to assist with re-stocking shelves and displays as well as provide customer service assistance. His role was limited to one particular area of the work environment. After a short while, one of the department managers began to express dissatisfaction at Jack's quality of work and was lobbying for his dismissal. The store manager consulted a service provider and a job coach was brought in to assist Jack in understanding his role, employer procedures and workplace expectations. He was provided with techniques and tools to stay on task. With this intervention, Jack is still working today and he is the first employee the employer schedules when managers from the corporate office schedule a visit at that store.

Discrimination, Human Rights and Disabilities

“A person may have a disability, but it is others who create handicaps through their attitudes.”

*Lieutenant Governor,
David Onley*

Three laws you need to know about as an Employer

1. The Ontario Human Rights Code (“The Code”)

The Code recognizes the dignity and worth of every person in Ontario. It provides for equal rights and opportunities, equal treatment in employment and freedom from discrimination.

What the Code means in your workplace...

- Employees with disabilities may require alternate arrangements or ‘accommodations’ to enable them to do their job. Employers and unions have a legal obligation to accommodate their needs.
- For more information see the Accommodations section of this guide.

2. Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001

While this Act applies mainly to the public sector, it also aims to improve accessibility in private business:

- Provincial and municipal government offices must consider accessibility when buying goods and services. This can impact private businesses that supply goods and services to government.
- Municipalities were given additional powers that may affect private business. For example, before issuing or renewing a license, a municipality may require a business to become more accessible.

3. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

The AODA aims to make goods and services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings and premises accessible to all Ontarians.

This will be done by developing and enforcing accessibility standards. Accessibility Standards are the rules that Ontario businesses will have to follow to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility.

How will the AODA impact small business?

Each standard will outline who is covered by the standard and when they will need to comply. The requirements and timelines may be different for different types and sizes of businesses.

Once a standard becomes law, all businesses identified in the standard must comply within the timelines that have been set out.

The 5 Key Areas covered by the AODA:

Accessibility standards are being developed in the following key areas. At time of printing, it is not known when standards for the first four areas will come into effect.

- 1) **Employment.** The objective of the Employment Accessibility Standards (EAS) is to facilitate the achievement of accessible employment for Ontarians with disabilities. Proposed standards relating to employee-employer relationships could cover recruitment, hiring, retention policies and other practices.
- 2) **Buildings and Other Structures.** Proposed standards for access to buildings and outdoor spaces are expected to include things like counter height, aisle width, door width, parking and signs.
- 3) **Information and Communications.** Standards will be developed to address the removal of barriers to information access. They could cover the manner in which information is available, such as in person, or through print, a website or other means.
- 4) **Public Transportation.** Many people with disabilities rely on public transportation for commuting to work and other activities in daily life. Proposed standards will address making public transportation more accessible.
- 5) **Customer Service.** The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service came into effect for the public sector on January 1, 2010. Organizations in the private sector, including non-profit, must comply by January 1, 2012:
 - Organizations with 20 or more employees must document in writing their policies, practices and procedures for providing accessible customer service and make those documents available to anyone who requests them.
 - Organizations with less than 20 employees must comply with the standards, but do not have to document their policies, practices and procedures in writing.

Visit www.onevoicenetwork.ca for more information.

Resources

“You can’t solve a problem with
the same kind of thinking
that created it.”

Albert Einstein

One Voice Network Service Provider Links

AURORA

**Community Living Aurora
Newmarket District**
www.clnad.com

Rehabilitation Network Canada
www.rehabnetwork.ca/main.html

BRADFORD, WEST GWILLIMBURY

**South Simcoe Community
Information Centre**
www.contactsouthsimcoe.ca

EAST GWILLIMBURY

Job Skills
www.jobskills.org

KESWICK

Community Living Georgina
www.communitylivinggeorgina.com
Job Skills
www.jobskills.org

MARKHAM

Community Living York South
www.communitylivingyorksouth.ca

Corbrook
www.corbrook.net

Job Skills
www.jobskills.org

Meta Centre
www.metacentre.ca

Seneca College Work on Track
www.senecac.on.ca/counselling/wot/

MOUNT ALBERT

Seneca College
www.senecac.on.ca

NEWMARKET

Seneca College
www.senecac.on.ca

Ontario March of Dimes
www.marchofdimes.ca

NOBLETON

Seneca College
www.senecac.on.ca

RICHMOND HILL

Community Living York South
www.communitylivingyorksouth.ca

Corbrook
www.corbrook.net

Meta Centre
www.metacentre.ca

Ontario March of Dimes
www.marchofdimes.ca
vpi Inc
www.vpi-inc.com

YMCA of Greater Toronto
www.ymcagta.org

STOUFFVILLE

York Region District School Board
www.yorkworks.ca

SUTTON

Community Living Georgina
www.communitylivinggeorgina.com
York Region District School Board
www.yorkworks.ca

THORNHILL

Academy of Learning
www.academyoflearning.com

VAUGHAN

Community Living York South
www.communitylivingyorksouth.ca

Corbrook
www.corbrook.net

COSTI
www.costi.org

Meta Centre
www.metacentre.ca

Seneca College
www.senecac.on.ca

Toronto District School Board
www.next-steps.ca

YORK REGION

Ability Management Services
abilityservices@sympatico.ca

Canadian Hearing Society
www.chs.ca

Canadian Mental Health Association
www.cmha-yr.on.ca

Learning Disabilities Association
www.ldayr.org

Link Up
www.linkup.ca

Northern Light Canada Inc.
www.northernlightscanada.ca

The Career Connection
www.thecareerconnection.ca

JVS
www.jvstoronto.org

Appendix

“The pessimist sees difficulty in
every opportunity.
The optimist sees opportunity in
every difficulty.”
Winston Churchill

Universal Symbols of Accessibility

The following symbols can be used to promote and publicize accessibility of places, programs and other activities for people with various disabilities.



International Symbol of Accessibility (ISA)

The wheelchair symbol should be used only to indicate access for individuals with limited mobility, including wheelchair users (e.g. to indicate an accessible entrance, bathroom or a phone lowered for wheelchair users).



Braille Symbol

This symbol indicates that printed matter is available in Braille, including exhibition labelling, publications and signage.



Accessible Print

Indicates that large print versions of books, pamphlets, guides or programs are available. You may also use the symbol on conference or membership forms to indicate that print materials may be provided in large print.



Assistive Listening Systems

This symbol is used to indicate that assistive listening systems are available for the event. The systems may include infrared, loop and FM systems.



Sign Language Interpretation

This symbol indicates that Sign Language Interpretation is provided for a lecture, meeting, performance, conference or other program.



Closed Captioning (CC)

This symbol indicates that a television program, DVD or videotape is closed captioned for deaf or hard of hearing people (and others).

York Region Statistics

York Region consists of nine municipalities, covering 1,776 square kilometres from Steeles Avenue in the south to Lake Simcoe and Holland Marsh in the north. The region is made up of the diverse communities of:

- Town of Aurora
- Town of East Gwillimbury
- Town of Georgina
- King Township
- Town of Markham
- Town of Newmarket
- Town of Richmond Hill
- City of Vaughan
- Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

With a population of over one million, York Region has become one of Canada's fastest growing municipalities. It is the third most populated municipality in the GTA and Canada's sixth largest municipality.

York Region's workforce of 500,000 is the third largest in Ontario, and is projected to grow to 786,000 by the year 2031. Full-time employees represent 78% of the workforce and 22% are part-time. Employment growth in recent years has seen an increase in service-oriented employment and the emergence of a strong knowledge-based economy.¹¹

Small and medium-sized businesses are a very important part of York Region's business economy. Small businesses (less than 20 employees) make up 88% of firms, while medium-sized businesses (20 to 99 employees) account for 10% of the firms in York Region.¹²

Adults with disabilities aged 25 to 54 years have a much higher unemployment rate (over 50% in Ontario) than those without disabilities.¹³ In York Region, there are reportedly more than 53,000 persons living with a disability who are of working age.¹⁴ This means there is a huge untapped pool of workers who have abilities to bring to the local labour market.

¹¹ Workforce Planning Board of York Region and Bradford West Gwillimbury 2010 Tomorrow's, Opportunities and Priorities Report

¹² IBID

¹³ Hon. David Onley speaking notes Canadian Hearing Society 70th Anniversary Celebration, May 19, 2010

¹⁴ TDSB Gap Analysis on Employment Accessibility – York Region and Bradford West Gwillimbury



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