

Seeing beyond
the disability



Guide for Employers Wishing to Hire or Retain Employees with Disabilities

Independent Living
Vie autonome



Péninsule Acadienne Inc.





Guide for Employers

Wishing to Hire or Retain Employees with Disabilities



Seeing beyond the disability



Infirmity doth still neglect all office

Whereto our health is bound; We are not ourselves

When nature, being oppress'd, commands the mind to suffer with the body.

William Shakespeare,
King Lear, Act II, Scene 4 (1606).



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Our mission

Promote and foster the progressive responsibility of people with disabilities in the community to help them develop and manage their personal and community resources.

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We want to point out that the statements in this document are not binding in any way on approaches and methods. This guide is intended to provide support. [Our guide is simply designed to support employers in their efforts to hire or retain employees with disabilities.]



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION..... 6

DISABILITIES 7

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR THE EMPLOYER..... 11

 Why hire a person with a disability? 11

 Advantages of hiring a person with a disability 12

 Facts and helpful tips for interactions with employees with disabilities..... 13

 Legal responsibilities of Canadian employers..... 14

 Psychological safety in the workplace 16

INTEGRATION OF EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES..... 17

 Employer’s role 17

 Workplace accommodation 19

 Examples of accommodations and accommodation tools..... 22

 Work integration period 25

 Action plan to accommodate an employee with a disability..... 26

EMPLOYEE ACCOMMODATION ACCORDING TO DISABILITY 30

 Motor disability 30

 Visual impairment..... 36

 Hearing impairment..... 45

 Intellectual disability..... 52

 Psychological disability..... 60

 Debilitating diseases..... 67

A FEW STATISTICS..... 75

LEXICON..... 77

SERVICES AND USEFUL LINKS 78

BIBLIOGRAPHY 80



INTRODUCTION

This guide, structured according to disability types, is intended for employers seeking to hire and/or retain people with disabilities.

The kit is intended to demystify the various types of disabilities, and above all to provide the necessary support to employers who want to hire and/or retain employees with a disability. It is also designed to answer the many questions employers might have on the topic.

Employers may have concerns and questions about hiring people with a disability, such as:

- How should I treat the person?
- Do I have the resources required to meet the person's needs?
- I am not familiar with the laws that protect people with disabilities.
- Where can I get information about it?
- Who do I consult if I have any doubts?

Questions that we asked ourselves in producing this guide:

- Where can you find a definition of disability, of a person with a disability?
- What are the categories of disabilities?
- How can they be classified and demystified?

Answers: After considerable research, we relied on the information provided by the World Health Organization (WHO).



DISABILITIES

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) defines disabilities as an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. Disability is the interaction between individuals with a health condition (e.g. cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, and depression) and personal and environmental factors (e.g. negative attitudes, inaccessible transportation and public buildings, and limited social supports).

Source: WHO, "Disability and Health," *World Health Organization*, <http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health>





Motor disability

Physical or motor impairments affect the body’s motor apparatus, and interfere with motor skills or mobility. They are progressive, cognitive, or stable.

Source: Le Phénix, *Services à la clientèle: guide pratique*, p. 19, http://lephenix.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Guide_Phenix_Service.pdf.

Hearing impairment

Hearing loss occurs when a person is not able to hear as well as someone with normal hearing, with a hearing threshold of 25dB or better in both ears. Hearing loss may be mild, moderate, severe, or profound. It can affect one or both ears and leads to difficulty in hearing conversational speech or hearing loud sounds.

Source: WHO, “Deafness and Hearing Loss,” *World Health Organization*, <http://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/deafness-and-hearing-loss>.

Visual impairment

According to the 10th revision of the international disease classification (ICD – revised in 2006), comprises four main categories:

- normal vision;
- moderate visual impairment;
- severe visual impairment;
- blindness.

Moderate and severe visual impairment are grouped together under the term “low vision”: low vision and blindness account for all visual impairments.

Source: WHO, “Blindness and Vision Impairment,” *World Health Organization*, <http://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/blindness-and-visual-impairment>

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Mental disability

The WHO defines mental retardation as being “arrested or incomplete mental development characterized by impairment of faculties and overall intelligence in areas such as cognition, language, motor and social abilities. Also referred to as intellectual disability or handicap...”

Source: WHO, *World Health Report 2001: Mental Health: New Understanding, New Hope*, p. 35, http://www.who.int/whr/2001/en/whr01_en.pdf?ua=1.

Psychological disability

There are many different mental disorders with different presentations. They are generally characterized by a combination of abnormal thoughts, perceptions, emotions, behaviours, and relationships with others.

Mental disorders include depression, bipolar affective disorder, schizophrenia and other psychoses, dementia, intellectual disabilities, and developmental disorders including autism.

Source: *Mental Disorders*, World Health Organization, <http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-disorders>

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Debilitating disease

To a large extent, they are chronic diseases that limit the daily activities of those who suffer from them and may sometimes make their tasks difficult to perform. They may be temporary, permanent, or progressive.

Examples include asthma, epilepsy, Crohn's disease, respiratory diseases, diabetes, hemophilia, and cancer.



Talk to your employee to find out his or her special needs and see that the person participates in the accommodation process.



GENERAL INFORMATION FOR THE EMPLOYER

Why hire a person with a disability?

The ageing of the population, reduction of the workforce, organizational restructuring, and equal opportunity laws are some of the factors requiring organizations to develop creative approaches to employee management. Employers must attract, recruit, and retain skilled, competent employees.

People with disabilities are generally under-employed, but comprise a pool of skilled, competent candidates ready to fill your positions.

Flourishing businesses know that **when a company's recruitment and hiring practices include an initiative for including people with disabilities, they necessarily benefit** from greater innovation, increased productivity and profitability, a reduction in recruitment costs, and the ability to retain skilled staff.

Source: New Brunswick Employer Support Services, Make Your Business More Profitable with an Inclusive Workforce, <https://employersupport.nb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/NBESS-Prochure.pdf>.



Advantages of hiring a person with a disability

- The employee's participation in your company promotes that person's economic interest and that of society.
- The company that incorporates a person with a disability into its staff is committing an act of solidarity and creating an inclusive workplace.
- People without disabilities often admire the good will of companies that employ people with disabilities.
- The presence of a person with a disability among the staff promotes mutual help, team spirit, and cohesiveness, which are fundamental within the company and essential to its operation.
- Employing workers with disabilities shows the quality of human resource management within the company. By definition, human resource management involves getting people with their individual characteristics to work together, since we are all unique, and to take each person's differences and specific qualities into account. A good manager must therefore know how to manage the integration of a colleague with a disability into a team, taking his or her individuality into account.
- The inclusion of people with disabilities in workplaces promotes innovation. The accommodation of a position for the special needs of a worker with a disability can help everyone and strongly increase the company's productivity. Major innovations were originally developed to meet the needs of people with disabilities (remote control for quadriplegics, SMS messages for the deaf).
- Employees with disabilities generally work harder than others because they want to show that they are as competent and fully able to perform their job. The work done by the person in overcoming the difficulties posed by their disability can inspire and motivate their fellow workers to do the same and to give their best.



Facts and helpful tips for interactions with employees with disabilities

- The presence of a person with a disability makes coworkers aware of the situation of people with disabilities and fosters team spirit and mutual help. It can become an internal motivating force.
- The ability and determination of a person with a disability to overcome difficulties connected with an incapacity are a stimulant for all.
- People with disabilities have professional skills that they want to put to work for your company.
- People with disabilities have the same skills as those without disabilities, which can result in advantages to the company and give it added value.
- Accommodations (accessibility) made for an employee with a disability are often beneficial to all staff (ramp, ergonomics of the workplace).
- Most people with a disability do not need special accommodations.
- If you have to adapt an employee's workplace, bear in mind that accommodation needs vary from person to person.
- Speak to your employee with a disability to find out his or her individual needs and see that he or she participates in the accommodation process.
- The cost of certain accommodations is often minimal.
- Be respectful of employees with a disability.
- Help employees with a disability if they request it.
- Be patient with employees with a disability.
- Speak well of employees with a disability when talking to other staff members about them.



Legal responsibilities of Canadian employers

Following are some important points concerning the legal responsibilities of Canadian employers:

- A person with a disability is not required to inform the employer about a disability if he or she can perform the work required without accommodation and the disability poses no danger to that person or the other employees.
- An employer must offer accommodations for any disability, subject to undue hardship, whether it is visible or not.
- An employer may ask questions concerning the duties of the position and the ability of the person to perform such duties.
- An employer does not have the right to ask questions about the name of a person's disability or medical diagnosis.
- All the information provided by a person with a disability is confidential and protected.

Each jurisdiction (province/territory and federal agency) of Canada has numerous **REFERENCE SOURCES**, including:

- employment legislation, which forms the basis of workplace rights;
- human rights legislation, designed to fight against discrimination; and
- workers' compensation and occupational safety legislation, which is related to occupational health and safety and disability insurance.



It is important for an employer to be aware of the laws that apply in his or her region. Even though provincial laws vary, there are some FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS:

- Everyone must be treated respectfully and equitably, regardless of their disability situation.
- Accommodations must be offered to people who need them unless these measures cause undue hardship.
- Accommodations may be necessary at all stages of the workplace relationship, including the hiring process.
- Requirements of the workplace or position should be reasonable and relevant, not arbitrary.
- Workers who have suffered permanent injuries have the right to re-enter the workplace.

Source: CBDC Restigouche, *Employer Toolkit – Condensed Printable Version: Find the Right Talent for Your Business*, p. 14, [https://hirefortalent.ca/images/pdf/Employer Toolkit Condensed Printable Version.pdf](https://hirefortalent.ca/images/pdf/Employer_Toolkit_Condensed_Printable_Version.pdf).

An applicant or an employee has a legal obligation to reveal a disability to the employer:

- if this disability could affect his or her performance or ability to carry out the tasks of the position;
- if this disability could negatively affect the person's health or safety or the health and safety of another employee.

Source: CBDC Restigouche, *Employer Toolkit – Condensed Printable Version: Find the Right Talent for Your Business*, p. 15, [https://hirefortalent.ca/images/pdf/Employer Toolkit Condensed Printable Version.pdf](https://hirefortalent.ca/images/pdf/Employer_Toolkit_Condensed_Printable_Version.pdf).



Psychological safety in the workplace

Whether an employee is living with a disability or not, issues of psychological health and safety in the workplace are the same:

The 13 factors of psychological health and safety in the workplace (PH & S) are as follows:

- Balance;
- Organizational Culture;
- Psychological and Social Support;
- Clear Leadership and Expectations;
- Civility and Respect;
- Psychological Demands;
- Growth and Development;
- Recognition and Reward;
- Involvement and Influence;
- Workload Management;
- Engagement;
- Psychological Protection;
- Protection of Physical Safety.

Source: Mental Health Commission of Canada, 13 Factors: Addressing Mental Health in the Workplace, Mental Health Commission of Canada / Commission de la santé mentale du Canada, <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/13-factors-addressing-mental-health-workplace>.



INTEGRATION OF EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

Employer's role

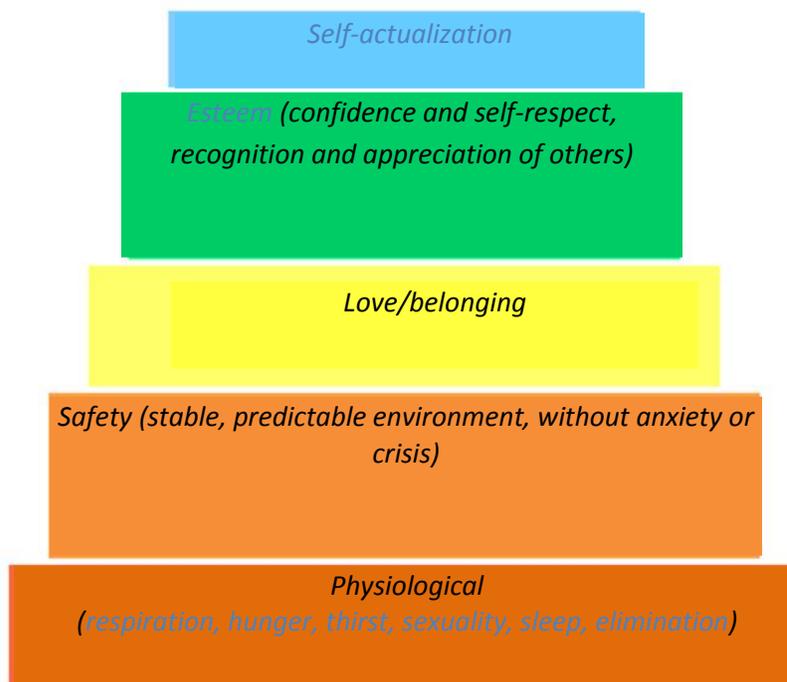
- Pinpoint the special needs of employees with a disability.
- Become familiar with the employee's needs.
- Emphasize the employee's abilities.
- Explain the company's priorities and activities to the employee.
- Give the employee a precise description of the tasks to be performed.
- Adapt the environment to make it accessible to the employee.
- Discuss the employee's work and needs with him or her regularly.
- Direct, support, and supervise the employee.
- Implement emergency measures at the company and let the employee know about them.



Pyramid of needs

The pyramid of needs is a representation of the hierarchy of needs in pyramid form, a theory of motivation developed from observations made in the 1940s by psychologist Abraham Maslow. Maslow wrote about his theory for the first time in an article entitled, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” which appeared in 1943.

This diagram is still used frequently today.



Pyramid of needs.

Source: Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, *Wikipedia*, online: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/hierarchy_of_needs.

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Workplace accommodation

As an employer, you might have to adapt the work environment of one of your current employees to enable him or her to participate in the job application process or to perform professional duties. The most common workplace accommodation requested is a modified work schedule or job description.

Statistics Canada defines workplace accommodations as modifications to the job or work environment that enable a person with activity limitations to participate fully in the workforce. Such modifications include, among other things, the schedule, duties, software, materials, and structural elements such as railings and adapted toilets. The most common accommodations for employees with activity limitations are modified working hours and/or days and reduced schedules.

It should be noted that most people with disabilities do not need special accommodations. If you need to adapt an employee's workplace, bear in mind that needs vary from one individual to another. Speak to your employee to find out about their special needs and see that they participate in the accommodation process. Also note that the cost of some accommodations is often minimal. If there is strong evidence that the necessary accommodations cannot be made because they would cause your company "undue hardship" you have the right to refuse to provide them.

Undue hardship: According to subsection 15(2) of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, undue hardship occurs when "accommodation of the needs of an individual or a class of individuals affected would impose undue hardship on the person who would have to accommodate those needs, considering health, safety and cost."

Source: Le Phenix, *L'inclusion de la personne en situation de handicap en milieu de travail guide pratique à l'intention de l'employeur*, http://lephenix.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Guide_Phenix_Emploi.pdf



It should be noted that the cost of some accommodations is minimal.

If there is strong evidence that the necessary accommodations cannot be made because they would cause your company “undue hardship,” you have the right to refuse to provide them.

Incorporation of certain factors into your accommodation plan

According to the standard, the development of accommodation plans ought to contain various elements:

- how the employee can participate in the process;
- how the employer can request assistance from an outside expert to determine an employee’s accommodation needs;
- action taken to protect the confidential nature of the personal information;
- how often the plan is reviewed.

Source: Le Phenix, *L’inclusion de la personne en situation de handicap en milieu de travail: guide pratique à l’intention de l’employeur*, p. 15, http://lephenix.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Guide_Phenix_Emploi.pdf



Accessibility

The *Cambridge* dictionary defines accessibility as follows: “The fact of being able to be reached or obtained easily: *the theater offers full wheelchair accessibility.*”

According to the WHO, accessibility is made up of four interdependent dimensions:

- non-discrimination;
- physical accessibility;
- economic accessibility;
- accessibility of information.

Source: WHO, Human Rights and Health, *World Health Organization*,
<http://origin.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs323/en/>.



Examples of accommodations and accommodation tools

Following are **some examples** of accommodations the employer can put in place, generally after assessing the employee's needs.

- Modify the employee's work schedule and be flexible.
- Allow the employee to work part time (reduced schedule).
- Modify work days.
- Modify tasks assigned to the employee.
- Increase the frequency of breaks.
- Extend the period dedicated to workplace orientation.
- Relocate the employee's work station.
- Have a resource person in the company (another employee) whom the employee with a disability can consult.

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Accommodation tool

The iPad is an excellent device for many reasons, including the multitude of applications available to help perform almost any task. Even before discussing applications, the iPad itself has some wonderful functionalities. Among our favourites are word text summary, Speak Selection, voice recognition or dictation, and of course Guided Access. The good thing about these functionalities is that they can be used within any application on your iPad or iPhone.



Source : [Neil Squire Society](https://www.neilsquire.ca/ipad-assistivetechology-ipad-comme-la-technologie-dassistance/), “iPad as assistive technology = iPad comme la technologie d’assistance,” *Neil Squire Society*, <https://www.neilsquire.ca/ipad-assistivetechology-ipad-comme-la-technologie-dassistance/>.



Personalized guidance

Personalized guidance is a measure that offers people with disabilities some supervision to enable them to gain maximum autonomy.

An example of such guidance is developing a work plan based on their skills.



Vers votre plein Potentiel	Reaching for your full potential
Votre bien-être est important pour nous!	Your well-being is important to us!



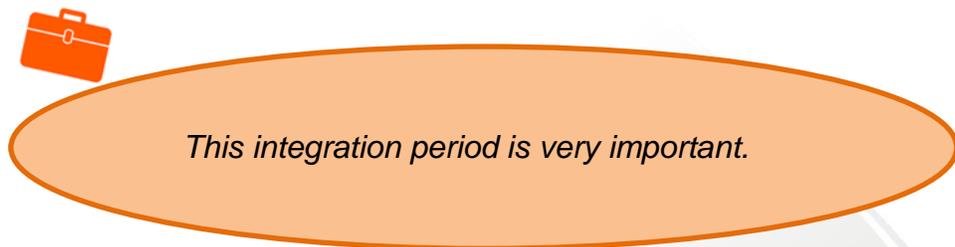
A person with a disability must be deemed to have his or her own needs and expectations.



Workplace integration period

For some people with a disability, the workplace integration process involves several steps that may be easy or that could be more difficult, leading people who are hypersensitive to change to abandon their plan to take on a new job.

It is necessary to plan several integration phases (and a training period designed to change into a part-time or full-time work contract, for example), during which it is necessary to be attentive to the changing needs of the person with a disability, who often feels vulnerable during this transition period, and adapt the support provided in consequence.





Action plan to accommodate an employee with a disability

An action plan is a path to follow in the process of accommodating and guiding the employee toward achieving a specific goal.

We suggest initiating the process of accommodating an employee with a disability by developing an action plan for that purpose. It is important to reassess the action plan often or when it is obvious that the employee has achieved the set objectives. In the following pages we suggest a model accommodation plan and an employee evaluation grid to help the employer plan the integration of an employee with a disability and to assess the employee's progress.



As the employee acquires experience in performing the tasks requested by the employer (when the objectives are met), the planned accommodations can be modified. This is the time to reassess the action plan.

Why would the employer use an action plan to accommodate an employee with a disability?

- To acquire a management tool.
- To help and guide the employee's integration into the workplace.
- To get the employee to perform specific tasks.
- To obtain guidance in the process of accommodating the employee.



Establishing an accommodation for an employee

Employer's name: _____

Reason for meeting: _____

Employer's objective: _____

Employee's objective: _____

Employee's challenge: _____

Solution to the challenge: _____

Tool implemented: _____

Intervention: _____

Worker: _____ Date: _____

Employee: _____ Date: _____

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Employee Evaluation Grid

		Agree	Disagree		
Work habits					
The employee gets to work on time.					
The employee informs the employer or his or her supervisor if he or she is going to be late or absent.					
The employee has regular attendance at work.					
The employee performs the duties assigned to him or her.					
The employee keeps at tasks even if frustrated.					
The employee shows an ability to work independently.					
The employee can perform work without instructions.					
The employee assumes responsibility for actions.					
The employee is organized.					
Work performance					
The employee follows workplace rules and regulations.					
The employee listens clearly to and accepts instructions given.					
The employee requests help in case of need.					
The employee helps coworkers.					
The employee works well on a team.					
The employee expresses opinions and ideas constructively.					
The employee's quality of work is satisfactory.					
The amount of work done by the employee is satisfactory.					
Personal development					
The employee reacts well to feedback.					
The employee has acquired new knowledge through work experience.					
The employee shows initiative and ambition.					
The employee adapts well to changes in routine.					
The employee is self-confident.					
The employee is honest and has demonstrated trustworthiness.					
The employee is clean and dressed appropriately.					
The employee expresses himself or herself well orally.					
The employee expresses himself or herself well in writing.					

Employer: _____ Date: _____

Employee: _____ Date: _____



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Myth or reality?

Employees with disabilities have a higher absentee rate than employees without disabilities.

Reality: Studies by firms such as DuPont show that employees with disabilities are not absent any more often than other employees. In fact, these studies show that on average, individuals with disabilities have better attendance rates than their non-disabled counterparts.

Myth or reality?

Individuals with disabilities do not have the education I need.

Reality: Over half of individuals with disabilities have high school diplomas and over a third have post-secondary diplomas. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada reports that overall, combining university, college, and trades, Canadian adults with disabilities are about two thirds as likely to have a post-secondary education as adults without disabilities.

Source: New Brunswick Employer Support Services, "Myth Busters," NB Employer Support Services, <https://employersupport.nb.ca/myth-busters/>.



EMPLOYEE ACCOMMODATION ACCORDING TO DISABILITY

Motor disability

Physical or motor disabilities affect the body's motor apparatus and interfere with motor skills or mobility. They are progressive, cognitive, or stable.

Source: Le Phénix, *Services à la clientèle: guide pratique*, p. 19, http://lephenix.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Guide_Phenix_Service.pdf.

Examples: paralysis, amputations, cerebral motor infirmity, spina bifida, myopathy

Employer's role

- Pinpoint the special needs of employees with a motor disability.
- Become familiar with the employee's needs.
- Emphasize the employee's abilities.
- Explain the company's priorities and activities to the employee.
- Give the employee a precise description of the tasks to be performed.
- Adapt the environment to make it accessible to the employee.
- Discuss the employee's work and needs with him or her regularly.
- Direct, support, and supervise the employee.
- Implement emergency measures at the company and let the employee know about them.



Workplace accommodation

As an employer, you might have to adapt the work environment of one of your current employees to enable him or her to participate in the job application process or to perform professional duties. The most common workplace accommodation requested is a modified work schedule or job description.

Statistics Canada defines workplace accommodations as modifications to the job or work environment that enable a person with activity limitations to participate fully in the workforce. Such modifications include, among other things, the schedule, duties, software, and materials and structural elements such as railings and adapted toilets. The most common accommodations for employees with activity limitations are modified working hours and/or days and reduced schedules.

It should be noted that most people with disabilities do not need special adaptations. If you need to adapt an employee's workplace, bear in mind that needs vary from one individual to another. Speak to your employee to find out about their special needs and see that they participate in the accommodation process. Also note that the cost of making some adaptations is often minimal. If there is strong evidence that the necessary accommodations cannot be made because they would cause your company "undue hardship," you have the right to refuse to provide them.

Undue hardship: According to subsection 15(2) of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, there is undue hardship when "accommodation of the needs of an individual or a class of individuals affected would impose undue hardship on the person who would have to accommodate those needs, considering health, safety and cost."

Source : Le Phénix, *L'inclusion de la personne en situation de handicap en milieu de travail: guide pratique à l'intention de l'employeur*, p. 15, http://lephenix.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Guide_Phenix_Emploi.pdf.



Accommodations

Position and functions:

- Modified and flexible work schedule
- Part-time work
- Redistribution of duties and modification of position
- Breaks to ease fatigue
- Flexibility on deadlines

Physical environment:

- Modification of the space to enable the employee to get around independently
- Relocation of work station
- Textured stair nosing
- Removal of obstacles (keep the work environment tidy, especially travel routes)
- Sufficient space for a wheelchair or other equipment

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Motor disability characteristics

A person with a motor disability may experience the following difficulties:

- Difficulty getting around;
- Difficulty standing for a long time;
- Difficulty controlling the speed of movements;
- Difficulty coordinating and performing movements;
- Difficulty performing manual tasks.

Facts and helpful tips

- Do not move the employee's wheelchair without permission.
- If the person does not know the sound of your voice, introduce yourself.
- When the employee must move to another location, offer your help. If the person accepts, you can ask how he or she prefers to be helped.
- Be specific in your instructions to the employee.
- If you are helping the employee down the stairs, point out the obstacles to be avoided.
- If a person needs to move from a wheelchair to another chair, make sure to have the type of seat needed (height, if it is a stool, armless chair, or chair with arms, etc.)
- Spaces must be clear.



Myth or reality?

People in wheelchairs do not have the use of their legs.

Myth: Some people can walk and use their legs with the help of equipment and use a wheelchair to save their energy and get around quickly.



Have a resource person at the company whom employees with a disability can consult, which will reduce anxiety for those who underestimate their abilities.



Psychological safety in the workplace

Whether the employee is living with a disability or not, issues of psychological health and safety in the workplace are the same.

The 13 factors of psychological health and safety (PH & S) in the workplace are as follows:

- Balance;
- Organizational Culture;
- Psychological and Social Support;
- Clear Leadership and Expectations;
- Civility and Respect;
- Psychological Demands;
- Growth and Development;
- Recognition and Reward;
- Involvement and Influence;
- Workload Management;
- Engagement;
- Psychological Protection;
- Protection of Physical Safety.

Source : Mental Health Commission of Canada, “13 Factors: Addressing Mental Health in the Workplace,” *Mental Health Commission of Canada = Commission de la santé mentale du Canada*, <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/13-factors-addressing-mental-health-workplace>.



Visual impairment

According to the 10th revision of the International Classification of Diseases (revised in 2006), visual function comprises four main categories:

- Normal vision;
- Moderate visual impairment;
- Severe visual impairment;
- Blindness.

Moderate and severe visual impairment are grouped together under the term “low vision”: low vision and blindness represent all visual impairments.

Source: WHO, “Blindness and Vision Impairment,” *World Health Organization*, <http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/blindness-and-visual-impairment>.

Examples: blindness, poor vision, amblyopia, achromatopsia



Employer's role

- Pinpoint the special needs of employees with a visual impairment.
- Become familiar with the employee's needs.
- Emphasize the employee's abilities.
- Explain the company's priorities and activities to the employee.
- Give the employee a precise description of the tasks to be performed.
- Adapt the environment to make it accessible to the employee.
- Discuss the employee's work and needs with him or her regularly.
- Direct, support, and supervise the employee.
- Implement emergency measures at the company and let the employee know about them.

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Accommodations

Position and functions:

- Modified and flexible work schedule
- Part-time work
- Redistribution of duties and modification of position
- Breaks to ease eye strain
- Extra time for orientation
- Flexibility on deadlines

Physical environment:

- Modification of brightness and lighting in a room
- Relocation of the work station
- Textured stair nosing
- Auditory signals to accompany visual signals
- Removal of obstacles (keep the work environment tidy, especially travel routes)

Resources, technology, and tools:

- Lumbar supports and auditory devices
- Large print
- Magnifying tools (magnifying glasses, glasses, etc.)
- Documents in braille
- Messages via voice mail, telephone, or monitor (to replace written messages)
- Human reader (when documents cannot be converted)
- Text-to-voice conversion
- Screen magnifying software (this software can change colours, the mouse, and various components of a computer's interface to make them more accessible)
- Braille conversion software (this software converts documents in Word or HTML format to braille)

Seeing beyond the disability



- Braille printer or embosser
- Vocal synthesis software (e.g. JAWS)
- Audio version of documents, books, etc.
- Digital recorder for note taking
- Abacuses
- Talking cash registers
- Talking calculators
- Headphones
- Sound dictionaries
- Bank note and change identifiers
- Talking watches or clocks
- Talking scales
- Cell phones
- Closed circuit television system
- Flexible copy holder or lectern (these tools make it possible to bring documents closer and avoid having to lean over or constantly strain to read them)
- Telephone with large buttons
- Talking measuring tape and other electronic construction tools

Source : New Brunswick Employer Support Services, *Persons with Vision Loss in the Workplace*,
https://employersupport.nb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Vision-Loss_fev-2017.pdf.



Visual impairment characteristics

- Visual impairment requires constant concentration.
- To make up for vision loss, the employee uses other senses and various resources: hearing, perception of shapes, perception of movements, touch, smell, memorization, human helpers, and animal helpers.
- The various resources to compensate for visual impairment include:
 - White cane;
 - Guide dog.



Helpful tips

- In a noisy location, lightly touch the shoulder of an employee with a visual disability to attract his or her attention or to signal your presence.
- If the person does not know the sound of your voice, introduce yourself.
- When the employee must move to another location, offer your help. If the person accepts, you can ask how he or she prefers to be helped.
- Be specific in your instructions to the employee.
- If you are helping the employee down the stairs, point out the obstacles to be avoided and announce the first and last step.
- If the employee is accompanied by a dog, bear in mind that the animal is also working and should not be disturbed.
- Describe the environment to the employee, especially if it is noisy or there is an unexpected smell.
- Do not move objects the employee is used to encountering in a given location without advising him or her.
- Before guiding a person toward a seat, explain what kind of seat it is (height, if it is a stool, armless chair, chair with arms, etc.)
- Do not hesitate to use words to guide the employee.
- Do not leave doors ajar.
- Spaces must be clear.
- Have a resource person at the company whom employees with a disability can consult, which will reduce anxiety for those who underestimate their abilities.

Seeing beyond the disability



Myth or reality?

An employee with a visual impairment needs:

- *to get to his or her work station safely;*
- *to distinguish and find his or her work tools;*
- *to have points of reference in his or her work space;*
- *to integrate into the group if there are several other employees.*

Reality: Yes, an employee with a visual impairment needs accommodations, including points of reference to help locate work tools and be safely oriented to the work space. He or she also needs to integrate into the group of which he or she is a part.



Psychological safety in the workplace

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- Psychological and Social Support;
- Clear Leadership and Expectations;
- Civility and Respect;
- Psychological Demands;
- Growth and Development;
- Recognition and Reward;
- Involvement and Influence;
- Workload Management;
- Engagement;
- Psychological Protection;
- Protection of Physical Safety.

Source : Mental Health Commission of Canada, “13 Factors: Addressing Mental Health in the Workplace,” *Mental Health Commission of Canada = Commission de la santé mentale du Canada*, <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/13-factors-addressing-mental-health-workplace>.



Hearing impairment

A person who is not able to hear as well as someone with normal hearing - hearing thresholds of 25 dB or better in both ears - is said to have hearing loss. Hearing loss may be mild, moderate, severe, or profound. It can affect one ear or both ears, and leads to difficulty in hearing conversational speech or loud sounds.

Source: WHO, "Deafness and Hearing Loss," *World Health Organization*, <http://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/deafness-and-hearing-loss>.



Employer's role

- Pinpoint the special needs of an employee with a hearing impairment.
- Become familiar with the employee's needs.
- Emphasize the employee's abilities.
- Explain the company's priorities and activities to the employee.
- Give the employee a precise description of the tasks to be performed.
- Adapt the environment to make it accessible to the employee.
- Discuss the employee's work and needs with him or her regularly.
- Direct, support, and supervise the employee.
- Implement emergency measures at the company and let the employee know about them.

Seeing beyond the disability



Workplace accommodation

As an employer, you might have to adapt the work environment of one of your current employees to enable him or her to participate in the job application process or to perform professional duties. The most common workplace accommodation requested is a modified work schedule or job description.

Statistics Canada defines workplace accommodations as modifications to the job or the work environment enabling a person with activity limitations to participate fully in the workforce. Such modifications include, among other things, the schedule, duties, software, and materials and structural elements such as railings and adapted toilets. The most common accommodations for employees with activity limitations are modified working hours and/or days and reduced schedules.

It should be noted that most people with disabilities do not need special accommodations. If you need to adapt an employee's workplace, bear in mind that needs vary from one individual to another. Speak to your employee to find out about their special needs and see that they participate in the accommodation process. Also note that the cost of making some accommodations is often minimal. If there is strong evidence that the necessary accommodations cannot be made because they would cause your company "undue hardship," you have the right to refuse to provide them.

Undue hardship: According to subsection 15(2) of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, there is undue hardship when "accommodation of the needs of an individual or a class of individuals affected would impose undue hardship on the person who would have to accommodate those needs, considering health, safety and cost."

Source : Le Phénix, *L'inclusion de la personne en situation de handicap en milieu de travail: guide pratique à l'intention de l'employeur*, p. 15, http://lephenix.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Guide_Phenix_Emploi.pdf.



Accommodations

- Visual alarms
- Directional signs
- Relatively silent work stations with little exposure to distractions
- Round or oval tables to facilitate communication
- Internet telephone calls
- iPhone text messages



Hearing impairment characteristics

- An employee with a hearing impairment may have trouble communicating with others.
- The hearing deficit requires considerable concentration, which may often lead to fatigue.
- An employee with a hearing impairment may have trouble hearing:
 - a telephone ringing;
 - a recorded message;
 - a fire alarm;
 - oral instructions in an elevator or for crossing the street, etc.

Helpful tips

- Face the light to talk to an employee with a hearing impairment so that he or she can read your lips (lip reading).
- Articulate so that the employee can read your lips easily.
- Be expressive, make gestures, point your finger at items.
- Speak slowly to the employee without raising your voice.
- Be attentive to signs that the employee has not understood.
- Get the employee's attention before starting a conversation.
- Maintain visual contact with the employee.
- Use short sentences.
- Communicate by telephone.
- Use e-mail, SMS, or fax.
- You can also suggest that the employee write down what he or she means if necessary.
- For an organized meeting, you can plan to have an interpreter or presentation sheets.
- If you show a video, it should be captioned.

Seeing beyond the disability



Myth or reality?

Sign language is universal.

False: Sign language is not universal. There are three types in Canada:

- *AST – Maritime English;*
- *MSL – Maritime Sign Language;*
- *LSQ – Langue des signes québécoise (Quebec Sign Language)*

Myth or reality?

Deaf people are ideal employees for noisy work environments.

Reality: Intense noise with a lot of vibration can cause further damage to hearing. Deaf people should be hired for any job for which they have the skills and talents. No one should be subject to prejudices concerning their job prospects.

Source: New Brunswick Employer Support Services, “Myth Busters,” *NB Employer Support Services*, <https://employersupport.nb.ca/myth-busters/>.



Psychological safety in the workplace

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- Psychological and Social Support
- Clear Leadership and Expectations;
- Civility and Respect;
- Psychological Demands;
- Growth and Development;
- Recognition and Reward;
- Involvement and Influence;
- Workload Management;
- Engagement;
- Psychological Protection;
- Protection of Physical Safety.

Source : Mental Health Commission of Canada, “13 Factors: Addressing Mental Health in the Workplace,” *Mental Health Commission of Canada / Commission de la santé mentale du Canada*, <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/13-factors-addressing-mental-health-workplace>.

Seeing beyond the disability



Intellectual disability

As defined by the WHO, “Mental retardation is a condition of arrested or incomplete development of the mind characterized by impairment of skills and overall intelligence in areas such as cognition, language, and motor and social abilities. Also referred to as intellectual disability or handicap...”

Source: WHO, *World Health Report 2001: Mental Health: New Understanding, New Hope*, p. 35, http://www.who.int/whr/2001/en/whr01_en.pdf?ua=1

It is both an intellectual disability and the consequences it brings on a daily basis.



Maintain visual contact and speak to the person using short, clear expressions.



Employer's role

- Pinpoint the special needs of employees with an intellectual disability.
- Become familiar with the employee's needs.
- Emphasize the employee's abilities.
- Explain the company's priorities and activities to the employee.
- Give the employee a precise description of the tasks to be performed.
- Adapt the environment to make it accessible to the employee.
- Discuss the employee's work and needs with him or her regularly.
- Direct, support, and supervise the employee.
- Implement emergency measures at the company and let the employee know about them.

Seeing beyond the disability



Workplace accommodation

As an employer, you might have to adapt the work environment of one of your current employees to enable him or her to participate in the job application process or to perform professional duties. The most common workplace accommodation requested is a modified work schedule or job description.

Statistics Canada defines workplace accommodations as modifications to the job or work environment that enable a person with activity limitations to participate fully in the workforce. Such modifications include, among other things, the schedule, duties, software, and materials and structural elements such as railings and adapted toilets. The most common adaptations for employees with activity limitations are modified working hours and/or days and reduced schedules.

It should be noted that most people with disabilities do not need special accommodations. If you need to adapt an employee's workplace, bear in mind that needs vary from one individual to another. Speak to your employee to find out their special needs and see that they participate in the accommodation process. It should be noted that the cost of some accommodations is often minimal. If there is strong evidence that the necessary accommodations cannot be made because they would cause your company "undue hardship," you have the right to refuse to provide them.

Undue hardship: According to subsection 15(2) of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, there is undue hardship when "accommodation of the needs of an individual or a class of individuals affected would impose undue hardship on the person who would have to accommodate those needs, considering health, safety and cost."

Source : Le Phénix, *L'inclusion de la personne en situation de handicap en milieu de travail: guide pratique à l'intention de l'employeur*, p. 15, http://lephenix.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Guide_Phenix_Emploi.pdf.

Seeing beyond the disability



Accommodations

- Avoid complex issues when talking to an employee with an intellectual disability.
- Use simple language.
- Avoid getting upset and remain calm and welcoming toward the employee.
- Avoid having an employee with an intellectual disability work on his or her own.
- Foster development of independence.
- Do not make fun of an employee who does not understand.
- Make sure the employee has clearly understood instructions and comments.



Reassure, support, and encourage an employee with an intellectual disability.



Intellectual disability characteristics

- Intellectual disability is related to limitations with respect to problem solving, learning, reasoning, perception of the world, and acquisition of skills of daily living.
- Communication and understanding difficult or impossible, problems with relationships and social adjustment.
- Lack of motivation.
- Difficulty understanding feelings and emotions.
- Poor self-confidence.
- Difficulty processing and memorizing information.
- Difficulty evaluating time.
- Difficulty paying attention to someone speaking to him or her.
- Difficulty mastering the rules of communication and vocabulary.
- Difficulty learning to read and write.
- Strong desire to “be like everyone else.”
- Strong motivation to work.
- Desire to serve and please others.
- Low absenteeism rate.



A person living with an intellectual disability is fully capable of learning and can be personally and professionally successful.



Facts and helpful tips

- Do not assume that a person has an intellectual disability because he or she has another disability.
- Intellectual disability is a condition, not an illness.
- Emphasize the accomplishments of an employee with an intellectual disability.
- Know how to recognize stress indicators.
- Clearly state the employee's tasks.
- React effectively to conflicts.
- Be tuned in and accessible.
- Set high but realistic expectations in relation to the employee's skills and abilities.
- Give the employee more time to answer a question.
- Give the employee more time to react to a situation.

Seeing beyond the disability



Myth or reality?

Someone is always needed to help people with a disability.

Reality: That is false if the person has had good training. People with a disability have adapted to their disability in most cases. It does not interfere with their ability to work on their own.

Source: New Brunswick Employer Support Services, “Myth Busters,” *NB Employer Support Services*, <https://employersupport.nb.ca/myth-busters/>.



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- Engagement;
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- Protection of Physical Safety.

Source : Mental Health Commission of Canada, “13 Factors: Addressing Mental Health in the Workplace,” *Mental Health Commission of Canada / Commission de la santé mentale du Canada*, <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/13-factors-addressing-mental-health-workplace>.



Psychological disability

There are many different mental disorders with different presentations. They are generally characterized by a combination of abnormal thoughts, perceptions, emotions, behaviour, and relationships with others.

Mental disorders include depression, bipolar affective disorders, schizophrenia and other psychoses, dementia, intellectual disability, and developmental problems, including autism.

Source: WHO, "Mental Disorders," *World Health Organization*, <http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-disorders>.

Examples: schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, hypochondria



Employer's role

- Pinpoint the special needs of employees with a psychological disability.
- Become familiar with the employee's needs.
- Emphasize the employee's abilities.
- Explain the company's priorities and activities to the employee.
- Give the employee a precise description of the tasks to be performed.
- Adapt the environment to make it accessible to the employee.
- Discuss the employee's work and needs with him or her regularly.
- Direct, support, and supervise the employee.
- Implement emergency measures at the company and let the employee know about them.

Seeing beyond the disability



Workplace accommodation

As an employer you might have to adapt the work environment of one of your current employees to enable him or her to participate in the job application process or to perform professional duties. The most common workplace accommodation is a modified work schedule or job description.

Statistics Canada defines workplace accommodations as being modifications to the job or work environment that enable a person with activity limitations to participate fully in the workforce. Such modifications include, among other things, the schedule, duties, software, and materials and structural elements such as railings and adapted toilets. The most common accommodations for employees with activity limitations are modified working hours and/or work days and reduced schedules.

It should be noted that most people with disabilities do not need special accommodations. If you need to adapt an employee's workplace, bear in mind that needs vary from one individual to another. Speak to your employee to find out about their special needs and see that they participate in the accommodation process. Also note that the cost of some accommodations is often minimal. If there is strong evidence that the necessary accommodations cannot be made because they would cause your company "undue hardship," you have the right to refuse to provide them.

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Source : Le Phénix, *L'inclusion de la personne en situation de handicap en milieu de travail: guide pratique à l'intention de l'employeur*, p. 15, http://lephenix.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Guide_Phenix_Emploi.pdf.

Seeing beyond the disability



Accommodations

- Make a connection between tasks to give them meaning.
- Give specific explanations on the job.
- Accept the difference in the pace of work, adapt the work pace.
- Be tolerant and set reasonable deadlines.
- Avoid having the work pace of an employee with a psychological disability depend too much on that of the other employees.
- Give the employee explanations before he or she starts work.
- Plan activities that enable the employee to “breathe” (training, etc.).
- Have a resource person at the company whom employees with a disability can consult, which will reduce anxiety for those who underestimate their abilities.



To promote the inclusion of an employee with a psychological disability, his or her situation must be assessed ahead of time to determine needs and develop personalized responses.



Psychological disability characteristics

- A psychological disability may change the employee’s behaviour, perception, judgment, and relationship with the world.
- A psychological disability results in behavioural and judgment problems and leads to difficulty adapting to life in society.
- It is continuous or episodic.
- It may manifest at any age.
- It is often the most misunderstood of all the disabilities in the community and people’s attitudes to those affected by it may be based [are often based] on prejudices or myths (such as the idea that schizophrenics are potentially violent).
- Greater fatigue than the norm.
- Personal health, particularly sleep, is very important for people with a psychological disability.
- A person with a psychological disability is hypersensitive to change.

Seeing beyond the disability



Helpful tips

- You need to understand that slowness is different from laziness.
- Following is some advice for good communication with employees who have a psychological disability:
 - Listen attentively.
 - Act naturally and be patient.
 - Avoid ambiguity, allusions, and double negatives.
 - Avoid irony, metaphors, and other figures of speech that may be somewhat complex.
 - Be clear and precise with your comments.
 - Create a reassuring working atmosphere.
- Make sure not to have too long a break [avoid long work interruptions] (holidays) that do not facilitate resumption of work.

Myth or reality?

Are mental disabilities visible?

Reality: They are mainly illnesses that are [Mental disabilities are to a large extent] invisible. These problems and their consequences are too varied to be able to list the details.



Show appreciation for the work done by the employee, even if it is done slowly.



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Source : Mental Health Commission of Canada, “13 Factors: Addressing Mental Health in the Workplace,” *Mental Health Commission of Canada = Commission de la santé mentale du Canada*, <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/13-factors-addressing-mental-health-workplace>.

Seeing beyond the disability



Debilitating diseases

To a large extent, these are [In general, debilitating diseases are] chronic diseases that limit the daily activities of people who suffer from them and can sometimes make their tasks more difficult to perform. They can be temporary, permanent, or progressive.

Examples: fibromyalgia, asthma, epilepsy, Crohn's disease, respiratory diseases, diabetes, hemophilia, and cancer.



When you think about disabilities, remember debilitating chronic diseases.

Seeing beyond the disability



Employer's role

- Pinpoint the special needs of employees with a chronic disease.
- Become familiar with the employee's needs.
- Emphasize the employee's abilities.
- Explain the company's priorities and activities to the employee.
- Give the employee a precise description of the tasks to be performed.
- Adapt the environment to make it accessible to the employee.
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Seeing beyond the disability



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Seeing beyond the disability



Accommodations

- In some cases, ergonomic work stations will help remediate pain suffered by employees with a chronic disease. They may include the following:
 - ergonomic chair;
 - ergonomic keyboard;
 - footrest;
 - ergonomic mouse.
- Flexible work schedules and unpaid sick leave could also be considered if needed in cases of chronic pain.
- Offer the employee the opportunity to work from home where possible.
- Lifting mechanism such as a hand truck.
- Document holder on wheels.
- Treat an employee with a chronic disease with consideration so that he or she feels respected; respect his or her need for recognition and autonomy; ask him or her to express ideas.

Seeing beyond the disability



Debilitating disease characteristics

- The employee often has a reduced ability
 - to get around;
 - to tolerate physical effort;
 - to sustain effort.
- The employee is often afraid to talk about his or her illness.
- The employee is afraid of being regarded differently.
- The employee is afraid of not being up to the task.
- In some cases, motor skills are diminished.
- Chronic diseases are sometimes accompanied by fatigue or sleep disorders.

Seeing beyond the disability



Facts and helpful tips

It is important to be aware of the issue of the disability [debilitating diseases]. Awareness of the employer and the other employees enables them to understand problems arising from alterations of the employee's physical condition. [that the employee experiences owing to alterations OR fluctuations in his or her physical condition].

In each case, [Whatever the debilitating illness may be], by talking to the employee, you will be able to pinpoint his or her needs and thereby determine the best way to establish an accommodation plan.

- Make sure to establish a connection and a real dialogue with the employee.
- Give the person all the necessary support at the time of hiring to foster retention or following a return to work.
- Skills, abilities, challenges, and strengths are unique to every individual.
- Physical limitations [debilitating diseases and their effects] take various forms.

Seeing beyond the disability



Myth or reality?

People suffering from debilitating diseases do not tend to hide their condition.

Myth: People affected by such conditions tend to hide them for fear of the consequences, judgments, rejection, looks, isolation, etc.



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A FEW STATISTICS

Over 11% of Canadian adults have experienced one the three most prevalent disability types: pain, mobility, or flexibility. Of those who reported at least one of these disability types in 2012, more than 40% experienced all three at the same time.

The next most commonly reported disabilities were mental/psychological, 3.9%); dexterity, 3.5%; hearing, 3.2%; seeing, 2.7%; followed by memory and learning disabilities, 2.3% each. Less than 1% of Canadian adults reported a developmental disability.

The following table shows the prevalence of disability according to type, expressed in percentage.

Table 1
Prevalence of disability by type, Canada, 2012

Disability type	%
Pain	9.7
Flexibility	7.6
Mobility	7.2
Mental/psychological	3.9
Dexterity	3.5
Hearing	3.2
Seeing	2.7
Memory	2.3
Learning	2.3
Developmental	0.6
Unknown	0.3

Source: Statistics Canada, *Disability in Canada: Initial findings from the Canadian Survey on Disability*, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/fr/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2013002-eng.pdf?st=LDugXgl3>.



Table 2
Number of persons with disabilities, Canada, by province, 2006

Province/territory	Total population (inhabitants)	Total number of persons with disabilities	Disability rate (%)
New Brunswick	711,440	122,540	17.2
Newfoundland and Labrador	498,920	74,510	14.9
Prince Edward Island	133,750	21,750	16.3
Nova Scotia	893,790	179,100	20.0
Quebec	7,396,960	768,140	10.4
Ontario	11 970 000	1 853 570	15.5
Manitoba	1,075,490	169,170	15.7
Saskatchewan	905,510	145,230	16.0
Alberta	3,212,360	435,820	13.6
British Columbia	3,995,600	638,640	16.0
Nunavut ¹	19,340	1,630	8.4
Northwest Territories ¹	30,910	3,220	16.0
Yukon ¹	24,140	3,790	15.7
Canada²	30,893,640	4,417,870	14.3

Highlights:

- Disability increases with age; Just 4.0 percent of children under 15 years of age experience some level of disability, compared to 14.3 percent of adults aged 15 to 64, and more than 45% among persons aged 65 and over.
- Severity of disability also increases with age: only 1.4 percent of children had a severe or even very severe disability, compared to 17.5 percent of those aged 65 and over.

1. Applies to persons aged 15 years and over.
2. The Canada total excludes the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut.

Source: Premier’s Council on Disabilities, “2006 Statistics,” *Premier’s Council on Disabilities*, [n.d.], <https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/pcsdp/awareness/content/2006.html>.



LEXICON

Workplace accommodation: Modification to the job or work environment that enables a person with activity limitations to participate fully in the workforce.

Psychologically healthy and safe workplace: Workplace favouring the psychological well-being of workers and that actively prevents damage to their mental health deliberately or through neglect or carelessness.

Health: State of full physical, mental, and social well-being, not just the absence of disease or disability.

Mental and physical health: State of well-being enabling each person to achieve his or her potential, to face the normal difficulties of life, to work successfully and productively and to be able to contribute to the community.

Awareness: Awareness makes it possible to understand communication problems owing to changes in the employee's physical or mental condition.



SERVICES AND USEFUL LINKS

Independent Living Acadian Peninsula Inc.

Académie Sainte-Famille
228-399 Du Couvent Street
Tracadie-Sheila, N.B.
E1X 1E1
Telephone: 506-336-1304
Website: www.cvapa.ca
E-mail: info@cvapa.ca

Premier's Council on Disabilities

648-440 King Street
Fredericton, N.B.
E3B 5H8
Telephone (TTY): 506- 444-3000
Toll free (TTY): 1-800-442-4412
Facsimile: 506-444-3001
E-mail: pcsd@gnb.ca
Website: www.gnb.ca/council

New Brunswick Employer Support Services

329 Champlain Street
Dieppe, N.B.
E1A 1P2
Telephone: 506-858-9939
Toll free: 1-888-350-2202
Facsimile: 506-858-9939
TTY: 506-858-1657
E-mail: info@employersupport.nb.ca
Website: www.employersupport.nb.ca

Seeing beyond the disability



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Facsimile: 506-453-9681

Toll free: 1-866-446-7999

E-mail: nb.info@neilsquire.ca

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Employment and Social Development Canada

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