



DAVID C. ONLEY INITIATIVE  
FOR EMPLOYMENT & ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

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INITIATIVE DAVID C. ONLEY  
POUR L'EMPLOI ET L'ENTREPRENEURIAT

# **JOB SEEKERS GUIDE**

**FOR**

**Students and Graduates with Disabilities**



# Job Seekers Guide

For Students and Graduates with Disabilities



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# Job Seekers Guide

## For Students and Graduates with Disabilities



## Introduction

Are you a student or job seeker with a disability who is finding it a challenge to find work, secure a placement or obtain co-op work term? Are you unsure about the process and about how to talk about your disability? Perhaps you do not have a disability, but you have a family member, classmate, colleague or friend who does. In either case, gaining an understanding of how disability intersects with employment is important in navigating your future relationships, search for work, and career.

For anyone searching for work in today's competitive job market, finding a job can be a difficult and demanding task. For a student or graduate with a disability, the job search process may bring about other distinctive challenges. These challenges affect many students in Ottawa. Some 9,400 students in the city's four post-secondary institutions registered with these schools' disability services offices during the 2017–2018 school year.

Though persons with disabilities may face some distinctive challenges, we also know that persons with disabilities are uniquely valuable to employers in several different ways. When an employer hires a person with a disability, they tap into underused talent, generate more diverse perspectives, create a workforce reflective of society, increase accessibility for all, and support the elimination of barriers.

Everyone should have an equal opportunity to participate fully in the workforce; therefore, this guidebook is intended to broaden your awareness and provide you with the information and resources you need to be more successful throughout your employment journey.

The guide will enable you to:

- Broaden your understanding of disability
- Differentiate between essential and non-essential job duties
- Recognize how disclosure and accommodation interact with employment
- Know your rights and responsibilities as stipulated in employment legislation
- Learn strategies for disclosure, interviews and job searching
- Access information about online, on-campus and community resources and supports
- Increase positive dialogue about disability on campuses and in workplaces



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## Understanding Disability

Disability is common for students in many post-secondary institutions. It is important that we have an understanding of what it means. Disability is a complex and evolving concept that covers a range of different conditions. There is no single, all-encompassing definition of disability. Disability typically means someone experiences physical, mental or sensory barriers that affect their day-to-day life. In an employment context, having a disability does not mean that someone cannot do a job. Rather, it means that the person with a disability may do the job differently than someone else. When we are able to see disability as an opportunity to remove barriers, everyone benefits.

Disability is not a static or linear concept. It can be:

- Visible or not visible
- Mild, moderate or severe
- Permanent, long-term, short-term or episodic
- Present from birth, caused by an accident or developed over time



**A visible disability** is when the nature or degree of the disability is visible to others (e.g., mobility-related impairments).

**A non-visible disability** is when the nature or degree of the disability is invisible to others (e.g., chronic fatigue syndrome, a mental health condition or a learning disability). Conditions could simply not be apparent to the unknowing eye, or the conditions might remain hidden because they are episodic (e.g., epilepsy or environmental sensitivities). Other disabilities may become apparent only through interacting with an individual; and they could take multiple interactions to notice (e.g., hearing loss or learning disabilities). Still others may never be apparent (e.g., mental health diagnoses).

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Common types of disabilities and their associated impacts on the job include:

DISABILITY TYPE	IMPACT	EXAMPLES OF MEDICAL DIAGNOSES
<b>Physical and Mobility</b>	Can affect a person's motor skills and may require the use of a mobility aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cerebral Palsy</li><li>• Epilepsy</li><li>• Narcolepsy</li></ul>
<b>Sensory</b>	Can affect a person's senses: vision, hearing, smell, touch or taste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deafness</li><li>• Blindness</li><li>• Chemical Sensitivities</li></ul>
<b>Learning</b>	Can affect the way a person takes in, stores or uses information, as well as a person's oral and written language skills, reading skills, mathematics skills, organization and social skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dyslexia</li><li>• Dysgraphia</li><li>• Auditory Processing Disorder</li></ul>
<b>Mental Health</b>	Can affect a person's mental alertness, concentration, organization and anxiety level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anxiety Disorders</li><li>• Depression</li><li>• Post-traumatic Stress Disorder</li><li>• Obsessive Compulsive Disorder</li><li>• Bipolar Disorder</li><li>• Schizophrenia</li></ul>
<b>Intellectual and Developmental</b>	Can affect a person's ability to learn and use information, creating limitations in reasoning, learning and problem solving, as well as social and practical skill-building known as adaptive behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Autism Spectrum Disorder</li><li>• Down Syndrome</li><li>• Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder</li></ul>

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People with disabilities represent a significant portion of our population. They include students in our post-secondary institutions and our current and future workforce. It is valuable to learn about visible and non-visible disabilities, challenge any personal biases and improve our understanding of how we can promote an inclusive and accessible future.

According to research conducted by the David C. Onley Initiative in 2019, 52% of students registered with disability service offices at Ottawa's four post-secondary schools had a primary diagnosis of either a learning disability or a mental illness. This finding tells us that students and graduates with disabilities entering the workforce have disabilities that we cannot necessarily see. Employers need to be aware of this fact and need to learn how to accommodate this need.

### Sources:

*Discover Ability: Business, Roadmap* — <https://discoverability.network/business/roadmap>

*Ontario Human Rights Commission: 2. What is disability?* — [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-ableism-and-discrimination-based-disability/2-what-disability](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-ableism-and-discrimination-based-disability/2-what-disability)



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### Essential vs. Non-Essential Duties

Every job has essential and non-essential duties. An inclusive employer is able to differentiate between the essential requirements of the job and those that are flexible or optional. In the event that they do not know the difference, look at the following definitions so you can identify these duties during your job search.

- Essential duties are critical and fundamental responsibilities of the position. You must be able to perform these functions with or without reasonable accommodation. Ask yourself:
  - What are the parts of the job that are required and can be modified?
- A duty is considered essential if one of the following is true:
  - The position exists to perform the duty.
  - A limited number of employees can perform the duty.
  - The duty is highly specialized.
- Non-essential duties are performed either very infrequently or could be performed by others without altering the underlying reason the job exists. Ask yourself:
  - Are there non-essential parts of the job that can be removed?



**Remember, disclosure is not always necessary if the disability you have has no effect on the duties of the role you are applying for or are currently working in. However, having an understanding of what the essential and non-essential duties of a job are will help you decide whether or not you would like to disclose your disability and ask for accommodations.**

#### Sources:

Hire for Talent: Toolkit, Recruitment, How to Write Inclusive Job Descriptions — [www.hirefortalent.ca/main/toolkit/recruitment/51-how-to-write-inclusive-job-descriptions](http://www.hirefortalent.ca/main/toolkit/recruitment/51-how-to-write-inclusive-job-descriptions)

Ontario Human Rights Commission: 2. Setting job requirements — [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/2-setting-job-requirements](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/2-setting-job-requirements)

Job Accommodation Network: Job Description Topics — <https://askjan.org/topics/jobdesc.cfm>

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## Disclosure

Disclosure is the act of making your disability known to others. For many individuals, it is normal to experience different concerns or questions about the disclosure of your disability. It can be useful to take the time to consider what disclosure might look like for you, as there are many factors to consider. First and foremost, it is essential to understand these two facts:

- **Disclosure is an important and personal choice.** You are the owner of the decision. Deciding if, how and when you would like to disclose is completely up to you. You are encouraged not to feel pressured from outside sources; make the decision that is best suited to you.
- **Disclosure is not a one-size-fits-all concept.** There is no one right way or right time to disclose your disability. When, what and how you disclose is entirely based on your individual circumstance. Disclosure also looks completely different for every individual, employer and job opportunity. Always use your discretion based on your current situation.

## Whether to Disclose

When deciding whether or not to disclose your disability, consider how your disability affects your ability to perform the job. You may also consider whether or not you need adjustments to be made to perform the essential duties of the job. Remember, the choice to disclose is yours and self-reflection can be helpful as you make your decision.

When making your disclosure decision, consider how you might answer these questions:

- Is your disability visible or non-visible? If your disability is visible, you may feel inclined to address it head on; however, if it is not visible, you may decide not to disclose at all.
- Do you know the essential requirements of the job?
- Will your disability impact your ability to perform in an interview and complete the essential elements of the job?
- Will you need accommodations on the job to be successful?
- Without accommodations in the workplace, is your safety or the safety of others at risk?
- Are you confident in framing your disability as an asset and articulating your strengths to an employer?
- Have you disclosed your disability in the past? What was the reaction you received? How did that make you feel? What did you learn?
- Do you think your employer will understand your disability? If not, are you prepared to explain it?
- What do you know about this employer's policies and experiences regarding people with disabilities?
- Have you practiced disclosing your disability? Have you created a script to help you practice?
- Will disclosing your disability help you reach your goal of getting work?



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If you were not able to answer these questions, take some time to think more about them. Consider reaching out to someone to discuss them, such as a professional at your campus career services or disability office.

### When to Disclose

The following chart helps you make decisions about disclosing your disability at different times throughout the job search process.

TIME OF DISCLOSURE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER	RECOMMENDED USE
<b>On a resume, cover letter or job application</b>	May allow you to be considered for a job under a company's employment equity program.	Employer may make inappropriate assumptions that impact their decision to hire you. You may have uncertainty about the reasons for not being selected, or may not have the opportunity to explain or describe your accommodation needs.	Can you present information about your disability in a succinct way? Do you know whether the company has a good reputation for employment equity?	Recommended when your disability is seen as an advantage (i.e., when an employment equity program is in place)
<b>Before an interview</b>	If you need an accommodation, both you and the employer will be better prepared for the interview.	Employer may make inappropriate assumptions that impact their decision to hire you.	Do you need an accommodation in order to be successful in your interview?	Recommended when you require an accommodation for your interview.
<b>During an interview</b>	Allows you to highlight your skills and qualifications, address disability concerns and questions directly, and demonstrate to the employer that you are able to do the job. Enables you to raise relevant job, training and accommodation issues in a positive way.	Employer may focus on your disability rather than on your ability to do the job or may make inappropriate assumptions that impact their decision to hire you. You will need to be an effective advocate at a stressful time. You may feel defensive and have to deal with prejudices on the part of the interviewers.	Can you present your strengths and needs for accommodations in a clear, positive way? Do you understand how your skills, strengths and accommodation requirements relate to the demands of the job?	Recommended when you are able to confidently focus on your skills and abilities, and comfortable explaining your disability needs.

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<b>At time of job offer</b>	<p>Gives you the opportunity to discuss your accommodation needs and find out who the best person to approach is.</p> <p>Allows for more appropriate onboarding.</p> <p>Allows the employer to decide if your disability impacts health and safety issues.</p>	<p>Employer may react poorly or feel you should have told them before the hiring decision was made.</p> <p>Employer may withdraw job offer if your accommodation needs are seen as complex or onerous.</p>	<p>Do you know enough about the job duties to know if you will require accommodation?</p> <p>Do you know your legal rights under these circumstances?</p>	<p>Recommended when your disability is not visible, and you do not require any accommodations</p> <p>In this case, you could also choose not to disclose your disability.</p>
<b>After you start work</b>	<p>Allows you to prove your capabilities on the job before disclosing.</p> <p>Allows you to have a feel for the optimum timing and process for disclosure.</p> <p>Allows you to identify potential allies among your fellow employees.</p>	<p>You may feel nervous about what people think of you if they do not understand disability.</p> <p>You may worry that any difficulty, however minor, will be attributed to your disability.</p> <p>People may be reluctant to ask you to do things.</p> <p>It may change your work relationships.</p>	<p>When, what and whom do you tell?</p> <p>To what extent does stress influence your performance at work, and will you feel more or less stressed if you disclose?</p>	<p>Recommended if by not disclosing you experience unnecessary stress or you need accommodation to do your job</p> <p>It may also be appropriate to disclose if there are problems or concerns with your work performance or coworkers.</p>
<b>After a problem occurs</b>	<p>You have been yourself to some extent on the job.</p> <p>You have likely established some positive working relationships with your supervisor and fellow employees.</p> <p>You have a better understanding of company policies and practices.</p>	<p>You may have a performance issue at work.</p> <p>You may hurt your work relationships, since your employer or coworkers may view you as dishonest.</p> <p>You may feel guilty, which could add to your stress and damage your performance further.</p> <p>You may contribute to negative stereotypes and attitudes.</p>	<p>Can you present the necessary information at this stage and still avoid defensiveness?</p> <p>Is this the situation that led you to resign in a previous job?</p> <p>As difficulties begin to appear, should you approach your supervisor and disclose your disability? Or should you wait a while, hoping that things will smooth over?</p>	<p>Recommended if problems or concerns at work persist</p> <p>Be prepared to educate your employer and coworkers about your disability. Ask for help and rely on your support system.</p>
<b>Never</b>	<p>You will not have to explain your disability.</p> <p>Your employer and coworkers may not automatically assume work-related issues are associated with your disability.</p>	<p>Employer and coworkers will not become more aware or educated about the benefits and value of hiring and working with persons with disabilities.</p>	<p>Does disclosure of your disability have any impact on your ability to do your job?</p> <p>Would you feel more or less comfortable at work if people knew about your disability?</p>	<p>Recommended if your disability is invisible, and you do not require any accommodations</p> <p>In this case, you could choose not to disclose.</p>

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### Sources:

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario: *Transition Planning Guide for Students with Learning Disabilities* — [www.ldao.ca/wp-content/uploads/LDAO-Transition-Planning-Resource-Guide.pdf](http://www.ldao.ca/wp-content/uploads/LDAO-Transition-Planning-Resource-Guide.pdf)

Alberta Human Resources and Employment: *Employment Series for Persons with Disabilities: Tips for Job Seekers*

Algonquin College: *Be the Boss of Your Career: A Complete Guide for Students & Graduates*

## How to Disclose

Planning and preparing for your disclosure conversation can give you a sense of empowerment. If you decide to disclose your disability, you might then wonder: How will I say it? And to whom will I say it? These are great questions. Here are some steps to take:

### 1. Answer the following questions to get started:

- What strengths and abilities do you have that relate to the position you are applying for?
- What challenges or limitations do you have that are either related to the job you are applying for or the job you are doing now?
- What are the job duties that could be difficult to perform?
- Have you used strategies, tools or accommodations in the past that have enabled you to perform certain duties more successfully?



Visit the [Job Accommodation Network](https://askjan.org/a-to-z.cfm) to find out more about common limitations associated with different diagnoses.

<https://askjan.org/a-to-z.cfm>

2. Using your answers to the questions above, develop a disclosure script that frames your disability as an asset, highlights your abilities, and clearly states your limitations and needs. Use caution when speaking about your limitations. Speak about your limitations related to the job only. Here is a suggested script:

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*"I have/am (highlight your strengths/skills/abilities/qualifications relevant to the job) and can perform the essential functions of this job. But sometimes (mention your limitations) might impact my ability to (describe the duties you may have difficulty performing). I work best when (describe the specific accommodations you need to support the duties you have difficulty performing)."*

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You do not have to name the disability; however, if you feel comfortable talking about it more directly, you could say something like this:



*"Although I don't anticipate any problems, I did want to mention that I have (preferred term for your disability). I know that my (one or two strengths) will allow me to excel in this position; however, sometimes (indicate your limitations) might interfere with my ability to (describe the duties you may have difficulty performing). In the past, I have found that I can overcome this issue with (describe specific accommodations you need)."*

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Here is a complete example:



*"I am an extremely detail-oriented worker and a skilled communicator who can perform the essential functions of this job. But sometimes my limited motor skills impact my ability to type quickly. This may impact how efficient I am when taking notes, writing reports and documenting meeting minutes. I work best when I am able to use speech recognition software, such as Dragon. This accommodation worked really well for my employer and me in my last job."*

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3. Now it is time to practice!
4. Once you are comfortable, approach a trusted source, such as your manager or human resources professional. They will respect the privacy of your information and be able to direct you to the right sources if you are seeking an accommodation.
5. Request your accommodation in writing and invite your manager or human resources manager to discuss it further.
6. Be open and willing to collaborate with your employer on your accommodation needs.



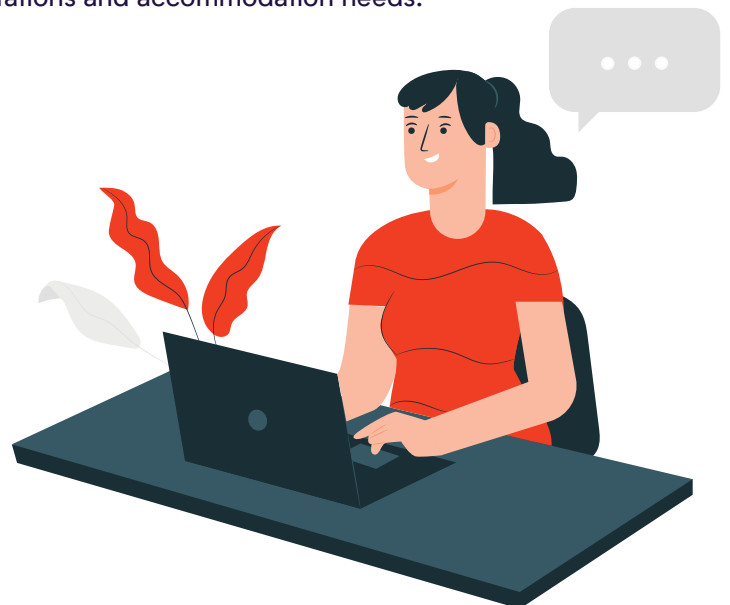
Visit the Canadian Mental Health Association’s “Navigating Disclosure: What employees need to know” for more tips on disclosing a mental health disability or concern.

Try your best not to be too stressed about the process. Your campus disability services office would be glad to help you identify your strengths, limitations and accommodation needs.

### Sources:

Carleton University, Accessible Career Transitions (ACT) Program: Disclosure Script Worksheet

University of Guelph: Creating Your Disclosure Script — [www.recruitguelph.ca/cecs/sites/uoguelph.ca/cecs/files/public/Disclosure%20Script.pdf](http://www.recruitguelph.ca/cecs/sites/uoguelph.ca/cecs/files/public/Disclosure%20Script.pdf)



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## Interviewing

The Ontario Human Rights Commission prohibits discrimination based on age, marital status, children, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability and more. The Commission also protects job seekers against unlawful questions. An employer's interview questions must be related 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 employers are permitted to 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?

### Questions employers are not permitted to 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's appointments?



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

## What you should do if you are asked an inappropriate question

Interviews are conducted sometimes by employers or employees who may not understand that certain questions are actually illegal to ask. If you are asked an inappropriate question, it may not have been intended to be offensive. In some cases, the interviewer may not have even realized it was an illegal question. In any case, you can follow some different strategies if you find yourself in this situation:

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- Answer the question directly if you are comfortable doing so. Be sure not to share more information than you need to.
- Think about the intent behind the question. Then answer it in the context of performing the job. For example, if you are asked whether you miss a lot of work because of your disability, you could respond with “It sounds like you are wondering if I am dependable. I am very dedicated to my job. My previous manager would agree that I have had an incredible attendance record.” Try to provide concrete examples if possible.
- Ask the interviewer to clarify the meaning of the question or ask how the question applies to the job.
- Politely decline to answer.

Although the question may be inappropriate, it is important to give a professional and tactful response. The interviewer may not realize why the question is inappropriate and perceive your reaction as defensive. Reflect on the situation after the interview and decide whether or not you still feel that your values correspond with this employer or organization.

### Source:

Ontario Human Right Commission: 5. Interviewing and Making Hiring Decisions — [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/5-interviewing-and-making-hiring-decisions](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/5-interviewing-and-making-hiring-decisions)

## Disclosure and Interview Tips

Here are some strategies that will help you disclose your disability:

- **Role-play your disclosure conversations.** If you are nervous about discussing your disability, plan what you are going to say. Take the time to rehearse with a family member, support staff or close friend. You will feel more confident and prepared about what you are going to say.
- **Keep it simple.** You do not need to give all of your personal details. Decide how much you feel comfortable sharing and stick with that.
- **Do not present your disability as a weakness.** Focus on what you can do for the company. Do not let your disability stand in the way of highlighting your capabilities. You have developed unique skills as a result of meeting the challenges of your disability, such as creativity, flexibility, positive attitude, problem-solving skills and determination.
- **Focus on highlighting your skills and qualifications as they relate to the position.** Give concrete examples of how you performed your job duties in the past. This move will help the employer visualize you in the role. If you are comfortable, talk about the valuable contributions you have made in other environments.
- **Be able to identify your workplace accommodations.** The more you can tell an employer about the required accommodations, the more confident they will feel in knowing how to support you. It will also be helpful to provide examples or reflect on academic or employment accommodations you have received in the past. If

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you have resources that you can provide to help the employer gain a better understanding of your needs, leave this information with them.

- **Research the costs and funding available for any accommodations you may need.** When possible, be responsible for your individual needs by offering any software or equipment you have and need for your accommodation. Sharing this information with the employer is helpful and creates a sense of reassurance that you are prepared for your new work environment.
- **Be prepared to answer questions about your disability.** Questions are an opportunity for an employer or colleague to learn. Providing an educated and thorough answer will be an opportunity to break down perceived barriers.
- **Talk about the business case for hiring persons with disabilities.** There are strong motivations for businesses to hire employees with disabilities, which is why it is helpful to inform employers of the benefits of adding a person with a disability to their team. For example, they are diversifying their workforce, showing their commitment to employment equity, broadening perspectives, building a positive image in the community, widening their talent pool, and encouraging and improving accessibility practices for everyone.
- **Ask the right questions.** Remember that an interview is not only for the employer to interview you, but also for you to interview the employer. Informing yourself about prospective workplace environments and cultures is an important part of your job search. Pick one or two questions that you are comfortable asking and see what you can learn. See below for some ideas:



1. How flexible is your work environment for those with diverse needs?
2. Do you have resources and activities in place to promote workplace balance and well-being?
3. Do you offer a range of tools, training and technology to support people with different learning styles?
4. Do you have an accessibility policy?
5. What do inclusive hiring practices mean to your organization?
6. In what ways does your company value diversity?

### Sources:

Alberta Human Resources and Employment: *Employment Series for Persons with Disabilities: Tips for Job Seekers*

Mount Allison University, Meighen Centre: *Transition to Employment for University Graduates with Disabilities* — [www.mta.ca/uploadedFiles/Community/Student\\_services/Meighen\\_Centre/Resources/Transition/Transition%20to%20Employment%20for%20University%20Graduates%20with%20Disabilities%201.17.pdf](http://www.mta.ca/uploadedFiles/Community/Student_services/Meighen_Centre/Resources/Transition/Transition%20to%20Employment%20for%20University%20Graduates%20with%20Disabilities%201.17.pdf)

Algonquin College: *Be the Boss of Your Career: A Complete Guide for Students & Graduates*



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### Accommodations

In the interview process and the workplace itself, persons with disabilities are entitled to access the same opportunities and benefits as those who do not have disabilities. For some persons with disabilities, this right means certain adjustments may need to be made for an individual to perform the duties of their job. Any such adjustment is known as an accommodation. The accommodation process is a shared responsibility. Each person involved in it is expected to collaborate, share appropriate information and consider possible solutions—all in a sensitive, confidential and timely manner.

Employers have a legal duty to accommodate. This obligation ensures that employees who are otherwise fit to work are not unjustly excluded when workplace adjustments can be made. Employees will be most productive when given the tools they need to do their jobs.

Consider the following facts on making workplace accommodations:

- Accommodation needs vary widely from person to person. These needs may be related to the individual, the environment, the tasks or the tools needed to perform a job or task.
- An employer is not obligated to provide the exact accommodation preferred by the individual involved. However, the employer cannot decide on an accommodation without consulting the individual.
- An accommodation cannot be used to evaluate the merits of an applicant during candidate selection.
- An accommodation may be needed at any stage in the employment relationship, including pre-employment (testing, interviews), training, employment and evaluating for promotion.
- An employee's probationary period should start after the employee has been accommodated.

According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, employers and employees have specific roles and responsibilities under the duty to accommodate.

### Employee Responsibilities



**A person with a disability is not required to disclose their disability if they can perform their work without an accommodation and they do not pose a danger at work to themselves or others.**

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**A person with a disability who requests an accommodation at work is required to:**

- Make their accommodation needs known to the employer, preferably in writing.
- Answer questions or provide information to their employer on their limitations, which may include information or documentation from a health care provider.
- Discuss potential accommodation solutions with their employer.
- Collaborate with experts when assistance is needed to manage the accommodation process.
- Work with their employer to manage the accommodation process.
- Meet performance standards and job requirements once accommodations are put in place.
- Discuss disability and associated needs only with those who need to know.

## Employer Responsibilities

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**An employer is allowed to ask questions about an employee's ability to perform the functions of the job, but the employer does not have the right to ask for specific information about the employee's disability such as its name or diagnosis.**

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Whenever possible, an employer must attempt to provide needed accommodations without requesting information not absolutely necessary. Typically, the employer does not have the right to have an employee's confidential information, unless the information clearly relates to the accommodation being requested. Such information also may be required in cases in which the employee's needs are complex or unclear and more information is needed to make a proper assessment.

Employers are also required to:

- Be aware that a person may need an accommodation even if they have not requested one.
- Accept a person's request in good faith.
- Obtain the opinion of an expert or further advice if needed.
- Examine alternative approaches and possible accommodations solutions.
- Keep a record of accommodation requests and document what actions were taken.

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- Maintain confidentiality and respect the dignity of the person requesting accommodation.
- Request only information related to the nature of the limitation mentioned.
- Process and implement accommodation requests in a timely manner.
- Cover the cost of any medical information or documentation being requested.

### Undue Hardship

The Ontario Human Rights Commission states that an employer has an obligation to accommodate all disabilities up to the point of undue hardship. Three considerations are used to determine whether an accommodation would cause undue hardship: cost, outside sources of funding (if any), and health and safety regulations (if any).

#### Sources:

*Ontario Human Rights Commission: 13. Duty to Accommodate* — [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-based-mental-health-disabilities-and-addictions/13-duty-accommodate](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-based-mental-health-disabilities-and-addictions/13-duty-accommodate)

*Government of Canada: Duty to Accommodate: A General Process For Managers* — [www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/diversity-inclusion-public-service/working-government-canada-duty-accommodate-right-non-discrimination/duty-accommodate-general-process-managers.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/diversity-inclusion-public-service/working-government-canada-duty-accommodate-right-non-discrimination/duty-accommodate-general-process-managers.html)

### Understanding Your Accommodation Needs

It is a challenge to know if you need accommodations when entering into a co-op, placement or starting a new job. The challenge is especially daunting if you have limited or no work experience. You might be asking yourself, how do I know what I need? Perhaps you have recently acquired a disability, or you are simply unaware of how your disability will impact your ability to do a job. More than anyone else, you will be the first to know what you need. Talk directly with your employer to come up with solutions together.

A good starting point to understanding your needs is to reflect on the academic accommodations you may have received. How might they transfer to a workplace setting? Below you will find a resource that helps you answer that question.



#### University of Guelph's Academic Accommodations Translated into Employment Settings

[www.recruitguelph.ca/cecs/system/files/Academic%20Accommodations%20translated%20into%20the%20Workplace\\_AODA\\_MF.pdf](http://www.recruitguelph.ca/cecs/system/files/Academic%20Accommodations%20translated%20into%20the%20Workplace_AODA_MF.pdf)

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Understanding your accommodation needs is a learning experience for you and your employer. Remember, you may not know what you need to be successful until you are doing the job. Also consider that your needs may change over time and look differently depending on requirements of each position. If you want to learn more about what accommodations you think you might need, explore the Searchable Online Accommodation Research offered by the Job Accommodation Network.



Job Accommodation Network provides a comprehensive database of key accommodation examples by disability type, limitation, work-related functions and topic.

<https://askjan.org/a-to-z.cfm>

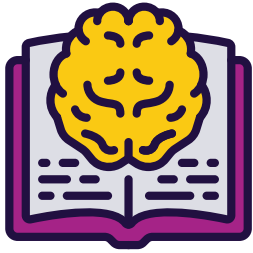
### Examples of Common Accommodations

Most accommodations are easy to introduce, involve flexibility rather than expenditures, and often end up costing very little. You may even be able to provide your own accommodation. Workplace accommodations can come in many different forms and solutions:

ACCOMMODATION FORM	ACCOMMODATION EXAMPLES
Restructure work or daily tasks	Divide larger tasks into smaller ones
Acquire or modify equipment, software or devices needed to do the job	Use computer screen magnifier, voice input or speech recognition aids, ergonomic chair
Change work locations	Use a quiet workspace or work from home
Create flexible or modified work schedules	Take advantage of flexible hours, frequent breaks, self-paced workload
Offer retraining options or job reassignment	Get assigned to a new position
Change workplace facilities to be more accessible	Benefit from an accessible door opener, improved lighting
Provide assistance through a support service or person	Use an ASL interpreter

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Perhaps you are person living with a mental illness and you are wondering how employers can accommodate your specific workplace needs. Mental Health Works provides a detailed overview of likely accommodations for someone living with a mental health condition.

[www.mentalhealthworks.ca/mental-health-accommodations](http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/mental-health-accommodations)

## Sources:

Ontario Human Rights Commission: 13. Duty to Accommodate — [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-based-mental-health-disabilities-and-addictions/13-duty-accommodate](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-based-mental-health-disabilities-and-addictions/13-duty-accommodate)

Government of Canada: Duty to Accommodate: A General Process For Managers — [www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/diversity-inclusion-public-service/working-government-canada-duty-accommodate-right-non-discrimination/duty-accommodate-general-process-managers.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/diversity-inclusion-public-service/working-government-canada-duty-accommodate-right-non-discrimination/duty-accommodate-general-process-managers.html)

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/](http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/how-do-i-hire-someone-with-a-mental-health-problem/)



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## Job Search Tips

Here are some tips to keep in mind as you continue to search for your next opportunity.

- **Maintain a positive attitude.** Some people with disabilities may fear entering or re-entering the workforce, especially if they have acquired a disability recently or they have had a negative experiences associated with their disability. If you are feeling negative about your disability or situation, this attitude can come across in your behaviour and attitude. Do your best to work on maintaining a positive outlook.
- **Seek out companies that support diverse hiring practices.** You can find out information about different organizations and their practices around the support of persons with disabilities. Try networking, conducting informational interviews, working with disability employment support agencies, and researching companies directly.

Consider the following to help you with your research:



When researching organizations, pay attention to employment equity statements on company websites and on job postings. Such statements let applicants know that this is an organization that takes employment equity seriously, and that practices are in place to accommodate applicants at each stage of the hiring process.

- **Be open-minded and create opportunities.** There are many companies that have never hired a person with a disability. If this situation applies to a company that you really want to work for, do not be afraid to reach out. Suggest to an employer the possibility of a job trial, so that you can showcase your skills and abilities on the job and they can evaluate your work performance before deciding to hire you. This move also gives you the opportunity to decide if this opportunity will be the best fit for you.
- **Connect with employment-based disability service providers.** Two heads are better than one! If you do not want to go through this process alone, enlist the help of a community service provider. Some service providers are disability-specific. They can offer programs on job search support and connect you with disability-friendly employers. Find a list in the Community Resources section.
- **Stay motivated.** Job searching can take a long time. It is easy to lose your initial hopefulness during a long search. Stay motivated by celebrating your successes, even if you have not obtained employment; any

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opportunities you have had to discuss your skills with others is an achievement. Keep track of your efforts by documenting and reviewing all that you have accomplished. This action will keep you on track. It also will enable you to evaluate whether or not there is anything more you can do.

- **Coordinate logistics.** Ensure that you have made the appropriate arrangements for transportation, recurring medical appointments, and childcare. These may or may not be formal workplace accommodations, but they may be aspects of your life that are impacted by your disability. They should be addressed prior to starting a job.
- **Identify a solid support network.** It is not always easy during the search for employment. To help you maintain your enthusiasm, identify people in your life whom you can rely on for encouragement, support and sound advice. Network with other job seekers and other persons with disabilities who have been successful in finding work. Find ways to support your networks and they will find ways to support you.

### Source:

Alberta Human Resources and Employment: *Employment Series for Persons with Disabilities: Tips for Job Seekers*



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## Resources

### Job Search

In addition to the regular job search websites, access the following resources for more information on diversity hiring.

**Canada's Best Diversity Employers** is a website that recognizes and lists employers across Canada that have exceptional workplace diversity and inclusiveness programs.

- [www.canadastop100.com/diversity](http://www.canadastop100.com/diversity)

**Career Edge** offers internships (from four to twelve months) in a variety of industries for current students and recent graduates with disabilities.

- [www.careeredge.ca/blog](http://www.careeredge.ca/blog)

**Disabilities Mentoring Day** is an annual one-day mentoring event where job-ready people with disabilities pair with companies to put their skills to use.

- <http://disabilitiesmentoringday.org>

**Discover Ability Network** is a job-matching online portal and resource that connects people with disabilities directly to Ontario employers.

- <https://discoverability.network>

**Diversity Canada** is a job-posting site dedicated to encouraging workforce diversity.

- <https://diversitycanada.com>

**Employment Accessibility Resource Network** is an employment resource for people with disabilities, employers and service providers in Ottawa and the National Capital Region.

- <https://earn-paire.ca>

**Job Opportunity Information Network** is a community-sponsored job board for persons with disabilities in Ontario.

- <http://joininfo.ca>

**Lime Connect** is for university and college students and alumni with disabilities. It matches them with top Canadian corporations that offer full-time employment, co-op employment, internships and scholarship opportunities.

- <https://www.limeconnect.com>



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**Next Billion** is a free online mentorship program. Lasting eight weeks, the program connects students with disabilities to personal mentors in the tech industry. Next Billion Social Inc., a Canadian for-profit social enterprise, sponsors the program.

- <https://nextbillion.net/about>

**Specialisterne** connects individuals on the autism spectrum with jobs in a variety of industries in Canada.

- <http://ca.specialisterne.com>

**WORKink** provides career guidance and job postings for Canadians with disabilities.

- <https://www.workink.com>

## Community Disability–Employment Resources

Once you graduate, consider enlisting the help of a community service provider. There are many disability-specific service providers who offer programs that can support you throughout your job search. Take a look at the list below. Research the different organizations' eligibility criteria and services to decide which one might be the best fit for you.

**Acclaim Ability** offers a wide range of tailor-made programs and services designed to assist individuals with disabilities in their efforts to return to work and activities of daily living.

- [www.acclaimability.com](http://www.acclaimability.com)

**Canadian Hearing Society** specializes in the unique needs of adults aged 16 and over who are Deaf or hard of hearing. The society assists them in finding jobs and succeeding at work.

- [www.chs.ca/services/services-job-seekers](http://www.chs.ca/services/services-job-seekers)

**Canadian National Institute for the Blind** “Come to Work” program connects job seekers who are blind or partially sighted with employers who want to discover the full potential of Canada’s talent.

- <https://cnib.ca/en/programs-and-services/work/im-looking-employment-come-work?region=on>

**Causeway Work Centre** is an approved Ontario Disability Supports Program service provider. It helps people with mental illness and other challenges find rewarding work and live more independently.

- [www.causewayworkcentre.org](http://www.causewayworkcentre.org)

**CVE Inc.** works with Ontario Disability Supports Program recipients and Opportunity Fund recipients to identify skills and abilities, and develop the tools required to enter the workforce confidently.

- [www.cve.ca](http://www.cve.ca)

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**Distinct Programmes Inc.** is an approved Ontario Disability Supports Program service provider. Specializing in psychiatric health issues, it helps people with disabilities find and keep satisfying jobs.

- [www.distinctprogrammes.com](http://www.distinctprogrammes.com)

**LiveWorkPlay** is an approved Ontario Disability Supports Program service provider. It supports people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, autistic persons and individuals with dual diagnosis with many facets of their lives, including employment.

- <https://liveworkplay.ca>

**March of Dimes** is an approved Ontario Disability Supports Program service provider. It helps people with disabilities achieve greater independence by providing them with job training and finding them employment.

- [www.marchofdimes.ca](http://www.marchofdimes.ca)

**Neil Squire Society** provides opportunities to people with disabilities to develop computer skills, build their employment skills and enter or re-enter the workforce.

- [www.neilsquire.ca](http://www.neilsquire.ca)

**Performance Plus Rehabilitative Care Inc.** is an approved Ontario Disability Supports Program service provider. It specializes in providing personal employment counselling services to people with physical, psychological or developmental disabilities looking to enter the workforce.

- [www.pprc.ca/en/home.aspx](http://www.pprc.ca/en/home.aspx)

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## Glossary

**Accessibility** is a general term used to describe the degree to which a product, device, service or environment is available to be used by all intended audiences. According to the Government of Ontario, there are five identified barriers to accessibility for persons with disabilities. These barriers are attitudinal, organizational or systemic, architectural or physical, information or communications, and technological.

**Sources:**

Council of Ontario Universities, *Accessible Campus: Understanding Barriers to Accessibility* — <https://accessiblecampus.ca/understanding-accessibility/what-are-the-barriers>

Ontario Public Service: *Inclusion and Diversity Blueprint* — [www.ontario.ca/page/ops-inclusion-diversity-blueprint](http://www.ontario.ca/page/ops-inclusion-diversity-blueprint)

**Disability** is a complex phenomenon that reflects the interaction between features of a person's body and mind and features of the society in which they live. A disability can occur at any time in a person's life. Some people are born with a disability. Still others develop a disability later in life. It can be permanent, temporary or episodic. Disability can worsen steadily, remain the same, or improve. It can be very mild to very severe. It can be the cause of, as well as the result of, disease, illness, injury or substance abuse.

**Source:**

Employment & Social Development Canada, *Accessibility Resource Centre: Federal Disability Reference Guide* — [www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability/arc/reference-guide.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability/arc/reference-guide.html)

**Diversity** is the presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization or society. These can be identities, experiences, and visible and invisible qualities that shape who we are, how we think, how we engage with the world, and how we are perceived by the world. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

**Sources:**

Council of Ontario Directors of Education: *Equity and Inclusion Education: Going Deeper* — [www.ontariodirectors.ca/downloads/EIE-2014/Equity\\_and\\_Inclusive\\_Education\\_Eng\\_Final.pdf](http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/downloads/EIE-2014/Equity_and_Inclusive_Education_Eng_Final.pdf)

Ontario Public Service: *Inclusion and Diversity Blueprint* Employment Equity Act — <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/e-5.401/FullText.html>

**Employment Equity** is the process of achieving equality in the workplace so that no person is denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability. In the fulfilment of that goal, employment equity strives to correct the conditions of disadvantage in employment experienced by women, Aboriginal Peoples, persons with disabilities, and members of visible minorities. As such, employment equity is meant to give effect to the principle that equality means more than treating persons in the same way; it also requires special measures and the accommodation of differences.

**Source:**

Council of Ontario Directors of Education: *Equity and Inclusion Education: Going Deeper* — [www.ontariodirectors.ca/downloads/EIE-2014/Equity\\_and\\_Inclusive\\_Education\\_Eng\\_Final.pdf](http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/downloads/EIE-2014/Equity_and_Inclusive_Education_Eng_Final.pdf)

**Equity** is a condition or state of fair, inclusive and respectful treatment of all people. This state means making sure everyone has what they need to succeed, as well as removing barriers that disadvantage some groups over others. As such, equity is different than treating people equally.

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## For Students and Graduates with Disabilities



### Sources:

Ontario Public Service: *Inclusion and Diversity Blueprint* — [www.ontario.ca/page/ops-inclusion-diversity-blueprint](http://www.ontario.ca/page/ops-inclusion-diversity-blueprint)

Council of Ontario Directors of Education: *Equity and Inclusion Education: Going Deeper* — [www.ontariodirectors.ca/downloads/EIE-2014/Equity\\_and\\_Inclusive\\_Education\\_Eng\\_Final.pdf](http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/downloads/EIE-2014/Equity_and_Inclusive_Education_Eng_Final.pdf)

**Inclusion** is about creating a culture that strives for equity and that embraces, respects, accepts and values difference.

### Source:

Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion: *Diversity Defined* — <https://ccdi.ca/our-story/diversity-defined/>

**Workplace Inclusion** is an environment that accepts each individual's differences, embraces their strengths, and provides opportunities for all people in the workplace to achieve their full potential. Inclusion should be reflected in an organization's culture, practices and relationships. More broadly, workplace inclusion is about creating a sense of belonging, a sense in each employee of feeling valued for who they are, and of feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so you can do your best work.

### Sources:

Law Society of Ontario: *Definitions* — <https://lso.ca/about-lso/initiatives/edi/definitions>

Royal Bank of Canada: *Diversity and Inclusion Blueprint* — [www.rbc.com/diversity-inclusion/\\_assets-custom/includes/pdf/rbc-diversity-blueprint.pdf](http://www.rbc.com/diversity-inclusion/_assets-custom/includes/pdf/rbc-diversity-blueprint.pdf)



The Government of Canada has created an **Accessibility Glossary**. It contains definitions of 342 concepts, including terminology in the fields of the sociology of work and technical aids for persons with disabilities.

[www.btb.termiumplus.gc.ca/publications/accessibilite-accessibility-eng.html](http://www.btb.termiumplus.gc.ca/publications/accessibilite-accessibility-eng.html)

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## References

**Alberta Human Resources and Employment:** Employment Series for Persons with Disabilities: Tips for Job Seekers

**Algonquin College :** Be the Boss of Your Career : A Complete Guide for Students & Graduates

**Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion:** Diversity Defined

- <https://ccdi.ca/our-story/diversity-defined>

**Carleton University, Accessible Career Transitions (ACT) Program:** Disclosure Script Worksheet

**Council of Ontario Directors of Education:** Equity and Inclusion Education: Going Deeper

- [www.ontariodirectors.ca/downloads/EIE-2014/Equity\\_and\\_Inclusive\\_Education\\_Eng\\_Final.pdf](http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/downloads/EIE-2014/Equity_and_Inclusive_Education_Eng_Final.pdf)

**Council of Ontario Universities, Accessible Campus:** Understanding Barriers to Accessibility

- <https://accessiblecampus.ca/understanding-accessibility/what-are-the-barriers>

**Discover Ability:** Business, Roadmap

- <https://discoverability.network/business/roadmap>

**Employment & Social Development Canada, Accessibility Resource Centre:** Federal Disability Reference Guide

- [www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability/arc/reference-guide.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability/arc/reference-guide.html)

**Government of Canada: Duty to Accommodate:** A General Process For Managers

- [www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/diversity-inclusion-public-service/working-government-canada-duty-accommodate-right-non-discrimination/duty-accommodate-general-process-managers.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/diversity-inclusion-public-service/working-government-canada-duty-accommodate-right-non-discrimination/duty-accommodate-general-process-managers.html)

**Hire for Talent:** Toolkit, Recruitment, How to Write Inclusive Job Descriptions

- [www.hirefortalent.ca/main/toolkit/recruitment/51-how-to-write-inclusive-job-descriptions](http://www.hirefortalent.ca/main/toolkit/recruitment/51-how-to-write-inclusive-job-descriptions)

**Job Accommodation Network:** Job Description Topics

- <https://askjan.org/topics/jobdesc.cfm>

**Law Society of Ontario:** Definitions

- <https://lso.ca/about-lso/initiatives/edi/definitions>

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**Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario:** Transition Planning Guide for Students with Learning Disabilities

- [www.ldao.ca/wp-content/uploads/LDAO-Transition-Planning-Resource-Guide.pdf](http://www.ldao.ca/wp-content/uploads/LDAO-Transition-Planning-Resource-Guide.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](http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/how-do-i-hire-someone-with-a-mental-health-problem)

**Mental Health Works:** What kinds of accommodations are people with a mental health problem likely to need?

- [www.mentalhealthworks.ca/mental-health-accommodations](http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/mental-health-accommodations)

**Mount Allison University, Meighen Centre:** Transition to Employment for University Graduates with Disabilities

- [www.mta.ca/uploadedFiles/Community/Student\\_services/Meighen\\_Centre/Resources/Transition/Transition%20to%20Employment%20for%20University%20Graduates%20with%20Disabilities%2017.pdf](http://www.mta.ca/uploadedFiles/Community/Student_services/Meighen_Centre/Resources/Transition/Transition%20to%20Employment%20for%20University%20Graduates%20with%20Disabilities%2017.pdf)

**Ontario Human Rights Commission:** 5. Interviewing and Making Hiring Decisions

- [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/5-interviewing-and-making-hiring-decisions](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/5-interviewing-and-making-hiring-decisions)

**Ontario Human Rights Commission:** 13 Duty to Accommodate

- [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-based-mental-health-disabilities-and-addictions/13-duty-accommodate](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-based-mental-health-disabilities-and-addictions/13-duty-accommodate)

**Ontario Human Rights Commission:** 2. Setting job requirements

- [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/2-setting-job-requirements](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/2-setting-job-requirements)

**Ontario Human Rights Commission:** 2. What is disability?

- [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-ableism-and-discrimination-based-disability/2-what-disability](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-ableism-and-discrimination-based-disability/2-what-disability)

**Ontario Public Service:** Inclusion and Diversity Blueprint

- [www.ontario.ca/page/ops-inclusion-diversity-blueprint](http://www.ontario.ca/page/ops-inclusion-diversity-blueprint)

**Government of Canada, Justice Law Website:** Employment Equity Act

- <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/e-5.401/FullText.html>

**Royal Bank of Canada:** Diversity and Inclusion Blueprint

- [www.rbc.com/diversity-inclusion/\\_assets-custom/includes/pdf/rbc-diversity-blueprint.pdf](http://www.rbc.com/diversity-inclusion/_assets-custom/includes/pdf/rbc-diversity-blueprint.pdf)

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**University of Guelph:** Academic Accommodations Translated into Employment Settings

- [www.recruitguelph.ca/cecs/system/files/Academic%20Accommodations%20translated%20into%20the%20Workplace\\_AODA\\_MF.pdf](http://www.recruitguelph.ca/cecs/system/files/Academic%20Accommodations%20translated%20into%20the%20Workplace_AODA_MF.pdf)

**University of Guelph:** Creating Your Disclosure Script

- [www.recruitguelph.ca/cecs/sites/uoguelph.ca.cecs/files/public/Disclosure%20Script.pdf](http://www.recruitguelph.ca/cecs/sites/uoguelph.ca.cecs/files/public/Disclosure%20Script.pdf)