

INCLUSIVE HIRING BEST PRACTICES

FOR WORKERS WITH A DISABILITY

This tip sheet is based on 12 qualitative interviews with businesses in Sarnia Lambton sharing their experiences hiring a worker with a disability. These actionable strategies and initiatives provide a framework for promoting inclusivity, fairness, and excellence in both workplace culture and recruitment processes. By promoting inclusive hiring best practices can create environments where every individual feels valued, empowered, and able to contribute their unique talents and perspectives.

Prioritize Clear Communication:

- Promote honesty and clarity in all communications, fostering trust and understanding by learning about your employees or colleagues and asking how you can better support them and show appreciation in ways that are meaningful to them.
- Ensure transparent and on-going communication during the recruitment process and after to establish a mutual understanding of expectations. Reach out to experts who can offer support in navigating those conversations if you're unsure of what to say or ask.
- Regularly assess the organization's inclusivity efforts through surveys, feedback mechanisms, and performance evaluations where employees can anonymously submit feedback, suggestions, and concerns directly to senior leadership.
- Utilize tools to support diverse abilities (e.g., Microsoft Teams) with accessibility features in mind, ensuring that it is fully compatible with screen readers, keyboard navigation, and other assistive technologies commonly used by individuals with disabilities.

Promote an Inclusive Work Environment:

- Foster an open and supportive workplace culture valuing individual contributions from each team member.
- Emphasize flexibility in job roles and tasks to accommodate diverse skills and abilities, what works for some may not work for others.
- Advocate for adaptability in employment policies to support employees with a disability, including mental health and other non-visible disabilities.
- Develop Individualized Accommodation Plans for employees who need accommodation.
- Arrange workshops or training specifically focused on diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Promote Flexibility and Adaptability:

- Foster a culture of autonomy and flexibility. Maintain flexibility in task assignments keeping in mind each employee's abilities and interests or customize various aspects of the role, such as job responsibilities based on their strengths, abilities, and preferences.
- Allow employees to customize their workspaces to accommodate their unique preferences and needs. This could include providing equipment or flexible accommodation for appointments or treatments.
- Promote autonomy and flexibility on when and how they work, allowing individuals with disabilities to work in ways that best suit their strengths and abilities.
- Develop contingency plans that include accessible evacuation procedures, alternative communication methods for employees with hearing or speech impairments, and accommodations for those with limitations to their mobility.
- Introduce a job rotation program so employees can engage in cross-functional collaboration, gain new experiences, and develop their skills in a supportive and inclusive environment.

Focus on Skills and Abilities:

- Develop an "Inclusive Hiring Policy" that explicitly outlines the organization's commitment to non-discrimination, equal opportunity, and diversity in all aspects of the recruitment process.
- Ensure job posts are accessible and include details on the skills, abilities and interests that would align with the ideal candidate for the job, being mindful not to include "must have" requirements if they are a preference rather than a mandatory requirement needed to be successful in the role.
- Introduce a "Candidate Success Profile" considering the diverse abilities and attributes of candidates, outlining key competencies and attributes required for success in the role.
- Implement skills-based assessments or work simulations during the interview process that are inclusive and accessible for candidates with disabilities to evaluate practical abilities and skills relevant to the job.

Invest in Accommodation, Training and Development:

- Conduct an internal audit or recruit a specialist to evaluate where your organization may or may not be compliant with the standards set by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).
- Foster a culture of continuous learning and development. Support employees to enhance their skills and capabilities. Provide professional development opportunities for employees to develop specific skills tailored to their individual needs, abilities and learning styles.
- Implement mentorship programs by pairing seasoned employees who have experience navigating workplace challenges related to disabilities with junior staff who may be experiencing similar obstacles.
- Allocate a budget for employees to enroll in courses and access support relevant to their roles or career aspirations. Ensure that online learning platforms are accessible and comply with accessibility standards with any necessary assistive technologies or accommodations.
- Recognize transportation barriers and explore solutions such as transportation assistance programs, subsidized transportation or carpooling options for employees without access to reliable transportation.
- Explore partnerships and collaborations with local organizations or government agencies that offer grants or subsidies designed to support diversity and inclusion initiatives for individuals with disabilities. These organizations can offer support with any costs associated with inclusive hiring.

Utilize Job Coaches:

- Utilize job coaches in mediating and adjusting tasks for employees with disabilities, especially during the initial stages of employment.
- Partner with local disability advocacy organizations to access resources and offer training sessions for hiring managers to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to support employees with disabilities in the workplace.
- Create a mentorship program specifically designed to pair employees with experienced mentors within the organization who can provide guidance, support, and advice for navigating the workplace.



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