

MYTHBUSTING: EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

Myth 1: People with Disabilities Are Not Applying for Jobs

FACT:



- **20%** of working-age Canadians live with a disability. Applicant pools may contain **more** people with disabilities (PWD) than managers realize
- People may not disclose their disabilities because of a fear of **being excluded**
- Managers do not understand that **disabilities are diverse**
 - Some disabilities are invisible (e.g., diabetes, depression)
 - Some are episodic (e.g., pain)

Myth 2: Recruiting People with Disabilities Is Difficult

FACT:



- PWD are one of the **largest** underutilized labour pools
- Some **recruitment practices** may inadvertently prevent or discourage PWD from applying
- **Lack** of disability hiring policies for managers to follow leads to less hiring and retention of PWD

Myth 3: People with Disabilities Do Not Want to Work

FACT:



- Just like people without disabilities, **PWD want to work** and usually prefer full-time positions over part-time ones
- PWD attach the **same importance** to outcomes such as job security, income, promotions, interest, and societal contribution
- PWD may need to evaluate work **benefits/policies** in relation to other assistance they **need/ receive** (e.g., PWD may face transportation barriers to come to work, and may benefit from flexible working hours)

Myth 4: Applicants with Disabilities Are Not Qualified

DUE TO PERCEIVED PHYSICAL AND EDUCATIONAL LIMITATIONS



FACT:

- Matching job requirements to an applicant's **knowledge, skill, and abilities** results in good staffing practices
- Assuming a person is unqualified based on disability stereotypes is **illegal** and can result in overlooking a talented employee
- Census data shows that people with & without disabilities are often **similar** on important markers of employability (e.g., education)

Myth 5: Interviewing Applicants with Disabilities Is Complicated



FACT:

- Many managers **lack training** in best practices for interviewing candidates with disabilities. This leads to **worse interview practices** when interviewing PWD
- Interviewers often **forget** information about PWD's qualifications - focusing on the disability instead of the individual. This results in **biased** interviews

Myth 6: Accommodations Cost Too Much



FACT:

- Accommodations are **inexpensive**. They most often cost \$0 or a onetime cost of up to \$500
- Accommodations are often **requested by workers without disabilities** and cost the same as accommodations for workers with disabilities
- Accommodations are actually **cost-effective**
- Accommodations often improve **productivity** and **help retain** talented employees

Myth 7: Coworkers May Resent Employees with Disabilities Due to Accommodations



FACT:

- Making accommodations improves interactions between employees with & without disabilities and **increases organizational morale**
- Accommodations have positive effects on coworkers' attitudes. Accommodations show that **an organization values employees**
- PWD have a **positive effect** on coworkers' attitudes. Disclosing a disability may create an environment of **trust**



Myth 8: Employees with Disabilities Won't "Fit In"



FACT:

- "Fitting in" is determined by an **organization's culture** and the approach it takes to **diversity, equity, and inclusion**
- Employees with disabilities often report **subtle discrimination** (e.g., being ignored in meetings)
 - Supervisors must lead by example
 - If supervisors are welcoming, co-workers will be too

Myth 9: Employees with Disabilities Can't "Get the Job Done"



FACT:

- HR managers who provided accommodations report being **satisfied** with the **performance** of PWD
 - Lower productivity may be due to organizational factors (e.g., improper accommodations)
- PWD do **not** usually require extra supervision
- PWD do **not** usually exhibit more lateness or absenteeism than employees without disabilities
- PWD have **much lower** turnover rates than employees without disabilities

Myth 10: Employees with Disabilities Will Have More Accidents



FACT:

- Employees with disabilities usually have **equal**, or **better**, safety awareness and records than employees without disabilities
- Any "increase" in accidents may be due to **more accurate reporting** (i.e., actually reporting incidents when they occur)
- Proper accommodations result in **less** time away from work and **lower** workers' compensation costs for PWD compared to employees without disabilities

Myth 11: Disciplinary Action of Employees with Disabilities Will Result in a Lawsuit



FACT:

- Legal action usually only occurs **after** attempts at receiving accommodation have failed. If proper practices are followed, lawsuits can be **avoided**
- Managers have reported **knowledge gaps** on accommodation practices and understanding of the disability experience. This may lead to biased treatment of PWD

What To Do?

Within the Organization:

- Create an **organizational culture** that **makes disclosure** of disability and discussion about disability safe and productive
- Create an environment of **trust and honesty**
- Employ **consistent and timely** feedback

When Recruiting:

- Partner with organizations that **support the employment of PWD** to facilitate recruitment
- Seek out education and training about disabilities and inclusive recruiting practices; this education is often **easily accessible and free**

Resources:

- **Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work:**
 <https://www.ccrw.org>
- **Canadian Human Rights Commission (information about disabilities and free webinars):**
 <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/persons-disabilities>
 <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/webinars>
- **Conference Board of Canada (free accessibility toolkit for employers):**
 https://access.org/sites/default/uploads/files/AODA-Resources/accessibilityempguide_toolkit-Conference-Brd-of-Canada.pdf
- **Government of Canada: Rethinking DisAbility in the Private Sector:**
 <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability/consultations/rethinking-disabilities.html>
- **Hire for Talent (free employer toolkit):**
 <https://www.hirefortalent.ca>
- **Ontario Disability Employment Network:**
 <https://odenetwork.com>



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Link: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10869-018-9602-5>