

# ACCESSIBILITY AWARENESS TOOLKIT



**Increasing Accessible Employment in the Information and Communications Technology Sector**


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# Introduction

 *“There’s not just one main reason, or even two or three, why the disability unemployment rate is so high – there are many reasons and they’re complex and entrenched in society. That’s why there are no easy solutions. But communicating the benefits to employers to hiring and working with people with disabilities is an important part of overcoming the fear and ignorance out there.”*

*~ Tim Rose, Founder of Disability Positive Consulting*

We need to change the way we think, talk and act when considering barriers to participation in society and in the workplace. We need to consider it at every stage of employment, from recruitment through to employee retention and development. An inclusive Ontario is one where all Ontarians can participate and have an equal opportunity to succeed in their workplaces and communities.

The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector is one of the largest employment sectors in Ontario, particularly in technology hubs such as Ottawa, Toronto, and Waterloo. In 2017, an ICTC report, *The Digital Talent Dividend: Shifting Gears in a Changing Economy*, noted that the strength of the ICT sector accounted for more than 4% of the GDP of the entire national economy.

Skilled employees are consistently in demand and the demand is growing every year. Another ICTC report, *The Next Talent Wave: Navigating the Digital Shift - Outlook 2021*, noted that by 2021, Canada is expected to see a demand for approximately 216,000 digitally-skilled workers. This is a demand that the current and projected supply of skilled workers is not able to meet. Yet the skillsets required in the ICT sector are an excellent fit for many people with different types of disabilities.

If the ICT sector is to benefit and grow by accessing the largely untapped market of skilled persons with disabilities, then how can ICT employers create more inclusive workplaces? How can these employers connect with people with disabilities seeking employment? Recognizing and wanting to address these needs for the ICT sector, for people with disabilities, and for all Ontarians inspired this EnAbling Change project.

March Of Dimes Canada, with the support of the Government of Ontario, has developed several resources to assist employers with identifying and removing barriers to accessible employment. These resources focus on connecting employers in the ICT sector with qualified employees with disabilities. While the majority of these resources are relevant to most businesses in Ontario, the research, interviews, case studies and examples focus on how to identify and remove barriers related to employing people with disabilities in the ICT sector. We encourage you to use all available resources to help make your workplace more inclusive for people with disabilities.



The following resources were developed as part of this EnAbling Change project:

Resource	Title	Available
Research report	<i>Enabling Change: Removing Barriers and Supporting Meaningful Employment of Ontarians with Disabilities in the Information and Communications Technology Sector</i>	ICTC website, March Of Dimes Canada website
Accessibility Awareness Toolkit	<i>Identifying and Removing Barriers to Accessible Employment in the Information and Communications Technology Sector</i>	March Of Dimes Canada website
In-person training and online webinar	<i>Accessible Employment Practices: Identifying and Removing Barriers to Inclusive Employment</i>	March of Dimes Canada Training Institute
Awareness and training video	<i>Creating an Inclusive Culture in the Information and Communications Technology Sector</i>	March of Dimes Canada YouTube channel and website

This Accessibility Awareness Toolkit includes information to help you make all stages of the employment process more inclusive, including recruitment and selection of new employees, as well as accommodation, retention, and career development of current employees.

## About this Document

This Accessibility Awareness Toolkit includes information on:

- Background on the AODA and accessibility in Ontario;
- The goals of the AODA and the guiding principles behind it - independence, dignity, integration, and equality of opportunity for people with disabilities;
- Information to help you understand your organization’s Employment Standard compliance requirements and ensure that you’re meeting compliance deadlines;
- Reasons why it’s important to create an inclusive workplace for people with disabilities;
- Myths and facts regarding what it’s like to work with employees with disabilities;
- Case Studies  and Lived Experience  examples of how to identify and remove barriers to accessible employment;
- Tips, techniques, and checklists for how to meet and exceed the AODA compliance requirements related to employee recruitment and selection, accommodation in the workplace, and how to attract, retain, and develop employees with disabilities; and

- A list of programs and resources available to support your organization in meeting its goals and becoming an inclusive organization.

## Acknowledgements

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Thank you to all those who worked on or assisted with this EnAbling Change project, including AccessAbility Advantage, the EnAbling Change Project Advisory Committee, Information and Communications Technology Council (ICTC), and D2L, as well as all Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector employer and employee interview participants.

## Copyright and Disclaimer

This Toolkit is not intended as legal advice. If you require assistance in interpreting legislation or regulations, please seek professional legal advice. This resource has been created to help you understand and apply accessibility legislation related to employment and does not replace the official Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (Ontario Regulation 191/11) or the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA). If there is any conflict between this Toolkit and the AODA, the AODA and Ontario Regulation 191/11 are the final authorities.

Alternate formats of this document are available upon request by contacting [traininginstitute@marchofdimes.ca](mailto:traininginstitute@marchofdimes.ca)


## Did You Know?

-  One in seven people in Ontario is living with a disability. That's nearly 1.9 million people in Ontario. Over the next 20 years that number will increase as the population ages, putting the overall percentage of those living with a disability and/or supporting those with a disability as a family member or friend at just over 50% of the population.  
~ *Partnership council on employment opportunities for persons with disabilities report*
-  A more accessible Ontario is good for our economy, for employers and employees, and for our communities. Improved accessibility in Ontario can help generate up to \$9.6 billion in new consumer spending.  
~ *The Path to 2025: Ontario's Accessibility Action Plan*
-  In the next 20 years, an aging population and people with disabilities will represent 40% of total income in Ontario - that's \$536 billion. Making an accessible Ontario is not only the right thing to do, it makes good business sense.  
~ *Beyond Compliance: Accessibility Self-Assessment Tool for Organizations*
-  Close to 30% of Canadian small- and medium-sized businesses have reported difficulties in filling job vacancies. Qualified people with disabilities can help fill these vacancies and broaden the diversity of workplaces and customer bases.  
~ *Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Building Bridges*
-  90% of Canadians believe that people with disabilities are not fully included in society.  
~ *Angus Reid Institute, in partnership with the Rick Hansen Foundation*
-  People with disabilities in Canada face lower workforce participation rates than people without: just under 48 percent reported they are employed, compared to nearly 74 percent of Canadians without disabilities.  
~ *Statistics Canada, Persons with disabilities and employment*
-  Of those Canadians with disabilities who have jobs, many are not comfortable disclosing information about their disability: 27 percent indicated their employer isn't aware of their work limitation.  
~ *Statistics Canada, Persons with disabilities and employment*
-  The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is about 16% - far higher than the rate for people without disabilities.  
~ *Access Talent*
-  If every business in Ontario with 20 or more employees hires at least one more person with a disability, about 56,000 people with disabilities looking for work will




gain employment and have the opportunity to help further build and enrich our businesses and economy.


~ *Access Talent*

 47 percent of millennials consider diversity and inclusion an important job-search criteria, compared to 33 percent of Gen X and 37 percent of baby boomers. Younger generations also expect to live their values openly at work, including being open about their identity and expressing themselves freely without reprisal.


~ *Deloitte*

 Employees with a disability are 2.4 times more likely to disagree that their organization promotes belonging.


~ *MaRS Discovery District, Tech for All*

 30% of talent supply needed to fill industry demand will have to come from the local workforce, including underrepresented groups like career transitioners, Indigenous populations and persons with disabilities.

~ *2016 Tech Talent BC Report*

 70 per cent of businesses report having no idea how much accommodation really costs

~ *Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities*

 \$500: the actual average one-time cost of accommodating an employee who requires it

~ *Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities*

# Myths and Realities

## *Myth*

Employees with disabilities won't be able to do as good as job as non-disabled employees.

## *Reality*

90% of people with disabilities rate average or better than average on job performance, compared to their colleagues without disabilities.

75% of Ontario small- and medium-sized businesses that employ people with disabilities report that they meet or exceed expectations.

~ *Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities*

## *Myth*

Someone with a disability won't be reliable and will miss a lot of work.

## *Reality*

86% of people with disabilities rate average or better on attendance than non-disabled employees.

~ *Ontario Disability Employment Network*

## *Myth*

There will be a lot of turnover among employees with disabilities.

## *Reality*

Job turnover among people with disabilities is estimated to be 20% of the rate of non-disabled employees. Statistics Canada research indicates that, in organizations with accessible employment practices, employee retention is 72% higher among people with disabilities.

~ *Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities*

## *Myth*

People with disabilities represent a niche market that companies can afford to ignore. It costs more to adapt than employers will benefit from.

## *Reality*

Together with families and close companions, people with disabilities represent more than half our population, with a buying power that tops \$40 billion in Canada. Companies that employ people with disabilities can better serve this growing market.

~ *(Wafer 2014)*

# Background on Accessibility

## Why Accessibility Matters

The importance of accessibility relates to our fundamental values as a society. The rights of persons with disabilities are protected under both the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

Accessibility turns legal rights into practical, everyday realities. The goal behind the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) is to create an inclusive society where everyone can participate to their full potential. As accessibility across Ontario increases, Ontarians with disabilities will bring their talents to bear more effectively in the workplace and in all other aspects of Ontario life.

Youth with disabilities will have more opportunity for educational achievement and seniors will live more fulfilling lives. Consumer spending by persons with disabilities will rise. And our quality of life will be enriched by the fuller inclusion of Ontarians with disabilities in our social relationships and community activities. Most important, the realization of accessibility will demonstrate our shared commitment to each other - and reinforce the values of decency, fairness and respect for individual dignity that bind Ontarians together.

## Changing Perceptions

Society's perceptions of disability are changing and persons with disabilities are now seen to include a larger population. The most common image of disability has typically focused on physical conditions and on people using wheelchairs or other assistive devices. More and more people are now understanding that disability has a much broader scope.

People are becoming more aware of sensory, developmental, mental health, learning and other non-visible disabilities. A large majority of people with disabilities become disabled or experience periods of disability during their prime working years of 18 to 54. These disabilities might be due to external trauma, underlying disease, or illness. The definition of disability is inclusive and reflects this broader view.

## Historical Background

The AODA is one of several pieces of public policy intended to protect people with disabilities from discrimination and remove barriers to their full participation in society. These initiatives have been, and continue to be, driven by persons with disabilities and organizations that represent them.

More information on the history of accessibility in Ontario can be found in the Charles Beer report which can be reviewed here: [Charting a Path Forward: Report of the Independent Review of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#)

## Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Ontario Human Rights Code

The inclusion of persons with disabilities in the equality rights section of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, enacted in 1982 and effective in 1985, came about after lobbying by disability organizations. The Charter guarantees persons with disabilities equal protection and equal benefit of the law.

In 1982, Ontario added “handicap” to the prohibited grounds for discrimination in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, which applies to the public, not-for-profit and private sectors. The term “handicap” was changed to “disability” in 2002.

Under the Code, every person has a right to equal treatment without discrimination because of disability, with respect to services, goods, facilities, housing, employment, contracts and membership in trade unions, occupational associations and self-governing professions. The Code requires employers, landlords and providers of goods, services and facilities to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities, unless doing so would cause undue hardship.

## Building Code and Other Measures

Since 1975, the *Ontario Building Code* – a provincial government regulation – has advanced one aspect of accessibility by setting requirements for buildings. These provisions cover building entrances, such as ramps and width of doors; the path of travel, such as width of halls, floor areas and lighting; washrooms; signs; emergency exits; passenger loading zones; and parking.

Accessibility requirements under the Building Code apply to new buildings, including apartment, condominium, commercial and public buildings, and to some renovations. Individual houses are not covered, and building owners and operators are not obliged to retrofit their buildings to meet current code requirements.

Other provisions to ensure equal treatment without discrimination for persons with disabilities are contained in such measures as the *Blind Persons’ Rights Act*, the *Education Act*, the *Planning Act* and certain regulations under the *Highway Traffic Act*.

## Origins of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act

The Charter and the Human Rights Code were not enough to remove and prevent the range of barriers that keep people with disabilities from participating in significant areas of life. In addition, with the Charter and the Code, it is largely up to persons with disabilities to enforce their own rights on a case-by-case basis. Change depends on costly, cumbersome and lengthy legal battles. Moreover, while imposing a duty to accommodate to the point of undue hardship, the Code provides little direction to employers, educators, landlords, retailers and others on how to comply.

In 1994, a coalition of Ontarians with disabilities and community organizations formed a committee for the purpose of securing the passage of a new Ontario law - the

*Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (ODA) - to identify, remove and prevent barriers to full participation.

Following the 1995 Ontario election, the ODA Committee outlined a series of principles that the new legislation should embody. In October 1998, the legislature unanimously adopted a private member's resolution calling on the government to bring in disability legislation based on the ODA Committee principles. A new bill was brought forward after the 1999 election. The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) was introduced and passed in December 2001.

### Accessibility Bill Enacted

During the 2003 election campaign, the then Leader of the Opposition wrote to the ODA Committee promising to enact a stronger and more effective *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. Shortly after the election, the new government began this work by conducting a series of roundtable meetings and regional public meetings. Held in early 2004, these sessions included representatives of organizations with obligations under the ODA, as well as representatives from disability groups and the private sector.

In October 2004, the government introduced the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA). In considering the bill, a legislative committee held public hearings across Ontario in early 2005. Based on this input, the committee adopted a series of amendments to the bill. For example, in order to strengthen the government's accountability for results, a requirement was added for a comprehensive review of the Act's effectiveness after four years, with further reviews every three years. The final version of the bill was passed by the legislature unanimously in May 2005. It received Royal Assent and took effect on June 13, 2005.

### Bill C-81 – An Act to ensure a barrier-free Canada

On June 20, 2018, the Honourable Kirsty Duncan, Minister of Science and Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, introduced Bill C-81 to Parliament. This Bill proposed the first federal Canadian legislation - the *Accessible Canada Act* - with the goal of realizing a barrier-free Canada through consistent accessibility legislation across the country.

The bill outlines how the Government of Canada will require organizations under federal jurisdiction to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility in similar areas as the AODA legislates provincially.

The Government of Canada plans to move forward with the implementation of the proposed Act, with input from The Canadian Accessibility Standards Development Organization (CASDO), Canada's first-ever standards development organization exclusively dedicated to accessibility issues.

# The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) begins by recognizing the history of discrimination against persons with disabilities in Ontario. It declares that its purpose is to benefit all Ontarians by developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards. It states its intention to develop these standards by involving persons with disabilities, government, and various industries and sectors.

The goal of the AODA standards is to achieve accessibility for people with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises by 2025.

## The AODA Standards

The AODA applies to all Ontario employers who have one or more employee. Within the AODA, there are several standards within the Integrated Accessibility Standards (Ontario Regulation 191/11) describing specific guidelines for organizations <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/110191>.

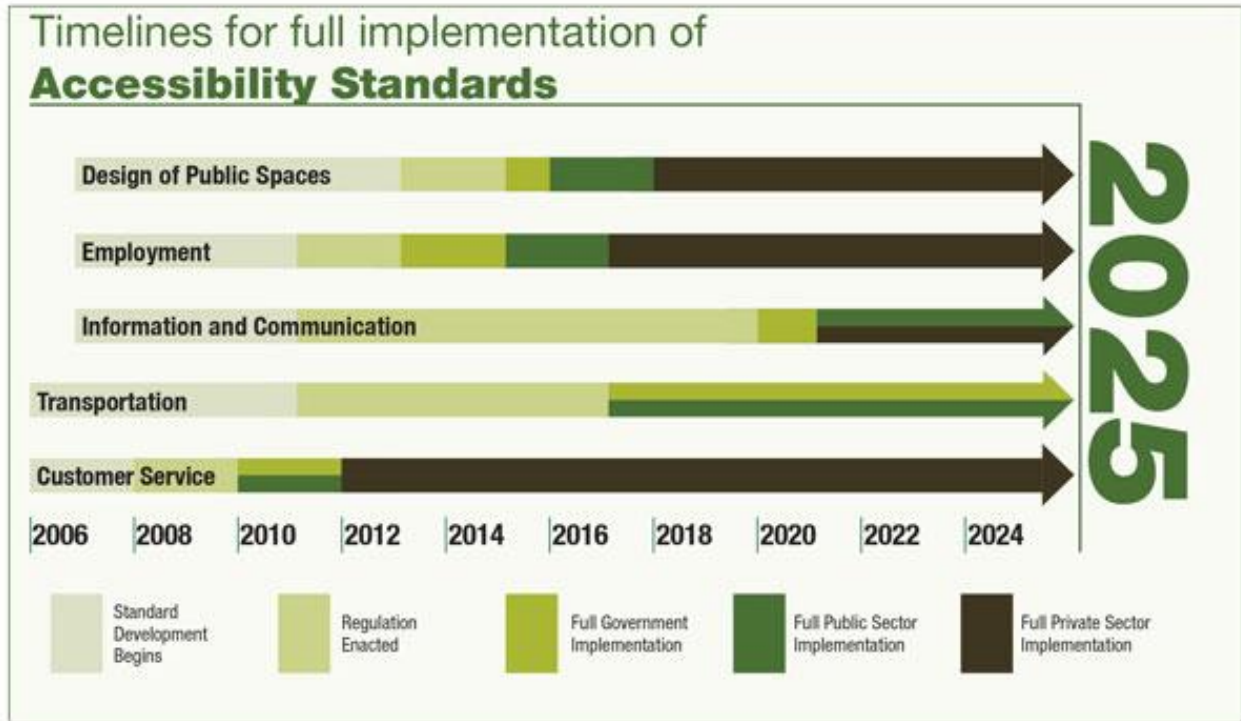
The following five AODA standards are in effect, with various compliance requirements for each standard, based on the size and type of an organization:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Transportation
- Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment)

These standards aim to ensure that all Ontarians can take part in everyday activities – working, shopping, taking public transit, using the Internet, attending sporting and cultural events, and enjoying parks and other public spaces.

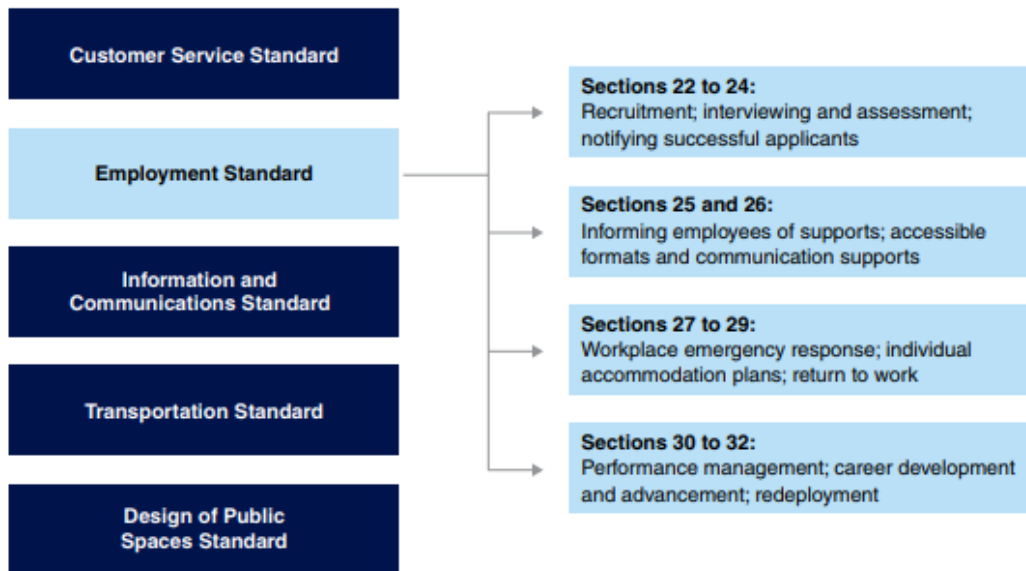
With the AODA, and particularly its Customer Service standard, Ontario became the first jurisdiction in the world to require employees to be trained on accessibility.

While it's important to be aware of all aspects of the AODA, this Toolkit focuses on the Employment Standard (Ontario Regulation 191/11: INTEGRATED ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS, Part III) and the ICT sector. Where relevant, other standards will be addressed and included



Source: Conference Board of Canada

## The AODA Employment Standard



Source: Conference Board of Canada



## Deadlines for AODA Compliance

As of January 1, 2017, all organizations and businesses with more than one employee in Ontario were required to make their employment practices accessible to job applicants and staff with disabilities according to the Accessible Employment Standard.

In the recent ICTC *EnAbling Change* report (2018) on accessibility in the ICT sector, “nearly half of employers (44%) noted that they were compliant with the AODA. A size breakdown of these results indicate that compliance was highest among medium and large companies (67% being compliant), while only 27% of small companies reported being compliant. An additional 33% reported being unsure of whether or not they were. That said, all employers interviewed who were currently not compliant were clear about their intention or desire to become so. No employers noted that compliance was not in their interest or a priority in the future. When employers were asked about the resources that they may need in order to become compliant, the most common responses were “time”, “funding” and “access to information.” (pg. 16)

Section of Employment Standard	Type of organization				
	Government of Ontario and the Legislative Assembly	Designated public sector organizations with 50 or more employees	Designated public sector organizations with 1 to 49 employees	Private and non-profit organizations with 50 or more employees	Private and non-profit organizations with 1 to 49 employees
Workplace emergency response information (s. 27)	January 1, 2012	January 1, 2012	January 1, 2012	January 1, 2012	January 1, 2012
Recruitment (ss. 22, 23, 24)	January 1, 2013	January 1, 2014	January 1, 2015	January 1, 2016	January 1, 2017
Employee accommodation (ss. 25, 26)	January 1, 2013	January 1, 2014	January 1, 2015	January 1, 2016	January 1, 2017
Individual accommodation plan (s. 28)	January 1, 2013	January 1, 2014	January 1, 2015	January 1, 2016	n.a.
Employees returning to work (s. 29)	January 1, 2013	January 1, 2014	January 1, 2015	January 1, 2016	n.a.
Performance management, career development, and redeployment (ss. 30, 31, 32)	January 1, 2013	January 1, 2014	January 1, 2015	January 1, 2016	January 1, 2017

n.a. = not applicable  
Source: O. Reg. 191/11.

Source: Conference Board of Canada

## Guiding Principles of the AODA

While the AODA Standards assist employers in complying with the AODA and ensuring an accessible workplace, it is the principles of the AODA that help ensure a more inclusive society. Throughout this document, we will provide information, resources, and best practices for going beyond compliance and for creating an inclusive workplace. There are four core principles guiding the AODA regulations and standards.



These are:

1. Dignity
2. Independence
3. Integration, and
4. Equal Opportunity.

### **Dignity**

Policies, procedures and practices that respect the dignity of a person with a disability are those that treat them as individuals who are as valued and as deserving of the same respectful treatment as any other individual. They do not treat people with disabilities as an afterthought or force them to accept lesser service, quality or convenience.

Employers needs to take into account how people with disabilities can effectively access employment opportunities and perform their jobs with dignity.

### **Independence**

In some instances, independence means freedom from control or influence of others freedom to make your own choices. In other situations, it may mean the freedom to do things in your own way.

People who may move or speak more slowly should not be denied an opportunity to participate in an employment opportunity or in a program or service where accommodations can be made. People with disabilities should not be rushed or have tasks taken over for them if they prefer to and can do those tasks for themselves.

### **Integration**

Integrated services are those that allow people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other individuals. Integration means that policies, practices and procedures are designed to be accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities.

Sometimes integration does not serve the needs of all people with disabilities. For example, working or attending meetings remotely might be the more appropriate alternative. Alternative measures, rather than integration, might be necessary because the person with a disability requires it or because you cannot provide another option at the time.

If you are unable to remove a barrier to accessibility, you need to consider what else can be done to provide services and opportunities to people with disabilities.

### **Equal opportunity**

Equal opportunity means having the same opportunities, choices, benefits and results as others.

In the case of employment, it means that people with disabilities have the same opportunity to learn about, apply for, qualify for, and retain employment opportunities. They should be able to develop their careers in a similar manner as other employees. They should not have to make significantly more effort to access or obtain employment opportunities or career development. They should not have to accept lesser quality or more inconvenience to access opportunities.

## The AODA and the Ontario Human Rights Code

The *Ontario Human Rights Code* has primacy over other legislation. Compliance with AODA standards does not necessarily represent compliance with the Code. It is important to understand that organizations that meet AODA Standards could still be subject to complaints of discrimination by individuals and proceedings before the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario could result.

*“The OHRC has always taken the position that while the [Human Rights] Code itself is the primal law in Ontario for disability rights, the Code and the OHRC must not stand alone. Complementary legislation, policies and programs that promote and enforce compliance are very necessary for achieving a barrier free society.”*

*~ Written Brief, Ontario Human Rights Commission*

## Definition of Disability

The AODA adopts a broad definition of disability - the same as in the Human Rights Code and the ODA - encompassing physical, developmental, mental health and learning disabilities. This definition applies to the provincial government, the broader public sector, and the private and not-for-profit sectors in Ontario (the “obligated” sectors).

“Disability” means:

- (a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- (c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- (d) a mental disorder, or
- (e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997; (“handicap”).

## Types of Disabilities

The following hints and tips regarding how to communicate with people with various types of disabilities are adapted from *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation: A Training Booklet for Small Private and Not-for-Profit Organizations*. This resource was developed by Curriculum Services Canada in partnership with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario under the Government of Ontario's EnAbling Change Partnership Program and can be found on the Access Forward website:

<http://www.accessforward.ca/resources/Training%20Booklet%20for%20Small%20Private%20and%20Not%20For%20Profit%20Organizations.pdf>

### Vision loss

Vision loss can restrict someone's ability to read documents or signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. Some people may use a guide dog, a white cane, or a support person such as a sighted guide, but others may not.

#### Tips:

- When you know someone has vision loss, don't assume the individual can't see you. Not everyone with vision loss is totally blind; many have some vision.
- Identify yourself when you approach someone, and speak directly to your contact, even if they are with a companion.
- If reviewing any documents or presentations together without audio support, ask if your contact (or anyone) would like you to read any printed information out loud to them.
- When providing directions or instructions, be precise and descriptive. Identify landmarks or other details to orient the person to the surroundings. For example, if you're approaching stairs or an obstacle, say so.
- Offer your elbow to guide someone with vision loss, if needed. If they accept, lead, but do not pull or rush.
- If you need to leave someone with vision loss, let them know by telling them you'll be back or saying good-bye.
- Don't leave your contact in the middle of a room - guide them to a comfortable location or seat.

### Hearing loss

People who have hearing loss may identify in different ways. They may be Deaf, oral deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing. These terms are used to describe different levels of hearing or the way a person's hearing was diminished or lost. A person with hearing loss may have preferred ways to communicate, for example, through sign language, by lip reading, or by using a pen and paper.

#### Tips:

- Once someone has self-identified as having hearing loss, make sure you face the individual when talking and that you are in a well-lit area so the person can see you clearly.

- As needed, attract the person's attention before speaking. Try a gentle touch on the shoulder or preferably a wave of your hand.
- Maintain eye contact. Use body language, gestures and facial expression to help you communicate.
- If the person uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or if possible, move to a quieter area.
- If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier, for example, using a pen and paper.
- When using a sign language interpreter, look at and speak directly to your contact, not to the interpreter. For example, say "What would you like?" not "Ask her what she'd like."

### Deafblind

A person who is deafblind has some degree of both hearing and vision loss. People who are deafblind are often accompanied by an intervener, a professional support person who helps with communication. Interveners are trained in special sign language that involves touching the hands of the client.

#### *Tips:*

- Speak directly to your contact, not to the intervener.
- A person who is deafblind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them or give you an assistance card or a note.

### Speech or language disabilities

Cerebral palsy, stroke, hearing loss, or many other conditions may make it difficult for a person to pronounce words, speak loudly, respond promptly to queries, or express themselves clearly. Some people who have severe difficulties may use a communication board or other assistive devices.

#### *Tips:*

- Don't assume that a person who has difficulty speaking doesn't understand you.
- Speak directly to your contact and not to their companion or support person.
- Whenever possible, simplify communication and ask questions that can be answered "yes" or "no."
- If the person uses a communication device, take a moment to read visible instructions for communicating with them.
- Be patient. Don't interrupt or finish your customer's sentences.
- Confirm what the person has said by summarizing or repeating what you've understood and allow the person to respond; if you're not sure what was communicated, don't pretend to understand.
- If necessary, provide other ways for the customer to contact you, such as email.

### Learning disabilities

The term “learning disabilities” refers to a range of disorders. One example is dyslexia, which affects how a person takes in or retains information. This disability may become apparent when the person has difficulty reading material or understanding the information you are providing. People with learning disabilities learn in different ways.

#### *Tips:*

- Be patient and allow extra time if needed. People with some learning disabilities may take a little longer to process information, or to understand and respond.
- Try to provide information in a way that works for your customer. For example, some people with learning disabilities find written words difficult to understand, while others may have problems with numbers and math.
- Be willing to rephrase or explain something again in another way, if needed.

### Developmental disabilities

Developmental disabilities (such as Down syndrome) or intellectual disabilities, can mildly or profoundly limit a person’s ability to learn, communicate, do every day physical activities, or live independently.

#### *Tips:*

- Don’t make assumptions about what a person can or cannot do.
- Don’t exaggerate your speech or speak in a patronizing way.
- Use plain language.
- Provide one piece of information at a time.
- If you’re not sure of what is being said to you, confirm by summarizing or repeating what was said, or politely ask them to repeat it - don’t pretend if you’re not sure.
- Ask the customer if they would like help reading your material or completing a form, and wait for them to accept the offer of assistance.
- Be patient and allow extra time if needed.

### Mental health disabilities

Mental health disability is a broad term for many disorders that can range in severity. A person with a mental health disability may experience depression or acute mood swings, anxiety due to phobias or panic disorder, or hallucinations. It may affect a person’s ability to think clearly, concentrate, or remember things. Unless you’re informed, you may not know someone has a mental health disability as these - as with many other disability types - are considered “invisible” disabilities. Stigma and lack of understanding are major barriers for people with mental health disabilities.

#### *Tips:*

- If you sense or know that a contact has a mental health disability, it should not affect your behaviour; treat them with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.

- Be confident, calm and reassuring.
- Listen carefully, and work with the contact to meet their needs.
- Respect your contact's personal space.
- Limit distractions that could affect your contact's ability to focus or concentrate - loud noise, crowded areas and interruptions can cause stress.
- Respond to the person's immediate behaviour and needs. Don't be confrontational. If needed, set limits with the person as you would others. For example, "If you scream, I will not be able to talk to you."

## Service Animals, Support Persons, and Assistive Devices

### Service animals

There are various types of service animals who support people with various types of disabilities:

- People with vision loss may use a guide dog.
- Hearing alert animals help people with hearing loss.
- Other service animals are trained to alert a person to an oncoming seizure, or to assist people with autism, mental health disabilities, physical disabilities and other disabilities.
- Under the Customer Service Standard, there are no restrictions on what type of animal can be used as a service animal. An animal is considered a service animal if:
  - you can easily identify it's a service animal through visual indicators, such as when it wears a harness or vest, or
  - The person with a disability provides documentation from a regulated health professional that confirms they need the service animal for reasons relating to their disability

### *Tips:*

- Don't touch or distract a service animal, it's not a pet. It's a working animal and has to pay attention at all times.
- If you're not sure if the animal is a pet or a service animal, you may ask your customer. You may ask to see their documentation from a regulated health professional.
- The customer is responsible for the care and supervision of their service animal. However, you can provide water for the animal if your customer requests it.
- If another person's health or safety could be seriously impacted by the presence of a service animal, such as a severe allergy, consider all options and try to find a solution that meets the needs of both people. For example:
  - creating distance between the two people
  - eliminating in-person contact
  - changing the time the two receive service
  - any other way that would allow the person to use their service animal on the premises.

### Identifying a service animal

If you can't easily identify that an animal is a service animal, don't make assumptions. You can ask the person to provide documentation (such as a letter, note or form) from a regulated health professional\* that states that they require the animal because of their disability.

- If the person shows you appropriate documentation, then they must be allowed to be accompanied by their service animal.
- The person is not required to disclose their disability or demonstrate how the animal assists them.

\* A "regulated health professional" is defined as a member of one of the following:

- College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario;
- College of Chiropractors of Ontario;
- College of Nurses of Ontario;
- College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario;
- College of Optometrists of Ontario;
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario;
- College of Physiotherapists of Ontario;
- College of Psychologists of Ontario.

### When a service animal is prohibited by another law

The law requires you to allow a person to bring their service animal with them into areas of your premises open to the public or to third parties. Areas are considered open to the public even if they are only open to those people who have paid an admission fee, are members, or have met certain eligibility or entrance requirements. This may include, for example, a fitness club, a hotel, taxicab, or a school. In cases where another law prohibits a service animal from entering certain areas (for example, a service animal would not be allowed in the kitchen of a cooking school), provide another way for the person to access your services.

While a service animal may be prohibited from certain areas, service dogs are allowed in areas where food is sold, served or offered for sale. This includes a restaurant's public dining area.

### Tips if the service animal is prohibited by another law:

- Identify if there are any areas of your premises where a service animal would be prohibited by law, and if so, identify the law in your accessible customer service policy and the area(s) where service animals are prohibited.
- Consider options ahead of time that you could offer when a service animal is prohibited.
- Explain why to your customer, and discuss other ways to serve them, for example, leaving the service animal in a safe area where its allowed, and offering assistance to the person while they're separated from the animal, or serving the customer in another area where the animal is allowed



### People with a support person

- A support person can be a paid personal support worker, an intervener, an interpreter, or a volunteer, family member or friend.
- A support person might help a person with communication, mobility, personal care or with accessing your services. A person with a disability is permitted to bring their support person with them to any area of your premises that is open to the public or to third parties.
- If your organization charges admission for activities, services, or events (for example, a movie theatre or a fundraising event), then your organization must provide advance notice of what admission fee or fare, if any, will be charged for a support person, for example, through a prominently placed sign or a notice on your website.


#### Tips:

- If you're not sure which person is the customer, take your lead from the person using or requesting service, or simply ask.
- Speak directly to your customer, not to their support person.
- If your organization charges an admission fee or fare, be familiar with its policy on fees or fares for support persons.
- It's good practice to confirm with your customer that they want the support person to be present while confidential matters are being discussed.

### When it may be necessary to require a support person

- In limited situations, you may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person for health or safety reasons.
- Identify ahead of time if there are situations where a support person might be required to accompany a person with a disability for health or safety reasons, and consider how you would handle such situations.
- You must first consult with the person with a disability and consider available evidence before you determine that:
  - a support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others on the premises; and
  - there is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others on the premises. In such a situation, you must waive the admission fee or fare for the support person, if one exists.

### People who use assistive devices

 *“There’s definitely a stigma involved with visible disabilities. The last thing you want to do is draw attention to your disability, and assistive devices do that. Using assistive devices – even if they can make your job easier – can make people self-conscious; it takes a while to adjust to and accept.”*

*~ Constantine Grantcharov,  
Senior Cloud Security Architect at Huawei Technologies*



An assistive device is a piece of equipment a person with a disability uses to help with daily living, for example, a wheelchair or walker, white cane, hearing aid, an oxygen tank or communication board.

*Tips*

- Don't touch or handle any assistive device without permission.
- Don't move assistive devices or equipment (such as canes, walkers) out of the person's reach.
- If your organization offers equipment or devices that can help customers with disabilities access your services, make sure you know how to use them. It may be helpful to have instruction manuals handy or an instruction sheet posted where the device is located or stored.

Some examples of devices that your organization might offer include:

- Mobility devices, such as a manual wheelchair or motorized scooter lift, which raises or lowers people who use mobility devices
- Technology that makes it easier for people with disabilities to communicate or access information, such as certain computer software, an amplification system or a TTY phone line
- Adjustable desk or workstation, which changes the height or tilt of a writing surface
- Accessible interactive kiosk, which might offer information or services in braille or through audio headsets.

## Beyond Compliance

*“By including all people in the hiring process and by looking past the disability, we will help build a more creative, more inclusive, more diverse workforce, and a stronger economy for all Ontarians.”*

~ The Hon. David C. Onley

In addition to the AODA, the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, and other legislative methods of ensuring compliance, it is important to understand the importance of creating and promoting accessible workplaces and increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. This section goes beyond basic AODA and legislative compliance for ICT employers and addresses:

- Why it’s important to create an inclusive workplace, and
- How to create an inclusive workplace.

### The Business Case for an Inclusive Workplace

The 2018 ICTC report, *Enabling Change: Removing Barriers and Supporting Meaningful Employment of Ontarians with Disabilities in the Information and Communication Technology Sector*, emphasizes that people with disabilities are a key source of underutilized talent that can be critical to filling employment demand in sectors across the economy, including the ICT sector.

The need for skilled workers in the ICT sector is clear:

- In 2016, the Canadian ICT sector grew by more than 1.5 billion in GDP from the year prior. Totalling nearly 73 billion in GDP, the sector saw a growth rate of almost 2.5%.
- By 2021, Canada is expected to see a demand for approximately 216,000 digitally-skilled workers, a demand for which we do not currently have sufficient supply to fill.

~ ICTC EnAbling Change report



“I see the world in a particular way, and it’s important to realize that there are lots of different viewpoints and a lot of different ways that people experience the world at large... Without actually having the right connections with people who view the world differently, you don’t necessarily see that...It’s up to each of us to go outside of our own bubbles and make sure that we get that full picture, that full understanding of what people in the world are facing so that we can make sure that we’re able to meet their needs... People’s abilities change throughout their lives. We don’t want to ever lose people on that journey.”

~ Brian Cepuran, D2L

Embracing inclusion and diversity can help the ICT sector meet this need:

- ICT employers need to direct their attention to alternative supply streams to fill this need, including from underrepresented groups, such as qualified individuals with disabilities.

*“Shifting demographics are leading to an aging, shrinking workforce in Canada. Today, countries are already jockeying to attract the most productive and innovative companies and the best and brightest talent. To win and to lead in the future, businesses must attract, engage, and retain workers from diverse backgrounds. Inclusion provides a critical competitive edge for doing so.”*

*~ Outcomes over optics: Building inclusive organizations.*

For ICT businesses to succeed, they must address changes related to global competition and technological disruption. To gain the competitive edge, businesses must react in several ways to create a more inclusive organization, including:

- Tapping into a qualified but underused talent pool,
- Creating new products and services based on universal design, and
- Harnessing the buying power of a broader population.

*“We must intentionally integrate diversity into our talent pool to attract and retain a diverse workforce of top talent.”*

*~ Lekan Olawoye, Talent Development, MaRS Discovery District*

For Ontario’s 1.8 million people with disabilities, it means being able to actively participate in our communities, workforce and economy.

Embracing the business case for accessibility is a win-win proposition for organizations of all sizes, for people with disabilities, and ultimately for all Ontarians.



### Expanding networking and recruitment opportunities – Dolphin Digital Technologies

During a Business-to-Business webinar in September 2018, Jamie Burton, VP, of Dolphin Digital Technologies, presented some ideas regarding how creative collaborations can help create a more diverse workforce. Ms. Burton pointed out that competing and succeeding in the ICT sector – a sector with a growing need for a skilled and diverse workforce – requires organizations to do things differently. She emphasized that businesses of all sizes need to think outside the box if they’re going to stand out and grow.

To attract skilled employees and to attract a broader marketplace, Dolphin sought to align their technical solutions with a social need that they wanted to

help address – the employment of people with disabilities. “Dolphin Disabilities Mentoring Day is just something we did because the impact of so many talented people without work was too much to ignore. We combined our business solutions with an opportunity to meet a social need....that is who Dolphin is.”

Dolphin Disabilities Mentoring Day was established in 2011 to help match talented people with mentors in the workplace for a shared learning experience. Dolphin DMD provides employers with the opportunity to learn about the extent of the skillsets and expertise available in the largely untapped pool of people with disabilities and offers potential employees the opportunity to gain insight and confidence from practicing professionals.

The success and growth of Dolphin Digital Technologies and Dolphin Disabilities Mentoring Day shows how technology can facilitate accessibility and how accessibility can contribute to the success of technology.

~ Jamie Burton, VP of Dolphin Digital Technologies

# Building an Inclusive Workplace for People with Disabilities

*“Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance.”*

*~ Verna Meyers, Diversity Expert*

*“At its core, inclusion is a talent strategy. It is all about maximizing the impact of human capital. We need to shift the conversation away from diversity to getting the best talent, then helping them be their best selves. That’s the gateway to innovation. And the key to scaling this is culture.”*

*~ Zabeen Hirji, former Chief Human Resources Officer, RBC, in Deloitte study, Outcomes over optics: Building inclusive organizations*



## Establishing an ICT start-up with employees with disabilities – Fable

During the ideation stage of Fable, we consulted members of the disability community that we planned to work with as software testers, asking them questions like, “What is an ideal work experience,” “How would you like to work,” and “If there is feedback you would like to give, how would you like to give it?”

We then engaged the disability community at every stage of our product’s development. Our entire testing methodology is designed for the testers to efficiently give the feedback that they think is important. We then present that feedback in the best way we can to our customers. The strength of our product is very much a result of the strength of our community.

Some things we were expecting, while other things we would not have learned without continuous engagement. Our community now has weekly meetings, a Wiki, and a chat group. Our entire company is setup up to include everyone remotely, ensuring people can work in the environment that they are most comfortable. The accommodations we’ve made don’t require anything other than flexibility, and the results have been outstanding.”

*~ Alwar Pillai, former Manager of Accessibility at Rogers, current CEO and co-founder of Fable*

## Changing the Culture



*“Ultimately, I think it’s a problem that needs a collective effort, from government, employers, disabled people and their allies to continue to talk about*

*it and innovate around it. Understanding and acknowledging the barriers provides the opportunity to make changes, be bold, and think differently.”*

*~ Tim Rose, Founder of Disability Positive Consulting*

Changing the culture of an organization involves an organization where all people can:

- Connect to the organization’s values and impact and see themselves succeeding there, with meaningful relationships and a *strong sense of connection*.
- *Feel like they belong* at the organization— in their practices, in their offices, on their engagement teams, and in leadership roles
- Have opportunities and support to develop strengths, *grow with purpose*, and own their careers.

*“Canadian businesses must move beyond counting and comparing differences based on demographic traits or socio-cultural identities. Too many companies have a mindset of representation and measure success in numbers: how many employees attended diversity training, how many under-represented groups were hired or promoted this year, how many grievances were received, are the numbers going in the right direction, and so on. They put their people into groups as opposed to focusing on them as individuals with unique aspirations and development needs. What most companies fail to realize is that many accessibility strategies, though well-intentioned, are often described as little more than window dressing. They tinker at the edges of the organization without addressing the deep, underlying cultural sources of exclusion.”*

*~ Deloitte*


### Steps to change a workplace culture

Employers want to encourage diversity, inclusion, and belonging in their organizations, but many report that they don’t know how or where to start.

*“A lack of knowledge, fear of doing the ‘wrong’ thing, the speed of growth in the tech sector and employee backlash all prove to be barriers for employers.”*

*~ MaRS, Tech for All*

But employers need to start somewhere. Diversity and inclusion can be achieved only when approaches to accessibility and inclusion change the organization at its core, not just on the surface.

 *“Many disabled people do not fit the typical boxes when it comes to job duties and accommodation practices do not, in my view, go far enough. Employers need to rethink the current ways of doing stuff. Until we, as a society, can look at the concept of work as something that is a more fluid and flexible concept, then we are going to face a gap for disabled potential contributors.”*

*~ Tim Rose, Founder of Disability Positive Consulting*

What are the steps needed to change the employment practices of an organization at its core?

1. Assess where you're at now.
  - Include individuals from diverse populations to help you assess your current processes.
2. Focus on individuals, not groups.
  - Understand the experience of individual applicants and employees as opposed to focusing on populations or statistics.
3. Broaden the hiring pool.
  - Look beyond your usual hiring strategies. Encourage managers to be creative and try new strategies. Participate in initiatives of organizations and educational institutions working with people with disabilities.
4. Focus on recruiting, hiring, and developing the skills of individuals.
  - Don't stop at the recruitment or hiring stage. Continue to engage with individuals and ensure you're providing the resources needed to support and develop their talents.
5. Select individuals both for their skills and their diverse backgrounds to build a truly inclusive environment.
  - Ensure that inclusion is embedded deeply into the organization's mission, mandate, goals, policies, and procedures, not just an add-on. Ensure that leadership comes from the top.

*“One of the most important changes will be the generational shift as millennials... become the dominant group in Canada’s workforce: at nearly 75 percent by 2025. ... All generations of Canadians value diversity and inclusion, but younger ones place a much greater emphasis on its importance and look to their employers to create an effective workplace culture. An inclusive culture is now a must-have to attract the best young talent: 47 percent of millennials consider diversity and inclusion an important job-search criteria, compared to 33 percent of Gen X and 37 percent of baby boomers. Younger generations also expect to live their values openly at work, including being open about their identity and expressing themselves freely without reprisal.”*

*~ Millennials@Work: Perspectives on Diversity & Inclusion*




“Two of the biggest takeaways for me are to not forget that you have assumptions and biases, no matter how wonderful a human being you are, and that’s okay, but it’s preventing you though from offering the best possible workplace. We are an Ed. Tech. [education technology] company that has a really critical mission of transforming the way the world learns and that will not happen if we have a homogeneous group of D2Lers who all think and act and are the same.... And the second lesson is that it is way less difficult than we think. We’re all accommodated in various ways here at our work environment

and we're all afforded the opportunity to bring our best versions of ourselves. That's a conversation that all of us are having with our managers and with each other every day, whether we have a visible challenge or something obvious that everybody knows about or not. That's happening every day for all of us."

~ Chantal Thorn, D2L



# Identifying and Removing Barriers to Inclusion

 *“Needing to remind people that accessibility should be considered – when designing products, services, facilities; when planning meetings, events; when recruiting new employees and building an inclusive workplace – this still needs to be done right now. But hopefully it’ll become a more automatic thing – like asking how many people are vegetarian when ordering food. It’s about recognizing and understanding that people have different needs. The sooner we accept that and include everyone in every decision, the better.”*

*~ TerriLynn Hulett, Team Leader Employment Services*

The first step to creating an inclusive workplace is to be able to recognize the barriers that exist and are preventing a workplace from being inclusive.

Employers can inadvertently create and maintain barriers within the workplace. Being aware of the wide range of accessibility barriers and considering them throughout the recruitment and employment process is essential towards moving forward to a truly inclusive workplace.

 [Building a company to address pain points of small business - Fable](#)

We recognize that, especially for small and medium sized ICT businesses, there is a need for specific skillsets – like quality assurance testing – but it’s difficult to recruit, hire, and retain skilled employees that live with a disability. Another huge barrier is providing an environment where the employee can meaningfully contribute to the company. To us, this means that there are real pain points for companies that current solution models aren’t addressing.

Similarly, we see the skills and qualifications in a population that is facing challenges themselves. Skilled software testers with disabilities are able to test products in many areas, including usability of accessibility features. Yet, they often face additional barriers. It’s a challenge to find work opportunities in the ICT sector if they’re not already part of the network or face challenges related to transportation. Working remotely and flexible schedules are extremely helpful. These elements don’t reduce the value to businesses, as long as the work gets done on time.

That's what Fable does. We set up the infrastructure to connect ICT businesses to the qualified testers they need access to. Our testers work remotely, which meets their needs, and they are able to earn a meaningful wage.

~ Alwar Pillai, former Manager of Accessibility at Rogers, current CEO and co-founder of Fable


## Identifying Barriers

A barrier is anything that keeps someone from fully participating in all aspects of society because of a disability. Barriers can be both visible and invisible. While barriers are often unintentional, they still can restrict people with disabilities from accessing goods, services, information, and facilities.

The five types of barriers identified in the AODA are:


- Attitude
- Architectural or structural
- Information or communication
- Technology
- Systemic

## Attitude

 *"I was a teacher for 28 years, and taught for 10 of those years while living with MS. What I learned very quickly was that physical barriers are the most obvious, but that attitudes and assumptions are the barriers that are the most difficult to confront and change."*

~ Jane Finlay, Retired Teacher, with Multiple Scoliosis

An attitudinal barrier is about what we think and how we interact with persons with disabilities. It is perhaps the most difficult barrier to overcome because our attitudes - based on our beliefs, knowledge, previous experience and education - can be hard to be aware of and be hard to change.

 *"Communication is the key to understanding, but sometimes I find myself being careful about what I say because I want to protect my peers and employers from feeling stressed or thinking that they need to solve or fix a situation. I can handle more than I'm given credit for. Sometimes kindness or wanting to protect me from struggling can become condescending and disrespectful. Give me the opportunity to do things differently than you, and I can accomplish more than you realize."*

~ Bobbi Moore, Member of Advisory Council for EnAbling Change Program

Attitudinal barriers occur when people do not know how to communicate with people with disabilities or people display discriminatory behaviour. If someone is uncomfortable interacting with a person with a disability or unsure if they should offer help, then they might avoid the situation or the individual. Some people may assume that someone with a speech problem also has an intellectual disability. People can display discriminatory behaviour by responding to someone with a disability in an impatient or condescending manner.

These reactions to people with disabilities are examples of attitudinal barriers. Attitudinal barriers are frequently mentioned by people with disabilities as the most challenging to deal with.

*“I live with bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder and depression. It has been a constant and awful struggle. I am an actor at my desk 95% of the time. I am not myself. If I want to keep my job, I leave myself at home.”*

*~ MaRS report, DIBs survey respondent*


### Architectural or structural

Architectural or structural barriers can result from design elements of a building, such as stairs, narrow doorways or hallways, or inaccessible washrooms. Structural barriers can be permanent or temporary.

Temporary structural barriers can occur through habits or practices that don’t consider accessibility needs. People might store boxes, furniture, or other objects in hallways and obstruct accessible pathways or in front of automatic door openers, preventing entry or exit to an area. Windows without blinds can produce glare and reduce visibility in a meeting room. Bathroom hardware can be positioned awkwardly or not provided.

Architectural and structural barriers are best addressed at the design stage. However, making modifications to remove barriers is often less costly than employers think.

### Information or communication

 *“With my hearing loss, participating in large meetings or on conference calls has presented a challenge. I’ve communicated those challenges to my employers and we’ve addressed any issues either through accommodations for the task or by job description adjustments.”*

*~ Constantine Grantcharov,  
Senior Cloud Security Architect at Huawei Technologies*

Information or communication barriers can make it difficult for people to receive or send information. For example, a person with a visual disability may not be able to read or complete an application form due to the size of printed materials. They may not be able to read directional signs in a building, locate landmarks, or see a hazard. A person

with an intellectual disability may not understand information that is not expressed in plain language. A person who is hard of hearing may not hear something said to them if the person speaking is not facing them.

Information and communication barriers are often identified and removed easily, through education and awareness or through making straightforward improvements of content or technology.

### Technology

Technology, or the lack of it, can prevent people from accessing information. Common tools like computers, telephones, or ineffective assistive technologies can all present barriers if they are not set up or designed with accessibility in mind.

### Systemic

Systemic barriers can result from an organization's policies, practices and procedures if they restrict or discriminate against persons with disabilities. This can often occur unintentionally, as in the case of making individuals line up in person for ticket purchases or not providing benefits to part-time employees.

### Removing Barriers

Not employing people with disabilities builds barriers that block people from enjoying the benefits of employment. But they also limit business growth, which affects employers and society.

### Preventing Barriers

Moving forward, employers - and society in general - need to consider the need for accessibility and inclusion at the design stage. Whether designing a new business, facility, product, service, or whether recruiting, hiring, or maintaining employees, accessibility needs to be considered at every stage. It's easier to be inclusive if you begin early in the process.

Preventing future barriers in a workplace will occur when being a diverse, accessible, and inclusive workplace becomes an integral part of an organization's operating culture. This takes leadership and sustainability.

### Consider Your Workplace

Consider what type of barriers are in effect in the following ICT examples, and consider what types of barriers might be in effect in your workplace.

#### Attitude

- Are new employees and contractors trained on AODA customer service and how to communicate with people with different types of disabilities?
- Is inclusion emphasized and demonstrated as a priority by managers and leaders in the organization?

- Are there manager or team expectations to contribute long work hours - based on ebbs and flows of ICT projects and project deadlines?
- Are expectations, assessments, and career advancement opportunities dependent on participation in inaccessible activities or events?
- Do company environments and activities focus on younger employees or physically or socially active employees developing connections and interacting in potentially inaccessible activities?
- Are employees with disabilities excluded from informal opportunities to connect or from formal work meetings - either actively or passively - by other employees?

### **Architectural or structural**

- Are there alternative workspaces to meet different needs - e.g., open workspaces can be energizing but also can be noisy and distracting?
- Are work, meetings, or social events held in older or heritage buildings or areas that are physically inaccessible?
- Are accessibility needs mentioned to clients and contacts when arranging consultations or meetings?

### **Information or communication**

- Is the company website AODA compliant?
- Are all required policies and procedures available in accessible or alternate formats?
- Is communication and planning for internal meetings, client meetings, or social events offered only in one format, reliant on social media or in-person participation?
- Is key information communicated verbally at meetings but not documented or converted in a timely manner to alternate formats?
- Is there a requirement for remote communication, often with team members working in different areas or time zones?
- Is accessibility considered when designing information, whether printed or online?
- Are accessibility needs mentioned to clients and contacts when arranging consultations or meetings?

### **Technology**

- Is hardware or software accessible for all users?
- If accessible technology is not available, are requests and opportunities for accommodations addressed promptly or are job descriptions or responsibilities modified instead to remove assigned tasks?
- Is accessibility incorporated as a priority in products developed?
- Are products tested for accessibility before being released?
- Are disruptive technologies introduced in a manner that ensures accessibility for everyone who requires it to perform their jobs?

### Systemic


- Is inclusion (diversity, accessibility) included in the company mission statement and goals?
- Is the organization AODA compliant, with an Accessibility Policy, and with new employees trained on AODA requirements?
- Are education and skillsets required on job descriptions up-to-date and reviewed to ensure they are as accessible and inclusive as possible (i.e., job descriptions might include requirements that are not necessary or requirements that could be modified through workplace accommodations)?
- Is there an expectation for employees to work on-site or remotely or is there flexibility?
- Does management seek new employees or contractors from a diverse range of sources?

### Leading by Example

*“The changing workspace will change the way we include people.”*

*~ Helle Bank Jorgensen, CEO, B.Accountability*

Becoming a truly inclusive organization requires courage. Organizations must choose to fundamentally change their culture—their way of acting and being - not just on the surface but through true organizational change.

 “The field that we recruit in, in IT, there is an expectation – certainly from millennials and a lot of people that are coming up – that this is a standard thing... they have expectations of the companies that they work for to be caring about [diversity and inclusion]... It’s more than just salary, it’s more than just what your company mission is, it’s ultimately how you treat people and how you tackle some of these bigger problems in the world. They want to see and work for companies that are working on improving. And with that, we also get access to more diversity of experience. That’s always a huge thing. Especially when we’re talking about our business, which is fundamentally about building software for people. That empathy of understanding of people and having those diverse viewpoints and opinions, helping us build our software in the right ways, is fundamentally important to doing it well and right. That’s a huge, huge benefit for us.”

*~ Nick Oddson, D2L*

Change management - in the ICT sector and elsewhere - is important to understand and to implement properly in order for change to be successful.

## Steps for Effective Change Management


1. Ensure the organization has a clear vision that mentions diversity and inclusion as a priority.
  - Make sure the commitment to diversity and inclusion is in writing and is public.
2. Ensure leadership behaviours are specific, visible, and inclusive
  - Inclusive organizations have leaders, management, and decision-makers who model inclusion and demonstrate that all individuals belong. They communicate and demonstrate to all staff that inclusive behaviour is expected.
3. Be open to challenges to inclusion and diversity.
  - Don't be afraid to discuss unconscious bias or address issues publicly.
4. Expect resistance.
  - Deep and lasting change in an organization often is accompanied by resistance. Anticipate the concerns and address them. Don't be afraid to embrace debate and be open to challenges.
5. Avoid tokenism.
  - Don't just hire for diversity; develop for diversity and true inclusion.
6. Develop leaders and staff as individuals.
  - Develop a deep understanding of everyone in the organization. Learn about their goals, strengths, limitations, and work to support and develop them with a long-term commitment.
7. Evaluate the effectiveness of changes.
  - Expect diversity in thought and ideas and be open to further changes and adjustments. Include everyone's feedback and value qualitative impact as well as quantitative impact.

## Best Practices

- The unemployment rate for Canadians with disabilities averages around 16% - that is more than 10% higher than the average unemployment rate witnessed among Canadians without disabilities (Turcotte 2)

Educated, skilled, qualified applicants with disabilities are out there. How do ICT employers find them?

### Recruitment and Selection


 *“Employers need to carefully review job descriptions, processes, methodology, etc. Modifications and accommodations made for one person might have a ripple effect throughout the department or the company.”*

*~ Constantine Grantcharov,  
Senior Cloud Security Architect at Huawei Technologies*

This section includes information on:

- promoting and advertising positions to people with disabilities;
- how to reach qualified applicants and job seekers with disabilities; and
- ICT-specific recruitment opportunities.

### Promoting Opportunities

 *“I feel like I’m doing everything I can to let employers know that I’m ready, willing, and more than able to do the job. If there are things I’m missing, I’d rather employers let me know rather than ignore me or not hire me. I can improve if I have clear feedback that I can respond to.”*

*~ David Wainberg, Member of Advisory Council for EnAbling Change Program*

Ensure that information related to the opportunity is accessible. This includes the position description, company information, and the application process.

In a survey conducted by PEAT (Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology), close to half of job seekers with disabilities (46 percent) reported that their most recent attempt to apply for a job online was “difficult to impossible.” (Source: PEAT) Some of the barriers they encountered included informational videos without captions, graphic images without text alternatives, applications that could be filled out only by using a mouse, inaccessible social media platforms or other forms of additional information or technical support. If your organization does not provide accessible job postings, application forms, promotional material, website, or customer service, then potential employees with disabilities will not feel welcome applying to your company.



Promote available positions - whether contract, part-time, or full-time - using a range of methods, including promoting postings and receiving applications through industry-specific social media, ICT professional associations, post-secondary institutions with ICT programs or universal design programs focusing on ICT, as well as ICT and job fair events.

### **Outreach to Students and Recent Graduates**

More than 45,000 students with disabilities are enrolled in colleges and universities in Ontario, and are preparing for careers in virtually all sectors. (Source: Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities)

The unemployment rate for youth with disabilities in Ontario is reported to be almost double that recorded by youth without disabilities. Even when employed, many youth with disabilities report under-employment (either working part-time or working in a job for which they are over-qualified).

Youth with disabilities often have a more difficult time connecting with employers. They face multiple barriers, including limited work experience, inadequate support when transitioning from school to work, and insufficient career preparation.

Establish connections with secondary and post-secondary academic institutions known for ICT-specific programs, including institutions that provide co-op and post-secondary connections for the ICT sector and people with disabilities. If you're seeking qualified candidates familiar with designing accessible ICT content, consider contacting coordinators of specialized programs in accessible media production or universal design practices.


#### *Making connections with qualified candidates - D2L*

At the 2014 Disabilities Mentoring Day, Matt Pharoah, a recent University of Waterloo Masters in Computer Science graduate with Asperger's Syndrome, shadowed D2L senior development manager Dinah Davis. At the end of the day, Matt had a mock interview. He so impressed the interviewer that he was called in for a formal interview and Dinah hired him. "Matt is very focused and dedicated," she says. "I think he's got a very successful career ahead of him."

~ Joanna Woo, HR Programs and Data Specialist, D2L, by email, April 13, 2015

Attend academic job fairs and post positions with post-secondary career centres. Many post-secondary institutions also have an Accessibility Coordinator or Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator that can assist with promoting opportunities to qualified candidates.

## Employment Agencies

 “Last year, I participated as a mentor [at Dolphin Disabilities Mentoring Day]. And when you’re working closely with somebody all day, very quickly you are aware of perhaps some of the assumptions that you’re making and of how little they really matter in the grand scheme of things when you’re thinking about somebody wanting to contribute to the mission that you’re here to achieve... It’s a fabulous opportunity... for us as a company to kind of just gently question ourselves about what assumptions might we have been having about what can and can’t be accomplished with somebody who presents as a disability.”

~ Chantal Thorn, D2L

Both people with disabilities and employers feel frustration in the face of complex and uncoordinated employment and training services. Job-seekers, employers, and employees want a seamless, easy-to-access system that provides information, services, resources, and support for all.

Employment supports are more effective when they are person-centered and guided by each individual’s interests and strengths. Connect with resources available in your area to help match available positions to qualified employees. This includes employment organizations that work with people with disabilities (such as March of Dimes Canada, Specialisterne Canada, and Fable). These organizations can help promote available positions to job seekers with various types of disabilities and in some cases provide pre-screening, matching, or sub-contracting to assist with filling available positions.

### Informing Applicants of Supports

Employers must also inform all employees, both new and existing, of their accessible employment practices. This includes, but is not limited to, policies on providing job accommodations that take into account an employee’s accessibility needs due to disabilities. Informing employees of supports makes all employees aware of how the organization can and will support them if they have a disability when hired or if they acquire a disability during their employment with the organization.


### Accessible Recruitment Process

When promoting positions, notify employees and the public that accommodations for job applicants with disabilities are available on request for the recruitment process. This can be as simple as including a standard statement in all job postings, either as part of a commitment to diversity and inclusion, or combined with information on how to request accommodations.

When inviting job applicants to participate in the selection process, inform them that accessibility accommodations are available upon request for interviews and other

selection processes. Ensure that staff responding to queries or scheduling interviews are informed and trained on how to respond to and address accommodation requests.

## Accessible Interviews

 “I think [participating in Dolphin Disabilities Mentoring Day] is a win-win because we are able to become more aware of a wide variety of skills in people that, perhaps prior to participating in Disabilities Mentoring Day, that we wouldn’t have known about necessarily. And also the people who are participating are given a real chance to shine and to highlight the skills that they bring to the table. So we really walk away with a simple but impactful opportunity to make a difference... for both us as an employer and for a large group of people who are perhaps often faced with barriers to getting their skills out there and employment opportunities that we might not have been able to support without participating in Disabilities Mentoring Day.”

~ Chantal Thorn, D2L


Ensure that those making interview arrangements and participating as interviewers are familiar with how to arrange and participate in accessible meetings and interviews. This includes being familiar with how to communicate with people with different types of disabilities, how to arrange the interview and any accommodations, and how to conduct an accessible meeting.

Consider the interview location (whether remote or on-site, consider accessibility, reducing possible distractions, confirming access for a service animal or support person), as well as the interview format (ensuring accessibility of any information and communication, timing and breaks), and format of any skills assessments tests or paperwork required from the applicant.

For detailed information, including hints and tips and meeting preparation checklists, see the *Guide to Conducting Accessible Meetings* ([https://www.omssa.com/docs/OMSSA\\_Conducting\\_Accessible\\_Meetings.pdf](https://www.omssa.com/docs/OMSSA_Conducting_Accessible_Meetings.pdf)).

When discussing or making a job offer to a successful applicant, inform them of your organization’s policies on accommodating employees with disabilities. Inform them in an accessible manner, both during the interview process and as part of the job offer.

## Accommodation at Work

 “One of the most fundamental things to get right is to ask them what they need and don’t assume things... talking with them and getting that feedback from them and understanding what their challenges are and what they’re looking for means that you can solve the problem better for them, which makes

it better for the whole company. I find that is probably one of the most important things to do and get right... And not only just ask them the first time, but also check in and get feedback... is it still working or do we need to change it again?”

~ Nick Oddson, D2L

This section includes information on:

- accommodation and supports of people with disabilities; and
- how to accommodate for people with various types of disabilities, including “invisible” disabilities.


### Informing Employees of Supports

Employers must inform all employees, both new and existing, of their accessible employment practices. This includes, but is not limited to, policies on providing job accommodations that take into account an employee’s accessibility needs due to disabilities. Informing employees of supports makes all employees aware of how the organization can and will support them if they have a disability when hired or if they acquire a disability during their employment with the organization.

### Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

Employees may request accessible formats and communication supports. This requirement is similar to requirements in the Information and Communications Standard in that employers must consult with employees to determine their accessibility needs and how best to accommodate them. Accessible formats, alternate formats, and communication supports can be requested for information required by the employee to perform their job, as well as information generally available for all employees.

### Accommodation Solutions

 *“Employers want to help change things, but they don’t always know how. They’re afraid of the unknown. They don’t know what supports are available. They don’t know what accommodations are needed or what will work. Individuals need to self-advocate and communicate to offer solutions.”*


*~ Louissa Regier,  
Senior Manager-National Contracts, Employment Services, March Of Dimes Canada*

Accommodations are tools, strategies, and reasonable adjustments to a job or work environment that enable employees with disabilities to do their jobs. The most common accommodations are modified or reduced hours or redesigning how jobs are performed.

Not all people with a disability need or request accommodations to perform their jobs and some might need only minor or a few accommodations. Most accommodations are also low cost or no cost, such as providing access to adaptive software or enabling a flexible work schedule. According to the US Job Accommodation Network, 57 per cent

of accommodations needed by employees cost absolutely nothing, while 36 per cent require an accommodation with a one-time cost of \$500 on average.

Successful job accommodations will vary from individual to individual. In addition, an accommodation that works well for one employee may not be right for someone else, even if the disabilities appear to be alike. It is essential that the employee and employer consult with each other and work together to find and implement the best possible accommodations.

 *“Most solutions (e.g., flexibility) don’t cost anything. Have the attitude, “Let’s try that out and see how it works.” And be willing to try a few things and see what works best. Don’t give up after one attempt – show the commitment to making things work. A quiet office and quiet communication are examples of accommodation I need. If you’re yelling at me from two cubes away, I’m not going to hear you. Also, let me know in advance when I’m expected to be on a call – I might take conference calls from home instead of in a loud meeting room. Remember: Individuals are the experts in their disability – they’ll work with you or take initiative to solve any issues; work with them to help resolve any work-related problems – don’t solve them in a way that you think will work, without discussing with them and reaching a consensus.”*

*~ Constantine Grantcharov,  
Senior Cloud Security Architect at Huawei Technologies*

## Examples of Employment Accommodations

### Employees who are Deaf, Deafened or Hard of Hearing

Hearing loss is a decrease in ability to hear and can occur at birth, suddenly, or gradually over time. Hearing loss can range from mild to severe.

#### **When communicating with the employee face-to-face:**

- Write notes with pen and paper, tablet or chalk board etc.
- Send email or text messages as an alternative to face-to-face communication (e.g., using a Smartphone).
- Use a personal assistive listening device or portable assistive listening system if the individual can benefit from amplification.

#### **When communicating in groups, meetings or training sessions:**

- Meet in a small group and sit at a round table that facilitates lip-reading.
- Provide written materials in advance, such as the meeting agenda or course materials.
- Hire a qualified sign language interpreter (ASL) or video remote interpreter on an as needed basis.
- Use relay conference captioning during group conference calls.
- Meet in a location where background noise is minimal or not present. When communicating with the employee by telephone

- Use a TTY.
- Use a video relay service.
- Use email or instant messaging instead of regular phone. When using sounds in the environment to communicate to a wide group of employees.
- Use a visual or vibrating alerting device. Alerting devices are used to alert people to a broad range of sounds, such as abnormal machine sounds, timers, a telephone ringing and emergency signals. Modify equipment by adding a light to the sound source.

### Employees Who Have Vision Loss

Vision loss results from conditions that range from:

- some usable vision
- low vision
- total blindness

#### When providing printed material to an employee:

##### Low Vision

- Provide a hand, stand or portable magnifier.
- Provide information in large print (recommended font size is at least 16 point but preferably 18 point).
- Use colour paper, acetate sheet or overlay to increase colour contrast between printed text and document background.

##### No Vision

- Use auditory versions of printed documents.
- Use documents formatted in braille.
- Use Optical Character Recognition (OCR) which scans printed text and provides a synthetic speech output or text-based computer file

#### When helping employees to access computers

##### Low Vision

- Provide screen magnification software.
- Provide an anti-glare guard and computer glasses to reduce glare.
- Allow for frequent breaks to rest eyes when fatigue is a factor.

##### No Vision

- Provide screen reading software.
- Provide computer braille display.

#### When employees have difficulty taking notes or writing down information

##### Low Vision

- Provide pens that include a bold felt tip or lighted pen.
- Provide paper with tactile lines, bold print or low glare.

##### No Vision

- Provide laptops with speech output or braille display.
- Provide digital recorder.

### Employees Who Have Mental Health Disabilities

Mental health disabilities include a broad spectrum of conditions and experiences. They have an adverse effect on an individual's mental health, emotional well-being and sense of self. Some examples of more common mental health disabilities are:

- anxiety
- depression
- obsessive compulsive disorders

#### **When an employee needs flexible work hours**

- Allow time off work for rehabilitation, assessments, medication counselling, and psychotherapy appointments.
- Work with the employee to adapt break schedules and work hours.

#### **When an employee easily loses concentration**

- Reduce distractions in the work area:
- Provide space enclosures, sound absorption panels, or a private office.
- Allow the employee to listen to soothing music using headphones.
- Plan for uninterrupted work time.
- Divide large assignments into smaller tasks and goals.
- Restructure job to include only essential functions.

#### **When an employee needs help to stay organized**

- Use daily, weekly and monthly task lists.
- Use a colour coding scheme to prioritize tasks.
- Divide larger assignments into smaller tasks and goals.

#### **When an employee has a panic attack**

Allow the employee to take a break and go to a place where he or she feels comfortable to use relaxation techniques or contact a support person.

### Employees Who Use Wheelchairs

People use wheelchairs for a variety of reasons and may have a wide variety of limitations. They may need assistance with personal care while at work. As well, they may encounter a variety of obstacles such as:

- Getting to their workstations
- Working at their desks
- Attending meetings and training sessions
- Attending meetings or events off-site

#### **When an employee's daily living requirements need accommodation**

- Allow the person to take periodic rest breaks.

#### **When a workstation requires adjustments to allow the employee to do their job**

- Provide an adjustable desk or table.
- Provide page turners and book holders for those who cannot manipulate paper.



- Provide writing aids for those who cannot grip a writing tool.
- Provide voice activated speaker phone, large button phone, automatic dialling system, and/or headset, depending on the person's limitations and preferences.
- Provide alternative access for computers such a speech recognition trackballs, key guards, alternative key boards, and/or mouth sticks.

**When accessing the worksite is difficult or an employee**

- Provide flexible scheduling so a person who cannot drive can access public transportation.
- Provide accessible restrooms, lunchrooms, break rooms etc.
- Allow the person to work from home if he or she cannot get to the work site

**Employees Who Have Intellectual Disabilities**

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities may experience limitations in:

- cognitive abilities
- motor abilities
- social abilities

These limitations can affect workplace performance. However, people with intellectual disabilities successfully perform a wide range of jobs, and can be dependable workers.

**When an employee needs help with reading information**

- Provide pictures, symbols, or diagrams instead of words.
- Provide written information in audio format.
- Use voice output on computer. When an employee has trouble writing, e.g., responding to a questionnaire
- Allow a verbal response instead of a written response.
- Provide templates or forms to prompt information requested.

**When an employee needs help with time management**

- Provide verbal, written or symbolic reminders.
- Use task list with numbers or symbols.
- Provide additional training or retraining as needed.

**When an employee has gross or fine motor limitations**

- Use large button phone, headset.
- Use orthopaedic writing aids.
- Use grip aids.

**When an employee's social skills are limited**

- Provide emotional support.
- Give positive feedback and encouragement.
- Use visual performance charts.
- Provide help interacting with co-workers



- Use co-workers as mentors and provide disability awareness training to all employees.
- Use role-play scenarios to demonstrate appropriate behaviour in workplace.
- Model appropriate social skills such as where to eat, when to hug, how to pay for coffee, and how to ask for help.

### Employees Who Have Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities affect the ability to:

- speak or use written language
- do mathematical calculations
- coordinate movements

Many people develop coping skills through:

- special education
- tutoring
- medication
- therapy

### When an employee has trouble understanding the written word

- Use tape-recorded messages and materials.
- Double space text in printed materials.
- Provide screen reading software for computers.
- Use a reading pen that scans a word and provides auditory feedback.

### When the employee has trouble writing down information

- Provide personal computers/laptops.
- Use software program that assists with spelling, reading and grammar.
- Use speech recognition software that recognizes the employee's voice and changes it to text on the computer screen.
- Use plain language.

### When mathematics is a problem for an employee

- Use calculators with large display screens.
- Provide talking tape measure.
- Provide Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) software for mathematics.

### When an employee needs help organizing work, or with time management

- Use day planners or electronic organizers.
- Allow the employee to attend time management workshops.
- Provide checklists to help employee remember tasks.
- Divide large assignments into smaller tasks and goals.

### Employees Who Have Environmental Sensitivities

Environmental sensitivities are generally an inability to tolerate an environmental chemical or class of foreign chemicals. Symptoms may include:

- headaches
- dizziness
- fatigue
- nausea
- breathing difficulties
- difficulty concentrating
- memory loss
- eczema
- arthritis-like sensations
- muscle pain

#### **When ventilation and indoor air quality is an issue**

- Provide an office or workspace with windows that open.
- Use air purification systems.
- Maintain a work environment which is free of pollutants such as fragrances, toxic cleaning agents, pesticides, exhaust fumes etc.
- Provide additional rest breaks for the individual to step out for fresh air or take medication.
- Have an air quality test performed by an industrial hygiene professional to assess poor air quality, dust mould, mildew etc.

#### **When undertaking construction, remodelling, and cleaning activities**

- Provide notification ahead of time for remodelling, painting, pesticide applications, carpet shampooing, floor axing etc.
- Allow for alternative work arrangements for those people who may be sensitive to the chemical agents used.
- Use non-toxic materials and supplies.

### Documented Individual Accommodation Plans

A documented individual accommodation plan is a formal way of recording and reviewing the workplace-related accommodations that will be provided to an employee with a disability.

Employers must work with an employee with a disability to determine the accommodations appropriate for meeting an individual's accommodation needs. For example, it might include the need to provide screen reader software for a computer.

Individual accommodation plans are required if requested by an employee. However, a process for creating documented accommodation plans is an AODA compliance requirement only for large organizations (50 or more employees). For large

organizations, this process must include procedures describing how your company will address the following:

- How an employee participates in the development of their individual accommodation plan;
- How an employee is assessed on an individual basis;
- How a unionized employee can ask for a representative from their bargaining agent, and how a non-unionized employee can ask for a representative from the workplace to participate in the development of the accommodation plan;
- How assistance can be requested from an outside expert, at your expense;
- The steps you will take to protect the privacy of the employee's personal information;
- The schedule for when and how the plan will be reviewed and updated;
- How an employee will be provided with an individual accommodation plan that considers their disability accommodation needs; and
- How you will tell an employee if and why their individual accommodation plan has not been accepted.

1. Recognize the need for accommodation

2. Gather relevant information and assess needs.

3. Write a formal individual accommodation plan.

4. Implement the accommodation plan.

5. Monitor and review the accommodation plan and, if accommodation is no longer appropriate, return to step 2.

### Workplace Emergency Response Information

Employers must provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees with disabilities, if the disability makes it necessary and the employer is aware of the need. With the employee's consent, you must ensure that relevant information is shared with anyone designated to assist in an emergency. This information should be included in an individual accommodation plan.

Workplace emergency response information must be reviewed when:

- The employee moves to a different physical location in the organization;
- The employee's overall accommodation needs are reviewed; or
- You review your organization's emergency response policies.

## Arranging Accessible Meetings and Events

To ensure that meetings and events are inclusive, individuals tasked with making arrangements should be trained and aware of how to meet common accessibility requirements. They should also ensure that they communicate with all potential attendees to clarify the accommodation request process and timeline.

Depending on the type of disability and accommodation requests indicated by employees or meeting participants, various arrangements might be required related to the facility, presentations, activities, and support or emergency planning. Some of these arrangements might be simple and straightforward, while others may take advance preparation (for example, arranging sign language interpreters, providing information in alternate formats).

For detailed information on how to arrange accessible meetings and events, including hints and tips and planning checklists, see the *Guide to Conducting Accessible Meetings* ([https://www.omssa.com/docs/OMSSA\\_Conducting\\_Accessible\\_Meetings.pdf](https://www.omssa.com/docs/OMSSA_Conducting_Accessible_Meetings.pdf)), which includes the following content.

### Step 1: Planning the Meeting

- *Budgeting*
- *Selecting the venue*
- *Developing the agenda*
- *Inviting participants*
- *Promoting the meeting*
- *Registering participants*
- *Making presentations accessible*
- *Training staff and volunteers*
- *Emergency planning*

### Step 2: Conducting the Meeting

- *Walking through the venue*
- *Beginning the meeting*
- *Taking breaks*

### Step 3: Evaluating the Meeting

- *Debriefing staff and presenters*
- *Inviting participant feedback*

## Retaining and Developing Employees

This section includes information on:

- how to create an inclusive environment;
- how to assist employees with various types of disabilities develop in a culture that can be challenging for some (for example, where there is a commitment to working long hours or overtime, an expectation for active networking and socializing, or the need to maintain current knowledge through attending remote conferences or off-site training courses); and
- how to modify performance management goals.


Retaining employees with disabilities is largely a matter of creating a supportive and inclusive environment for everyone.

Employees with disabilities generally have better retention and productivity rates. They also have a beneficial impact on other employees, particularly millennials, who will comprise 75 percent of the global workforce by 2025, and who are looking for employers who also value and embrace diversity.

- 74 percent of millennials believe that their organization is more innovative when it has a culture of inclusion. (2018 Deloitte Millennial Survey)

There are many ways for employers to exhibit their commitment to accessibility and inclusion. Some examples include:

### Education and Training:

 *“Fortunately, in my career, I haven’t experienced push-back from my managers and supervisors, but the personalities and fit have been a big part of that. Interviews are a two-way street – it’s important to get to know the person you’re going to be reporting to, understand their management and communication style, their way of doing things, their values and priorities. Similar, complementary, respectful personalities, and clear and open communication are key. And there has to be some suitability and ability for people with disabilities to perform the job. A good fit is still needed.”*


*~ Constantine Grantcharov,  
Senior Cloud Security Architect at Huawei Technologies*

- Include accessibility topics at regular (e.g., annual) trainings, AGMs
- Include accessibility topics in corporate communications, health and safety updates
- Include accessibility and accommodation topics in HR and management training sessions (reinforce examples of accommodation, emphasize that employees should not be afraid to disclose or request support; provide additional awareness

or sensitivity training where managers exhibit awkward or uncomfortable behaviour; test awareness of both compliance and beyond compliance information)

- Have a change management plan in place when new accessibility policies, procedures, or information are shared; assess the success of changes being implemented

### Marketing and Promotional Campaigns:


 *“Resources are available – occupational therapists, ergonomic tools and resources, staff training. We need to make sure employers know that support is available. We can help provide solutions to help employers become inclusive, because they want to be.”*

*~ Louissa Regier*


*Senior Manager-National Contracts, Employment Services, March Of Dimes Canada*

- Accessibility posters in the workplace or online promotional campaigns to encourage and show an inclusive workplace (e.g., “we can help” - if you’re feeling stressed, injured, need to address a change in your health - diversity makes us stronger).

### Open Communication:

 *“Becoming disabled while already an employee presented different challenges. I wasn’t comfortable disclosing to everyone. I began sharing my MS diagnosis on a “need-to-know” basis. I confided in people only if I needed to modify my responsibilities, not take on as many ‘extra’ tasks, or needed advance notification of fire drills. I would have liked to be more open about my situation, but I was concerned about what the reaction might be.”*

*~ Jane Finlay, Retired Teacher, with Multiple Scoliosis*

 *“I have a university degree and I’m qualified and capable to do many jobs. But my invisible disability sometimes results in ‘inappropriate’ behaviour or communication. The way I interpret the world means that sometimes I feel like a goaltender who needs to guess or anticipate where the ball is going to come from. It’s not always obvious to me what the right move is, but with experience and support, I can learn and get better at communication.”*

*~ David Wainberg, Member of Advisory Council for EnAbling Change Program*

- Provide opportunities for anonymous questions, online chats
- Encourage open discussion at staff meetings re: accessibility questions, concerns, suggestions, changes in policies or procedures



### Setting the stage for success – Specialisterne Canada

Open communication is so important for successful employee retention and development. We provide support to both neurodiverse employees and their managers. We help them develop communication strategies, to learn about different communication and learning styles, and work with both parties to support the development of effective and productive working relationships to ensure long-term retention.

We know employers sometimes have concerns or fears about working with people with disabilities – What do managers need to know? What do they need to do or say differently? What if they're unable to provide requested accommodations? Our staff members work with everyone involved during the recruitment and onboarding stages, and we make sure that we transfer the knowledge to the business, to ensure long-term operating success, using the principles and communication methods that we teach them.

~ Julia Martensson, Relationship Manager, Recruitment

### **Performance Management**

The Employment Standard requires that processes for performance management take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities. These requirements apply only if the organization currently has these processes in place. Organizations are not required to establish these processes if they do not currently exist.

### **Career Development**

The Employment Standard requires that processes for career development take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities. These requirements apply only if the organization currently has these processes in place. Organizations are not required to establish these processes if they don't currently exist.

### **Return-to-Work Process**

The Employment Standard requires that processes for return-to-work redeployment take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities. These requirements apply only if the organization currently has these processes in place. Organizations are not required to establish these processes if they don't currently exist.

## Tools and Templates

The following tools and templates are available in The Conference Board of Canada's Employers' Toolkit: Making Ontario Workplaces Accessible to People With Disabilities (2015).

- Job Posting and Outreach Checklist (summarizing and linking to organizations, programs, conferences, etc. noted in Recruitment section)
- Accessible Interviewing Checklist (with alternative interview formats)
- Sample Interview Script Guidelines (and alternatives to traditional interview methods and questions)
- Sample Notification to Successful Applicants
- Sample Functional Capacity Assessment (Full) Form
- Sample Functional Capacity Assessment (Short) Form
- Sample Written Accommodation Process
- Sample Individual Accommodation Plan
- Examples of Job Accommodations
- Sample Worksheet: Identification of Potential Barriers During an Emergency Response
- Sample Individualized Employee Emergency Response Information Form
- Sample Job Task Analysis Form
- Performance Management Checklist (including how to assist employees with disabilities in staying current and connected with changing ICT skill requirements)
- Sample Return-to-Work Process
- Sample Return-to-Work Plan Form
- Funding and Other Resources to Support Hiring and Retaining Employees with Disabilities



# Employer Resources

## Education and Training

- **AccessAbility Advantage**  
<http://accessabilityadvantage.ca/>
- **Access Forward Employment Standard Training Module**  
<http://www.accessforward.ca/front/employment/>
- **March of Dimes Canada Training Institute**  
<https://www.marchofdimes.ca/EN/programs/Pages/Training-Institute.aspx>

## Employment Services

- **March of Dimes Canada Employment Services**  
<https://www.marchofdimes.ca/EN/programs/employer/Pages/Contact-Us-for-Employers.aspx>
- **Fable Tech Labs**  
<https://www.makeitfable.com/>  
Fable is an accessibility platform that businesses use to engage people with disabilities in user-testing and direct consultations.
- **Specialisterne**  
<http://ca.specialisterne.com/>  
Specialisterne is an international organization focused on harnessing the talents of people on the autism spectrum and with other neurodiversities. Using a specialized recruitment model, Specialisterne recruits employees and provides them with the opportunity to sustain meaningful employment and provides businesses with talented employees.

## Making Connections

- **Dolphin Disabilities Mentoring Day**  
<http://disabilitiesmentoringday.org/>  
Dolphin Disabilities Mentoring Day (DMD) is an annual event that was established in 2011 to match talented people with disabilities with mentors in the workplace for a shared learning experience. Dolphin DMD provides employers with the opportunity to learn about the extent of the skillsets and expertise available in the largely untapped pool of people with disabilities and offers potential

employees the opportunity to gain insight and confidence from practicing professionals.

- **Canadian Business SenseAbility**

<http://senseability.ca/>

Canadian Business SenseAbility is a national business network dedicated to helping private and public sector organizations become more accessible and inclusive of people with disabilities.

- **The Ontario Job Opportunity Information Network (JOIN)**

[www.joininfo.ca](http://www.joininfo.ca)

JOIN is a network of 22 community agencies in the Greater Toronto Area. It helps employers match their hiring needs to suitable candidates with disabilities and offers other services related to mentoring, support with job accommodations, and networking and career marketplace events.

## Additional Information

*AccessON Handbook for Accessible Employment*

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