



Mythbuster:

Myths About Hiring Persons With Disabilities

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

Fact: Studies by firms such as DuPont show that employees with disabilities are not absent any more than employees without disabilities. In fact, these studies show that on average, individuals with disabilities have better attendance rates than their non-disabled counterparts.

Myth: *Individuals with disabilities should be placed in jobs where they will not fail.*

Fact: Everyone has the right to fail as well as to succeed. Be careful not to hold someone back from a position or a promotion because you think there is a possibility that he or she might fail in the position. If this person is the best-qualified candidate, give them the same opportunity to try that you would give anyone else.

Myth: *Someone will always have to help them.*

Fact: This is not the case with proper training. In most cases, individuals with disabilities have adjusted to their disability and does not affect their ability to work unaided.

From Premier's Council
on the Status of
Disabled Persons:

Individuals with disabilities who are not in the labour force are faced with the misperception that they are either unable or unwilling to work. Failure to recognize and address these myths and negative stereotypes results in discrimination and the exclusion of individuals with disabilities from the workplace despite their willingness and ability to actively participate in the labour force.

Myth: *Persons who are deaf make ideal employees for noisy work environments.*

Fact: Loud noises of a certain vibratory nature can cause further harm to the auditory system. Persons who are deaf should be hired for all jobs that they have the skills and talents to perform. No person with a disability should be prejudged regarding employment opportunities.

Myth: *Considerable expense is necessary to accommodate workers with disabilities.*

Fact: In reality and with proper planning and knowledge, most job accommodations are simple and inexpensive. According to the Job Accommodation Network Canada, 80% of accommodations cost less than \$500. In addition, the 1991 Health and Activity Limitations Survey (HALS) found that fewer than 30,000, or 4% of the 890,000 working Canadians with disabilities required accessible washrooms, ramps or other building modifications.

Myth: *I can't fire or discipline an employee with a disability.*

Fact: While there are laws in place to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities by providing equal access in the areas of employment, transportation, public accommodations, public services, and telecommunications, there are no special procedures for firing or disciplining employees with disabilities. Establish clear performance expectations from the start. If a performance problem does occur, follow your company's usual guidelines: discuss the problem with the worker, look for solutions, document the situation and, if necessary, terminate the employment agreement.

DID YOU KNOW

Most frequently reported accommodations were changes in job duties and modified hours of work. Accommodations mostly have more to do with creativity, flexibility and sound management practices than expensive structural modifications or specialized technology. Accommodations like ramps, automatic door openers, widened doorways, and wheelchair accessible washrooms make the employer's workplace more accessible to other potential employees with disabilities. Clients and customers like parents with baby strollers and people making deliveries also enjoy the comforts of a less cumbersome environment. Therefore it is misleading to consider the cost of these changes as the cost of accommodating just one employee.

Myth: *Workers with a disability are a bad influence on other workers.*

Fact: More often than not, the worker with a disability brings additional diversity into the workplace. For example: Someone who uses a wheelchair may point out ways to make physical access better for all by uncluttering walkways and offices. Someone who has a learning disability may develop a filing system based on colors in addition to words that increases efficiency and ease of use.

Myth: *Individuals with disabilities are not able to contribute to society.*

Fact: More than anything, individuals with disabilities are restricted not by their abilities, but by society. As an employer, do not let a person's disability get in the way of an opportunity for him or her to demonstrate talents. Misconceptions that insurance costs/rates will increase, and that they have a high rate of absenteeism and low productivity levels should be overcome and an equal opportunity afforded to individuals with disabilities.

Myth: *Individuals with disabilities are more sensitive than other people, more courageous, kinder, more creative, more admirable or more conscientious.*

Fact: Individuals with disabilities do not possess any special characteristics they are just like other persons you employ.

Myth: *It's almost impossible to interview individuals with disabilities because it's so easy to break human rights laws.*

Fact: Interviewing is easy. The key is to focus on abilities rather than disabilities. Ask the same job-related questions that you ask other applicants. And once you've hired someone with a disability, there's a good chance they'll stay. Pizza Hut Corporation finds that workers with disabilities are five times more likely to stay than people without disabilities.

Myth: *It doesn't matter to my customers if I address the disability issue or not.*

Fact: Canadians with disabilities have access to a combined annual disposable income of \$25 billion annually, making this a spending group with significant clout.

Myth: *Employees with a disability are more difficult to supervise than employees without a disability*

Fact: The Harris study also revealed that 82% of managers found employees with disabilities no more difficult to supervise than employees without disabilities. Employees with disabilities should be held accountable to the same job standards as any other employee. Managers should be confident that their supervisory skills will work equally well with employees with disabilities.

Myth:
Individuals with disabilities don't have the education I need.

Fact: 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.

Hiring People with Disabilities

1. What are my rights and responsibilities as an equal opportunity employer?

Employers are sometimes concerned their responsibility to employees with disabilities will run farther than their responsibilities to their other employees. This is not the case.

EMPLOYER RIGHTS		EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES	
Employers have the right to a clear understanding of the skills and limitations of a perspective employee.	Employers have the right to run their business as they see fit.	Employers have the responsibility to provide accommodation to an employee who has disclosed a disability.	Employers have the responsibility to provide a supportive and inclusive working environment.

2. What is a job accommodation?

Job accommodations are reasonable adjustments to a job or work environment, not luxuries. They make it possible for an individual with a disability to perform the duties of the job. Not all individuals with disabilities require job accommodations.

Job accommodation is not as complicated as it may appear. Accommodations can be as simple as flexible work hours or purchasing ergonomic chairs for employees with a bad back. The managing agency will support you in the accommodation process, providing you with whatever type of information or support you might require.

“Accommodating someone with a disability is seldom as expensive or difficult as is sometimes imagined. Over two-thirds of job accommodations cost under \$500; many cost nothing at all.”¹

¹ Ontario Human Rights Commission. Policy and guidelines on disability and the duty to accommodate. <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/Policies/PolicyDisAccom2?page=disen-5 .html>

3. What is the duty to accommodate?

The duty to accommodate requires employers and unions make every effort, short of undue hardship, to accommodate an employee who comes under a protected ground of discrimination within human rights legislation.

Undue hardship describes the limit, beyond which employers and service providers are not expected to accommodate.

4. Will I need a different set of interview questions? What am I allowed to ask?

As an employer you have the right to know that an employee has the skills and abilities to complete a job. A person with a disability has the right to not be discriminated against due to their disability.

As an employer, you can ask if an interviewee may require any accommodations. You may ask questions about their ability to complete a job. For instance “is there anything that might impact your ability to do the specific job?” is an appropriate question. Like any interview, focus on the person’s experiences and qualifications to get a full picture of an individual’s capabilities.

5. What are the right words to use with persons with disabilities?

Words regarding disability commonly used 15 years ago aren’t used today. As a general rule, put the person before the disability, in many instances there might not be a reason to mention a disability at all.

Put the person first and the disability second	Avoid using
An individual with a disability	Disabled person, coping with a disability, suffering from...
Uses a wheelchair	Wheelchair victim, confined to a wheelchair
Has a mobility impairment	Crippled, invalid
A person with a developmental disability	Mentally retarded, handicapped
A person with a mental illness	Crazy, insane, mad, sick