

Dreaming of Inclusion

Breaking Down Barriers to Library Work for People
with Disabilities

Overview

- Workplace barriers for people with disabilities
- Ways to provide support
- Workplace accommodation

Question 1: Which of these have a disability?



Myth: Disability = Visible

- Many types of disability are visible
- Many types of disability are invisible
- Invisible disability often seen as less 'legitimate'

Question 2

How many of you have people with disabilities employed in your workplace?

Myth: Disability Is Uncommon

- 1 in 7 or 4.4 million people
- 10% of university grads
- Discomfort disclosing
- May have people and not realize
- If not, why?

Question 3

How inclusive of disability is your workplace?

Myth: We are Inclusive

- Changes with AODA legislation
- Survey: big gap in perception
- Non-disabled feel workplace is more inclusive than those with disabilities
- Why is this?

Workplaces Favour the Able-Bodied

- Default assumption: people are able-bodied
- Non-disabled = 'normal'
- Ableism
- Workplace assumptions reflect this
- Barriers to hiring and participation

Physical Barriers

- Differ by disability
- Examples:
 - Elevators
 - Bathrooms
 - Chairs
 - Background noise

Inflexible Work Expectations

- How things need to be done
- Often alternatives
- Think about goal not how to get there
- Example: travel

Attitudes to Disability

- Able-bodied as 'normal'
- Disability as less than 'normal', negative
- Stereotypes:
 - Less productive, effective
 - Taking advantage of the system
 - Asking for special treatment
- Need to examine biases

Supporting Co-workers and Employees

- Different Categories of Disabilities
 - Their challenges
- Strategies for Support
 - For everyone and for managers

Categories of Disabilities

- Visible vs Invisible
 - Visible - A disability one notices just by looking
 - Invisible - Disability not obvious just by looking
- Lifelong vs Acquired
 - Lifelong - A disability that the person was born with
 - Acquired - A disability acquired at some point in the person's life

Categories of Disabilities

- These can overlap:
- Physical - A limitation on a person's physical functioning such as mobility, dexterity, stamina
- Sensory - Disability of the senses such as hearing or vision
- Intellectual - Characterized by significant limitations to intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour
- Learning - Difficulty correctly receiving, processing and/or responding to information with average or above average intelligence

Categories of Disabilities

These can overlap:

- Mental illness - recognized, medically diagnosable illness resulting in impairment of person's cognitive, affective, or relational abilities
- Chronic pain - persistent pain, usually lasting or recurring longer than 3-6 months
- Chronic illness - medical illness that lasts a year+, requires ongoing medical attention and/or limits activities of daily living

*****Other marginalized identities may overlap with disabilities causing more challenges (ex. racism and ableism)**

Strategies for Support - Everyone

- Learn about different disabilities and the challenges they face
 - “What Life is Really Like for Disabled People,” The Guardian, Nov. 15, 2017
 - “Spikes and Other Ways Disabled People Combat Touching,” BBC News, Oct. 15, 2019
 - “Legally Blind Man Denied What He Says He Needed to Write Exam,’ CBC News, Nov. 1, 2019

Strategies for Support - Everyone

ASK THE PERSON (ATP)

- Language
- Assistance
- Assumptions

Strategies for Support - Managers

No matter where you are in the organization, be a leader, show that accessibility and inclusion is important

- Accessibility as high priority
- Potential training opportunities
- Cultivate culture of trust

Strategies for Support - Managers

What support can look like

- Check in
- Be flexible
- Spouses/parents/family members

Accommodations

- The duty to accommodate
- Bona fide occupational requirements
- Undue hardship
- Librarians accommodate

The duty to accommodate - a high bar

- 1999: BC v. BCGEU - Meiorin case
- Supreme Court established a standard for accommodations
- The bar is higher than most people realize

Bona fide occupational requirements

- Occupational requirements must be “bona fide”
- must be rationally connected to a legitimate work-related purpose
- no clear definition or test
- courts and human rights tribunals tend to say that for an occupational requirement to be bona fide, it must be a core duty that gets to the heart of what the position is

Bona fide occupational requirements - case study

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- shelving books (bona fide)
- driver's license (extremely unlikely to be bona fide; can be accommodated)
- physical strength / dexterity (could be bona fide; can be accommodated)

Undue hardship

Criteria contributing to undue hardship

- health and safety concerns
- financial costs "so substantial that they would alter the essential nature of the enterprise, or so significant that they would substantially affect its viability"

Things that are not undue hardship

- Inconvenience
- employee morale
- third-party preferences
- costs that aren't prohibitive

Librarians accommodate already

Accommodations require:

- listening
- creativity
- collaboration
- meeting people's needs
- celebrating people for what they can do

These are the things librarians already do best!

Questions?

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