

# **An Inclusive Approach**

*An Employer's Guide to Engaging the  
Labour Market in Saskatchewan*

**2009**

---

# Acknowledgement

**“An Inclusive Approach”** is a revision from “A Guide to Hiring Persons With Disabilities for Saskatchewan Employers © North East Community Partners for Inclusion 2005. The original concept was produced in partnership with *North East Community Partners for Inclusion, Newsask Community Futures Development Corporation and the Supported Employment Transition Initiative including:*

- Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres (SARC),
- Saskatchewan Association for Community Living (SACL),
- Saskatchewan Learning – Special Needs Programs Unit,
- Saskatchewan Department of Community Resources and Employment, and
- Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)

The Supported Employment Transition Initiative is pleased to have provided financial support both for the original project and for this revision.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgement .....	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	3
INTRODUCTION .....	4
AN INCLUSIVE LABOUR FORCE IS GOOD BUSINESS .....	5
SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT .....	7
LAWS .....	8
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms .....	8
Saskatchewan Human Rights Code .....	8
POLITICALLY CORRECT COMMUNICATION .....	9
Communicating with People with Employment Barriers .....	9
Terminology.....	9
ACCESSIBLE HIRING PRACTICES .....	10
Determine the Actual Skills Necessary.....	10
Write a Job Description .....	10
Recruitment.....	11
Supported Employment Service Providers .....	11
Alternative Application Processes .....	12
INTERVIEWING .....	12
Pre-interview Preparation .....	12
Tips for Interviewing .....	13
Employers Should.....	13
Employers Should Not.....	13
ACCOMMODATIONS .....	14
Adapting Work Schedules .....	14
Adapting Job Duties.....	15
Changes to Work Environment.....	15
FITTING IN.....	15
GETTING STARTED .....	17
Creative Thinking: .....	17
Job Carving .....	17
Outsourcing.....	17
Working With A Service Provider.....	18
Employer Checklist.....	19
RESOURCES .....	20

# INTRODUCTION

An employment barrier is any condition, circumstance, or disability that in the past has made it difficult for a person to find and keep employment. This guide is intended to help employers who are seeking information about hiring people with employment barriers.

Saskatchewan employers let us know that they need information while they consider hiring someone with an employment barrier. Employers routinely request information about:

- Laws
- Hiring processes
- Benefits
- Recruitment and Retainment
- Government programs
- Resources

Our goal is to provide Saskatchewan employers with the supports they need to access a largely untapped source of labor.

The trends are changing. Less than one generation ago, many people with life time, multi-generational dependence on assistance were believed to be unable to work and were left to live out their lives in poverty. In more recent times, with the addition of supports many people initially viewed as ‘unemployable’ are reducing or eliminating their dependence on assistance programs with supports from service providers. The kind of support offered varies from person to person and are generally provided at no cost to the employer.

The end result is phenomenal. People who were previously considered ‘unemployable’ are not only employed, they are considered a real asset to their employers.

# AN INCLUSIVE LABOUR FORCE IS GOOD BUSINESS

People with employment barriers are a necessary part of the labor force. Combine outmigration of youth, lack of immigration and baby boomer retirement with a record breaking boom and here we are: Saskatchewan is experiencing the impacts of a monumental labor shortage. General wisdom says this labor shortage is not going to change anytime soon. As a result, employers are forced to look beyond their traditional labor pools in order to fill their positions, or risk significant impacts to their bottom lines. Research indicates:

1. There are several thousand people with employment barriers that could be part of the labour force because they have valuable skills, education and abilities that Saskatchewan employers need.
2. A study completed by Pizza Hut demonstrates that people with disabilities were significantly more likely to stay in their jobs than the general population. Employers enjoy reduced costs associated with advertising, recruitment, hiring and training.
3. The 1987 the 'Harris' study polled 920 employers who hired workers with employment barriers. The results showed that employees with employment barriers were seen as working as hard, or harder than employees without employment barriers.
4. In 1990, DuPont conducted an internal survey and found that their employees with employment barriers "were equivalent to employees without disabilities for performance of job duties."
5. In 2005, North East Community Futures conducted a survey of Saskatchewan businesses and found 81% of employers who hired workers with employment barriers reported successful employment outcomes. In many cases, people with disabilities were hired long term.

There are many reports and studies that have the same results. People with employment barriers are generally credited with:

- An equal or better rate of work attendance
- Longer retention than average employees
- Good safety ratings

Hiring and accommodating people with employment barriers benefit employers because:

- It allows employers to address their labor needs
- Employers are seen as having a social conscious
- There are measurable improvements in sales and customer loyalty
- There can be an increase in worker morale
- By making their business accessible to people with employment barriers, employers make their businesses accessible to customers with employment barriers

Hiring and accommodating people with employment barriers benefit all of us when:

- People with employment barriers become contributing taxpayers
- Employees with employment barriers become a bigger part of their community forming relationships with employers and coworkers
- People with employment barriers begin earning income and become consumers, contributing to the local economy

Diversity in the workplace is becoming more common as employers struggle to meet their labour needs. Even the smallest community in Saskatchewan has a diverse population that includes people with employment barriers. Hiring a person who happens to have an employment barrier is the right thing to do; it is simply good business!

### **The Economic Power of Persons with Disabilities**

“Persons with disabilities...their buying power are now estimated to be about \$25 billion (Canadian), and they also influence the spending decisions of friends and families and in doing so, at least double their economic reach”.

# SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Supported employment refers to a series of supports and services facilitated by service providers, and used by employers and people with disabilities. The process is intended to help people with disabilities access the labour market by accessing programs and services individually tailored to their needs.

While many employers do hire people with disabilities without any help from service providers, and should be encouraged to do so, there are many service providers in Saskatchewan who are available should an employer require assistance.

The benefits of accessing employees through Supported Employment Service Providers include:

- **Access to Qualified Job Candidates:** Service providers offer job preparation and skills training to people who access their programs, and work hard to make sure that people who apply for work are the most qualified for the position advertised. Employers are encouraged to advise service providers when they are looking to fill positions.
- **Information About Accommodations:** Service providers have ready access to information about accommodation, specific disability issues, and other resources that help employers may use when hiring, training or supporting a person with a disability on the job.
- **Information About Funding:** Employers have access to both federal and provincial government programs intended to help them offset any additional expenses that could result from hiring a person with a disability. Service providers make it their business to know what funding is available to employers and can provide assistance to employers to access these funds.
- **Diversity Training:** Service providers provide workshops for employers and their staff. These workshops are intended to provide potential coworkers of a person with a disability information about ways they can work together.
- **Job Coach Support:** There are some situations where support needs to be provided on the job. Service providers offer access to 'job coaches'. Job coaches come to work with the employee, and provide training support, advice, and hands on help to both the employer and the employee while the employee is learning the duties of the job. As the employee becomes more independent on the job, the job coach provides less and less support until both the employer and the employee agree that the support is not needed.

# LAWS

Because people with employment barriers face additional challenges when looking for work Canadian laws attempt to “level the playing field” so that individuals with employment barriers have the same opportunity to succeed as anyone else.

## Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

The definition of disability is getting broader all the time and includes people with employment barriers such as:

- Intellectual disability
- Physical disability
- Addiction issues
- Mental health issues

## Saskatchewan Human Rights Code

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (SHRC) provides information about employment rights for all people. It says:

“All individuals have the right to equal treatment in the workplace. That requirement extends to interviews, advertising, and application forms, hiring, wages, promotions, dismissals, fringe benefits and freedom from harassment”.

Equal treatment does not mean preferential treatment. An employer is not required to interview or hire applicants that are incapable of successfully doing the job. It is not a violation of the Code to refuse to hire a person who does not have the ability to do the job, but it is discrimination when an employer assumes on no factual basis that a person cannot do the job solely because of an employment barrier.

For more information, contact the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission:

Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission

[www.shrc.gov.sk.ca](http://www.shrc.gov.sk.ca)

Email: [shrc@shrc.gov.sk.ca](mailto:shrc@shrc.gov.sk.ca)

In Saskatoon phone: 306-933-5952

In Regina call: 306-787-2530

# POLITICALLY CORRECT COMMUNICATION

## Communicating with People with Employment Barriers

Sometimes employers lack confidence when communicating with people who have a visible employment barrier because they are afraid they might say something that would offend.

It is important to speak with all people with respect, particularly in the workplace. If you are referring to a person's disability, it is acceptable to ask how you should refer to the disability assuming there would be a reason to make mention of it.

## Terminology

**Impairment:** An impairment is a physical or cognitive limitation or restriction such as a hearing impairment, or a learning impairment.

**Disability:** A disability is an impairment that interferes with some aspect of daily living. It is possible to have an impairment without having a disability.

**Handicap:** A handicap is a barrier created by environmental or attitudinal circumstance.

Example:

Anne has arthritis that causes mobility impairment. The impairment is severe enough that Anne uses a walking stick; Anne has an impact from the impairment, and therefore has a disability. Anne applied for a job, but when she got to the interview, she discovered the interview room was on the top floor of an office building that was only accessible by stairs. Anne now has a handicap preventing her from applying for the job.

Tips:

- It is no longer acceptable to refer to people by their disability. Do not say “the disabled”, “the blind”, the “hearing impaired.”
- If you treat the person with respect, people will know that you are. You may say ‘see you later’ to a person who has a vision impairment without fear of offense if it was said with respect, and not as a joke.

# ACCESSIBLE HIRING PRACTICES

Every employer wants to hire the best person for the job. Sometimes the best person for the job has an employment barrier. Employers miss out through hiring practices that may unintentionally screen out the same people they really need. Given the current labour market, it is very important for employers to broaden their hiring practices to include those with employment barriers.

## Determine the Actual Skills Necessary

Very often, employers identify skills, educational requirements and even qualities that they would like to see in an ideal candidate when recruiting. Sometimes the employer effectively screens out people that could do a fine job because they focus on the ideal instead of focusing on what is necessary. Employers may want to be careful to word ads in such a way as to ensure the maximum number of people can apply, and then hire for the right mixture of aptitudes, skills, qualifications and experience. Before you write the advertisement, please consider:

- What are the actual duties of the job?
- What methods and procedures does the person have to follow?
- What skills, education and abilities are actually required?
- What are the other criterion that need to be considered?

## Write a Job Description

It is always helpful to have a job description in place. Sometimes job descriptions do not accurately reflect the duties, skills and qualities required by the applicant because people tend to write the job descriptions based on their ideal candidate. People reading the ads will often screen themselves out based on this ideal when they could in fact have been the best person for the job.

When setting the criteria for applicants, employers should carefull consider:

- What do we need the employee to actually do?
- How much experience or training does the employee actually need?
- Will only formal education be considered, or can a combination of education and experience be considered?

- What are the actual physical and psychological demands of the job?
- What results would satisfy the employer that the job is being done well?

When a written job description is not available, employers can work with service providers to ensure the job description reflects the duties of the job.

## **Recruitment**

People with employment barriers are one of Saskatchewan's biggest untapped labour sources! Some of the common recruitment methods such as word of mouth, or personal referrals are still the recruitment method of choice, as are newspaper ads, or help wanted signs. However, often people with disabilities are often missed by this approach.

Here are some recruitment tips:

- Establish relationships with Supported Employment Service Providers
- Advertise and recruit at technical institutes or universities—these campuses often have recruitment agencies specifically for students with disabilities
- Reflect diversity in illustrations, pamphlets and brochures intended to promote the company and to let people know you welcome their application
- Adopt inclusive hiring practices and include a statement in your advertising that recognizes commitment to hiring people with employment barriers

## **Supported Employment Service Providers**

Because people with employment barriers often find it difficult to gain access to the regular job market, there are agencies and service providers that exist to help them. We refer to these agencies and organizations as 'service providers'. Employers who are serious about hiring people with employment barriers can look to these agencies as an excellent resource for finding people who want to work. Although the range of services vary, typically they include:

- Referral of applicants to the employer
- Provision of employer supports, such as helping the employer train
- Working with the employer and applicants to find out what supports are needed
- Working with other staff so that the applicant is supported

- Providing on the job supports—also referred to as ‘job coaching.’

The needs of the applicant, the employer and the requirements of the job are all considered when decisions are being made about the types of supports that will be provided.

## **Alternative Application Processes**

Technology has given employers the ability to accept applications or resumes by fax or e-mail, and by doing so, may inadvertently screen out potential employees.

Employers may want to consider implementing an application process that considers the needs of people who may not have ready access to a computer. Supported employment service providers are able to provide advice to employers who want to make their application process more accessible.

# **INTERVIEWING**

Applicants are typically selected for an for an interview based on how well his or her education, skills and experience match the job requirements. Smart employers also seriously consider volunteer work and life experience in addition paid work experience and formal education.

Some applicants may not have formal education and may never meet the criteria for employment based on that. It is important that employers focus on the capabilities and skills of each applicant.

## **Pre-interview Preparation**

Occasionally, an applicant may request an accommodation if they are to be interviewed. Some examples of interview accommodations are:

1. A candidate with a mobility related disability may request that the interview room be wheel chair accessible.
2. A candidate with an intellectual or developmental disability may require interview questions to be worded differently in order to understand the questions that are being asked.

Supported employment service providers can be a wonderful resource for employers who are preparing to interview a person with employment barriers. In keeping with the employer’s ‘duty to accommodate’ it is acceptable to ask if an accommodation is

necessary when setting up the interview. Doing so allows the employer to demonstrate leadership when hiring people with disabilities and allows access for people with disabilities who are applying for work.

## **Tips for Interviewing**

- Keep questions job-related
- It is not acceptable to ask questions about an individual's disability unless it directly relates to the job.

Employers are allowed to ask if the applicant has any conditions or reasons that would prevent them from doing the duties of their job. If the applicant indicates that there are, the employer can ask what duties are impacted, and ask what accommodations could be made that would allow the applicant to do the work adequately.

An employer *may not* ask, during the pre-employment interview or on an application form, about the nature and severity of the disability...nor...request a medical (before)...an offer of employment is made.

## **Employers Should**

- ✓ Plan to interview in a room that is accessible (i.e. First floor and wheelchair accessible, or near easily accessible elevators) and quiet
- ✓ Demonstrate acceptance by shaking hands and greeting a person
- ✓ Ask if there is any reason the person cannot perform the duties of the job
- ✓ Be aware of their responsibility to ask about accommodations

## **Employers Should Not**

- ✓ Assume an applicant cannot do a job
- ✓ Ask personal questions about the nature or severity of the disability even if the applicant brings it up
- ✓ Assume the applicant requires assistance opening doors etc. because he/she has a disability

# ACCOMMODATIONS

“Job accommodations are modifications to the facility, changes in job process and assistive technology that allows a person to perform at the expected performance standards”<sup>1</sup>.

Many people with employment barriers do not require any accommodation at all. Accommodations that worked for one employee may not work at all for a different employee even if they have similar disabilities.

Typically accommodations can be categorized in one of three ways:

1. **Modification of Schedules or Job Duties:**  
For example, duties may be written down as a series of smaller tasks and supported with reminders for a person who has difficulty remembering.
2. **Changing the Work Environment:**  
Clearing the workplace of clutter may be all the accommodation needed for a person with a visual impairment.
3. **Assistive Technology:**  
Install lights for a person with a hearing impairment to warn them when an alarm sounds.

Some accommodations, such as the purchase of certain adaptive technology can be expensive. Other accommodations, like modifying a work schedule, may cost nothing. Service Providers commonly work with employers to accommodate people with disabilities on the job. Some of the more common accommodations include:

## Adapting Work Schedules

Sometimes people with certain types of barriers may require an accommodation in their work schedule. For example, a person who needs to take specific medication at a specific time, may need to arrange for a break at that specific time.

In many instances, employers have successfully created scheduling around the needs of a person with an employment barrier, including work from home options, and flexible shifts.

---

<sup>1</sup> Job Accommodation Network Website: [www.jan.wvu.edu](http://www.jan.wvu.edu)

## **Adapting Job Duties**

When an employee is able to complete most duties and a particular duty is causing an issue, employers often modify it, or eliminate it from the employee's job description. For example, if an employee has difficulty standing for long periods but can otherwise do the job, the employer may want to consider allowing the employee to sit.

When it is not possible to adapt the duty, it is sometimes possible to adapt the job description. For example, in a restaurant in Saskatchewan, one duty of the waitresses is to wrap cutlery in a napkin. Another duty is to operate the till. The employer hired a person with an intellectual disability who could do every other aspect of the job except run the till. The solution? The other waitresses ran the till, and the person requiring accommodation wrapped the cutlery for them all.

## **Changes to Work Environment**

Changes to the work environment can include physical modifications to the workspace to allow a person to do the job or assistive technology. These changes are not necessarily expensive. For example, sometimes all that is required to accommodate a person in a wheelchair is to rearrange the office furniture to allow sufficient room. Sometimes assistive technology (a term referring to any device that helps a person with a disability do their job independently) can be as simple as using a large button telephone.

In the event that a necessary change is expensive, there is sometimes funding available to offset the cost. There are provincial and federal programs intended to support employers who hire people with disabilities. Some programs provide funding, other programs offer information. Service providers are the best resource for up to date information about funding options.

## **FITTING IN**

Sometimes there is a concern about hiring a person with an employment barrier because there is a fear that the person will not 'fit in' with the workplace. Sometimes other employees are uncomfortable working with someone with a disability. It is important that the employer be aware of how the existing employees view about working with someone who may work differently than they do. It is important for the employer and service provider to work together where necessary to establish a good relationship at the beginning. It is important that co-workers be made aware of their responsibilities when working with a person with an employment barrier:

- The duties that are expected
- Any accommodations that are being made

- Changes if any to the way they do their work
- Procedures to follow if there are any issues
- Ways they can support the new employee
- Their own responsibilities under the existing legislation

Depending on the circumstances, some employers may opt to access “Diversity Awareness Training”. This training is sometimes necessary for other employees to develop an understanding about how to work with people with employment barriers. It is very important that people have a chance to ask questions, to express their concerns, and offer their suggestions. It is also very important that coworkers understand their own obligations and responsibilities under Human Rights and Saskatchewan Labour Laws.

Generally, people with employment barriers are accepted much more readily into the workplace when existing staff are part of the process. Properly prepared, the best support for a person with an employment barrier is often a co-worker. Ideally, people with employment barriers become part of the workplace social fabric, and enjoy not only a good working relationship, but also the social opportunities arising from workplace relationships.

# GETTING STARTED

## **Creative Thinking:**

### ***Job Carving***

Employers considering their labour may at first try to address these needs using the same methods they have always used—by simply running an ad and filling a position. Today’s labour market requires a different approach. Smart employers are looking at the tasks that need to be completed, and are hiring people based on those tasks, freeing up more qualified workers to do tasks for which *they* were trained.

For example, an operator may earn up to \$40.00 per hour in the Saskatchewan oil field. Part of his or her job may be to keep their vehicle clean. It benefits the employer to hire someone to clean the vehicle, leaving the operator more time to ‘operate.’

Service providers are skilled at analyzing existing positions to find tasks within them that do not require special training. By identifying these tasks and creating a new position for a person with a disability, the employer saves money that would otherwise be paid to highly skilled people for doing essentially unskilled labour.

The employee hired to perform these duties contributes to the well being of the entire business, and earns a better than average wage, in keeping with his or her skills.

This process is called ‘job carving’ by service providers.

### ***Outsourcing***

Many employers recognize the benefits to hiring someone who works from home. Some people with disabilities have difficulty coming in to work each day due to mobility issues, transportation issues, or personal support issues. That does not mean they cannot benefit an employer whose needs can be met without the person being physically present in the workplace. Employers are embracing this idea more and more all of the time—particularly to accommodate and retain employees who develop disabilities.

Employers owe it to themselves to consider different ways of structuring jobs in order to meet their labour market needs.

## **Working With A Service Provider**

Service Providers work with employers to support people who have had some difficulty connecting to the labour market. Typically there is some disability, condition or circumstance that needs to be supported in order for the individual to reach their full potential in the workplace. The kinds of services that can be offered depend on the individual circumstance of the employer and the potential employee.

If you are considering hiring a person, please contact a Service Provider in your area. Be prepared to tell them:

- Where you are located
- The nature of your business
- The kind of job or jobs you want to fill
- When would be a convenient time for you to meet

Typically a meeting is set at the first phone call. Allow up to an hour for a first meeting to exchange important information.

Together you and the Service Provider will come away from the first meeting with a plan that fits you, your schedule and your workplace.

# Employer Checklist

1. Consider service providers as a source of labor. There are many people with valuable skills, education and abilities that could prove to be a real asset.
2. Investigate diversity training for your employees.
3. Invite your employees to work with you to determine the kind of on the job support they need in order to make their job more efficient.
4. Invite a service provider to visit your place of work; they may be able to help you identify ways a specific person can help, and could be the first step in relationship building.
5. Write a job description for any new positions based on the actual skills necessary to do the job—not on the ideal candidate.
6. Make sure your advertisements and recruitment practices reflect a welcoming inclusive attitude.
7. Ask if accommodations are required when setting up an interview.
8. Consider adapting job duties or changing the work environment for the right candidate.
9. Be candid with the Service Provider about any support you think is needed.
10. Once a person is hired, follow up with to ensure any issues are addressed.

# RESOURCES

For Service Providers in your area, please contact:

Tracy Meyers  
Supported Employment Transition Initiative Coordinator  
Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres (SARC)  
and  
President, Supported Employment Network of Saskatchewan (SENS)  
306-764-3740  
[tracy.meyers@sasktel.net](mailto:tracy.meyers@sasktel.net)

[www.sarcsarcan.ca](http://www.sarcsarcan.ca)  
[www.mysens.ca](http://www.mysens.ca)  
[www.supportedemployment.ca](http://www.supportedemployment.ca)

James Sanheim  
Provincial Employment Opportunities Coordinator  
Saskatchewan Association for Community Living (SACL)  
306-790-5685  
[james.sanheim@sacl.org](mailto:james.sanheim@sacl.org)

[www.sacl.org](http://www.sacl.org)

Sylvia Moss  
Program Coordinator  
Gabriel Dumont Institute Training and Employment Programs  
306-242-6070  
1-877-488-6888  
[sylvia.moss@gdite.gdins.org](mailto:sylvia.moss@gdite.gdins.org)  
[www.gdins.org](http://www.gdins.org)

Lorri Arcand  
Saskatchewan Indian Training Assessment Group Inc.  
[arcandl@siit.ca](mailto:arcandl@siit.ca)