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Access*Ability* Services

Managing Your Career:
Strategies for Graduates with Dis*Abilities*

Video 2: Strategies for Addressing Barriers

Modules

1. Career Planning
2. Understanding Employment Equity
3. **Addressing Employment Barriers**
4. Self-Advocacy and Disclosure
5. Workplace Accommodations

Module 3:

Addressing Employment Barriers

Strategies for Addressing Barriers

Physical Barriers

Objects in the physical environment or the design of the building prevents a person from moving freely

- A building that is entered and exited using stairs without a ramp for people using mobility devices
- A workstation with a desk that is too low or too high for a person with physical challenges
- Narrow or cluttered hallways that are a safety hazard for an individual with low vision or prevent access for an individual who uses a mobility device
- Washrooms that are not accessible for people with various disabilities
- Poor lighting that makes it difficult for individuals with low vision, concussions, or who lip read
- Office layout resulting in no privacy or a place to allow you to get away to a low sensory location

Solutions to Physical Barriers

Barrier:

Long walk from parking lot

Lighting in workspace is insufficient or dim

If a floor is slippery or is covered with materials that are not fixed

The physical layout of your desk may be able to change

Solution:

Designated parking spots close to entrance

Identify strategies for making lighting adjustments

Wear rubber-soled shoes, suggest the employer improve the flooring

To provide more privacy through the use dividers or cubicles

Attitudinal Barriers

The opinions and feelings that someone may have about an individual with a disability

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I don't think he could do the same type of work as a person without a disability

Examples of Attitudinal Barriers

- A manager may insist a task be done their way and the manager is not willing to consider other ways the task can be done, especially ways that would allow you to complete the task.

- An employer may make a person feel that they are doing them a "special favor" by providing their accommodations.

- A colleague may avoid talking to you for fear of saying the wrong word or offending you.

Barrier:

Derogatory language used toward a person with a disability

Disability is emphasized and not the individual

Thinking that people with disabilities are inferior

Solution:

Correct assumptions and speak out against such language

Suggest using "person first" language (e.g. "people with disabilities" rather than "disabled person")

Always emphasize your strengths and not the disability

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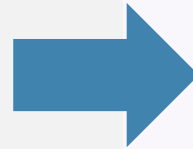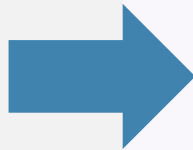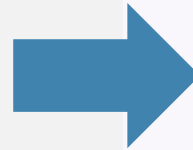
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Solutions to Attitudinal Barriers

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Organizational Barriers

- Policies and practices may be in place to support persons with disabilities but employees may not know about them.

- Employers should communicate the policies and practices to ensure all employees know how to respond to a barrier or a barrier removal request.

- Employees with disabilities also need to know the process to bring forward any requests.
  - *This includes how to request a flexible work schedule, modify duties or temporary alternative work.*

Other Organizational Barriers

Another organizational barrier can arise from policies that exclude animals on the premises, except where required by law.

Employers may not be informed of the right for persons with disabilities to use service animals to assist them with disability-related needs under the **AODA** or **Ontario Human Right's Code** *and, as a result, hesitate to let the animal accompany the employee*

Other Strategies

Other strategies to eliminate systemic barriers include employers ensuring all employees are felt welcome and included in work and social events through the use of an accessibility and accommodation statement for people to register needs for events and clearly communicating who the contact is to implement accessibility policies and procedures.

You may need to communicate your needs directly to the appointed contact or ask who the contact is if this is not clear.

Communication Barriers

Result when sensory or learning disabilities have not been considered and when a person with a disability cannot easily receive and/or understand information that is available to others

Communication Barriers

- Websites for applying to a job is not accessible with assistive technology
- Work-related tasks provided in print which is too small to be read by a person with low vision
- A PowerPoint slide deck or a video used in a presentation is not accessible to employees with low vision or who have hearing loss
- Brochures, guides and advertisements that are not clear or easily understood
- Complicated, busy or confusing signs
- Seating arrangements that make it difficult for people who have hearing loss to fully participate in meetings
- Marketing and communications materials that are not inclusive
- People with disabilities not being included in visuals, or considered as a potential target audience

Communication Strategies

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- Asking for work related materials to be provided in the format accessible to you
  - (e.g., In writing, large font, electronically, etc.)

- Materials provided to you in advance of a meeting to allow you time to review and process the material or reduce your anxiety by knowing what to expect

- Request seating around the table to facilitate lip reading for hearing loss or using microphones in large meeting rooms

- Making a recommendation to the marketing department/person in your work place to include photos and testimonials to reflect diverse people with a range of abilities in marketing materials

Other strategies to reduce such **barriers** could be practices such as employers ensuring the **closed captioning** feature of videos is turned on for presentations, providing **transcripts** of the videos if captions are not included, and using **assistive listening** or **amplification** devices during meetings.

Technological Barriers

Barriers can arise when a device or technological platform is either not accessible for its intended audience and/or cannot be used with an assistive device or software. Technological barriers are often related to information and communication barriers.

Technological Barriers

- Handouts that are available only in hard copy and not in an electronic format

- Emails or other electronic communications that are not accessible to people who use screen reading software

- Using only one method of contact in the workplace, like the phone

- Only accepting online job applications and documents.

A solution to most of these technological barriers is having a **variety** of methods and formats for **communication** – such as **phone, email**, and accepting **hard copies** of **applications** and **documents**.

Employers are **required** to make their website and email platforms **accessible** to people who use **screen readers** as well as **provide descriptions** using alt tags for all **website graphics** and **charts.**

Essential Requirements

These requirements are vital or indispensable to the job.

For example, if an individual with a disability wishes to become a Firefighter, the individual has to be able to pass a fitness test. The fitness test is considered an essential job requirement and therefore cannot be accommodated.

But if someone wants to be a Dispatcher for 911, many kinds of disabilities could be accommodated in that role.

We will discuss this further in Module 5 on Workplace accommodations.

Preparing to Handle Barriers

Until Canada achieves a barrier-free physical and social environment, we have to work to manage and eliminate barriers.

Which types of barriers do you anticipate dealing with in your work life?

See our Handling Barriers activity
Worksheets: uoft.me/careeranddisability

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If you would like to provide feedback on these videos or if you have questions or concerns, please contact:

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