



National Educational Association of  
Disabled Students

**Access to Success: A Guide for Employers**



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National Educational Association of Disabled Students

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## Introduction: Bridging the Gap

By Rachael Ross, President, NEADS

The number of disabled Canadians with post-secondary education has never been higher. Across the nation there is a vast pool of talent and creativity just waiting to be tapped. Yet, those of us who work as advocates in the area of education and/or employment of people with disabilities have, over the years, often heard employers say, “we’d love to hire a disabled person, but we just cannot find anyone with the qualifications we seek.”

We know there is a large number of qualified students and graduates with disabilities out there – many of them are members of our association. Clearly, with so many skilled and educated people looking for work, and a large number of employers keen to hire disabled people, but often unable to find applicants to fill positions, some sort of a gap exists. It is this issue that has motivated NEADS to produce *Access to Success: A Guide for Employers*, and we hope that it is one small step toward bridging the gap between enthusiastic job candidates with disabilities and progressive employers, willing to bring these individuals into their workplaces.

The following pages are the result of a year’s work consulting students with disabilities, employers, service providers and employment equity specialists across the country. In 2003, NEADS has organized five one-day consultations — what we call Student Leadership and Employment Forums — to share information and ideas with respect to the recruitment and accommodation of persons with disabilities in the Canadian employment market. Now, as the project comes to a close, we are pleased to have this opportunity to offer some different perspectives, an outcome of the issues addressed in our consultations.

What you will find is much like what we have found as we crossed the country: an interesting mix of viewpoints and approaches, and a variety of suggestions on overcoming barriers where they present themselves. The book includes five main subject areas: employer perspectives on hiring people with disabilities, profiles of some successful job seekers with disabilities, a comprehensive list and description of employment related agencies, a review of resources available for employers; and a series of questions that we have heard from employers and some of the answers that have been suggested during the course of this project. The guide also features information on recent, related NEADS initiatives, including our newly launched job site, the NEADS Online Work System (NOWS). It identifies various barriers to access in Canada’s employment market and offers some solutions.

As always, we welcome your feedback on this publication, and the work of the Association.

(November 2003)



## **BMO Financial Group: Attracting and Retaining Top Talent by Breaking Down Barriers**

By Joanne Maver

Forging the link between strategy and people steers BMO – Bank of Montreal Financial Group’s human resources’ mandate. Forging the link means that BMO’s people strategies must clearly result in outcomes, which enable BMO to successfully execute its customer-focused business strategies.

BMO’s people strategies focus on the importance of talented, engaged and high performing employees. Developing an equitable and supportive workplace, which reflects the diversity of the communities in which BMO lives and does business, are objectives that are explicitly aligned with strategic initiatives from the top. “The correctness, in every sense, of an equitable workplace and a representative workforce has embedded itself in our corporate culture,” says BMO Chairman and CEO Tony Comper. “We believe in it, we’re committed to it, and we know how to make it happen.”

The commitment to becoming a leader in establishing and sustaining a diverse workforce and an equitable, supportive workplace was first articulated in 1989’s Corporate Strategic Plan which cemented the drive to achieve this goal. In 1992, BMO initiated a Task Force on Employment of People with Disabilities to clearly identify the barriers facing employees with disabilities. The report led to innovative action plans, which continue to provide direction and focus to BMO’s efforts in creating an equitable and supportive workplace.

### **Accessibility**

A major goal identified by the Task Force was workplace accessibility. The report recommended that to create a positive work environment, BMO provide workplace modifications, alternative work tools and individual assistance, which would enable people with disabilities to contribute equitably and effectively to the business. Since the goal was articulated in 1992, BMO has made significant progress in workplace accessibility.

An example of this advancement is found in its innovative workplace accommodation policy created to ensure the provision of support to people with disabilities from recruitment to ongoing employment. The policy covers the cost of individual accommodations such as JAWS software, workplace modifications, technological support for the learning disabled, and ASL interpreters.

BMO’s dedication to workplace accessibility is also evidenced by leading-edge standards – set in 2002 - called “Beyond the Code.” These standards, which meet or exceed Canadian national and provincial building codes, guide BMO’s nationwide efforts to accommodate its customers and employees with physical disabilities in the workplace.

Diversity Councils and Affinity Groups – made up of employees at all levels, working in all of BMO’s lines of business – provide feedback to the enterprise on its success in creating an accessible workplace. These groups were created to raise awareness, foster dialogue, and model inclusive behaviour. They are actively involved in increasing awareness and advocating for diversity and workplace equity. Working in partnership with BMO’s leadership, these groups are fundamental to creating a fully inclusive environment.

The Diversity Councils have two fundamental roles: to bring the voice of the employee into goal-setting discussions and to act as grassroots champions of change. In doing so, they function as ambassadors for diversity and workplace equity—providing advice and support to the business unit’s executive team on issues related to the advancement of diversity and workplace equity. Councils meet regularly with employee groups to generate awareness.

Affinity Groups allow BMO employees who feel passionate about a specific issue or group to come together and not only discuss points of view, but also maintain and increase the level of employee engagement within BMO. Employee Affinity Groups are a catalyst for transforming



BMO's culture to a more inclusive and open environment. They provide resources for personal growth for participants as well as education and awareness for all employees.

BMO's Diversity Councils and Affinity Groups (Deaf, Deafened, and Hard of Hearing; Blind and Visually Impaired; Step Ahead-People with Disabilities; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered; Lion's Pride—the first transnational Affinity Group; and two Aboriginal Sharing Circles) hold numerous events year round to celebrate diversity within BMO and to reach out to the communities in which they serve. Examples include:

- Mayfest – Canada's largest celebration of deaf culture;
- Fashion Cares – Canada's largest and most spectacular gala fundraiser in support of the AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT);
- PCG Lunch and Learns – Designed to allow BMO employees the opportunity to hear success stories and tips from top female executives within BMO, and allow them the opportunity to ask career-coaching questions in an open environment.

As an initiative of the Blind and Visually Impaired Affinity Group, BMO established a policy to ensure the provision of support to employees with disabilities: the Adaptive Technology Services group. This group's mandate is to create a technically inclusive, barrier-free environment by establishing standards and implementing systemic technical solutions. In addition to coordinating specific assessments of adaptive technology for employees, the team provides the research and development, testing, and implementation of adaptive solutions. This support not only allows BMO employees to work at their most productive level, but also enables managers to actively source and hire top talent.

### **Recruitment of Top Talent**

Another goal identified by the 1992 Task Force was to increase the number of qualified job applicants amongst people with disabilities.

BMO strongly believes that when preparing to enter the workforce, applicants must remain active throughout the recruiting process – starting before the interview to the orientation once hired. It has been BMO's experience that successful candidates will have extensively researched the organization that they are applying to in order to better understand the business itself, the organization's culture and its policies. This will enable the applicant to determine if there is a good "fit" with the organization. Once candidates have been notified that they have been selected for an interview, they should practice their interviewing skills prior to the actual event. This may entail role playing, and preparing for a variety of interview formats. Once the interview has begun, applicants should clarify not only what is expected of them by the organization, but also what they expect of the company. Most employees leave jobs because it is not what they expected it to be. Asking questions throughout the process will prevent this from occurring. Once an applicant reaches the orientation stage of the recruitment process, they should familiarize themselves with their surroundings and team members. The individuals who are most successful in this stage are those who remain flexible and responsive.

It should be noted that BMO encourages people to understand their own barriers around disclosure. It is important that accommodation needs be carefully articulated. It is also critical that applicants focus on their abilities, not their disability.

In order to recruit talented employees, BMO engages in specific outreach and recruitment activities to attract applicants with disabilities. BMO works in partnership with community agencies such as the CNIB, the Canadian Paraplegic Association, the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work, and the Canadian Hearing Society.

In addition, BMO participates in job fairs and campus recruitment. It also sponsors and supports many organizations and events. In 2001, BMO was the Gold sponsor of the international conference "Inclusion by Design," which was a first for a Canadian company. The movement is based on the concept that all products, environments and communications should be designed to accommodate the greatest possible number of users. In 2003, BMO was an official corporate



sponsor of the Abilities Fair hosted by FACE. Other sponsorships include Mayfest – the annual event of the Ontario Association for the Deaf, NEADS, the Terry Fox Hall of Fame and People in Motion.

In partnership with Career Edge, BMO launched the Ability Edge Program to provide work experience to graduates with disabilities. After graduating from York University in Toronto with a degree in business and economics, Rachel Ho was having difficulty getting her career started. As a person with a disability, specifically dwarfism, Rachel found the career search daunting. “I had little work experience, it’s true,” says Ho. “However, I suspect that part of my trouble was due to my short stature. Unfortunately, some people equate ability with size.” Last year, Ho became an Ability Edge intern and subsequently joined BMO full-time as a national assistant administrator at BMO’s employee-run charitable foundation: the Fountain of Hope.

For those students who have recently graduated from high school, this program offers several tools to help ease the transition into the work world and allows the students to build a solid base for future careers. Students are able to forge relationships with a mentor who will be able to assist them throughout the program and after. Students also gain insight into proper job seeking strategies and learn the importance of networking in addition to receiving valuable work experience.

This program is seen as a “best practice”, with high permanent placement rates. The program facilitates the transition from high school, college and university to the workforce for people with disabilities, in a manner that is mutually beneficial to both employers and Ability Edge interns. In 2002, BMO received the Ability Edge Award for employing the largest number of interns in the program of any company in Canada.

BMO Financial Group is also involved in a program that was an initiative of the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW). It was launched in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in collaboration with the other “Big Five” banks. The program is aimed at training people with disabilities and offering them employment once training has been completed. The 12-week training program involves courses in the classroom and job shadowing. The curriculum is personalized to each candidate, so they receive information on the specific products and services offered at their financial institution. Upon completion of the training program, candidates become full time BMO employees as Financial Services Managers. BMO’s ability to take the leadership role with this program is facilitated by the integrated support they are able to provide in accommodating individuals with disabilities in the workplace.

There have also been efforts to facilitate the hiring process for managers looking to recruit people with disabilities. In conjunction with BMO’s B.C. HR Division, the British Columbia Diversity Council created a Hiring Guide for use within the division which details awareness tips for interviewing candidates with disabilities and sources for further information regarding BMO’s Accommodation Policy and diversity initiatives.

### **Changing the Corporate Landscape**

Since 1989, BMO has come a long way in creating an equitable, supportive workplace. BMO’s strategies are informed by the belief that diversity initiatives will be more successful if they are sponsored and led from the highest levels of the organization. Despite its progress, BMO carefully monitors its success on a regular basis. “Our commitment to create a diverse workforce and equitable, supportive workplace is part of the fabric of our organization,” said Rose Patten, Executive Vice-President Human Resources and Head, Office of Strategic Management. “Basically,” she added, “we’re trying to be a leader in creating a new corporate landscape – a landscape that is equitable and accommodating to person with disabilities so that BMO can attract and retain top talent, at every opportunity. We insist on respect for everyone and encourage all to have a voice.”

As BMO builds on their reputation as an employer of choice – one committed to equity, diversity and fairness; the importance placed on these beliefs has become ingrained into BMO’s day-to-day culture. The company has developed Corporate Values, which represent BMO’s core beliefs.



They stand as BMO's collective commitment - to each other, to BMO's customers, to BMO's shareholders and the communities of which BMO is a part.

According to the Canadian Bankers Association, BMO Financial Group is leading all of its competition in the overall representation of people with disabilities. Since 1992, the percentage of BMO employees in Canada with disabilities has risen from 1.8 per cent to 3.2 per cent.

BMO continues to be acknowledged for its leadership in the advancement of people with disabilities. In recognition of demonstrated commitment to removing barriers for people with disabilities, BMO was the 2002 recipient of the annual Daimler Chrysler Corporate Award presented by the Canadian Foundation for the Physically Disabled. This award was initiated in 1991, to recognize Canadian corporations for their contributions toward assisting people with physical disabilities in the community, as well as special efforts in aiding integration into the work place.

BMO was recently found in compliance with all twelve of the statutory segments of the Employment Equity Act during their Audit conducted by the Canadian Human Rights Commission. This was accomplished during Phase One – the only bank to accomplish this to date. No additional undertakings were required of BMO, a testament to its leadership and success in creating a diverse workforce and an equitable, supportive workplace.



## **Profile: Mahadeo Sukhai**

### **Medical Researcher and Student**

By Neil Faba

Mahadeo Sukhai's job involves a daily commute, hours of research, frequent overtime requirements, and interaction with a team of colleagues. But he doesn't work in a typical employment environment.

Sukhai is a PhD student at the University of Toronto, performing research into leukemia at the Princess Margaret Hospital's Ontario Cancer Institute. While it's not, perhaps, employment in the traditional sense of the word, he says he considers it the same as any career position. He had to go through a formal interview process to secure the position, and has to do research that contributes to the field, both situations akin to what other employees go through.

"In the hospital environment, we're treated as employees," says Sukhai. "Research takes precedence over our schooling, even though my research is my schooling. Also, I'm responsible to my graduate supervisor."

Sukhai says he credits that supervisor with providing him the chance to prove what he can do. As someone with a visual impairment, performing cell-based research in a lab environment, often involving work on mice, requires doing things in ways that differ from his colleagues. He says it would have been easy for his supervisor to deny him that opportunity based on these challenges, but she chose to take him in based on what he can do.

"She may have soul-searched for a few weeks before offering me the position, but ultimately she now knows what people with disabilities are capable of, and she won't be shy about hiring people with disabilities in the future."

The challenge of conducting research with a visual impairment has meant Sukhai has required several accommodations in order to do his work effectively, the most expensive of which has been a full-time research lab technician, paid for by the university. The technician assists Sukhai with the aspects of research experiments he can't do on his own.

"My supervisor has been very good about this, saying that I don't need my eyes to think," he says. "If I can't do an experiment, I can think it through, and then have someone else handle the drudgery of actually doing the experiment."

Sukhai says other technologies he was given to help accommodate his needs in the lab have changed and been adapted. For example,

*"My supervisor has been very good about this, saying that I don't need my eyes to think."*



he says that a computer originally installed in the lab for his use was eventually made available to other researchers as the need grew. Currently, he has his own laptop computer, with a 19-inch flatscreen monitor paid for by the university's accommodation fund. He also uses a microscope hooked up to a television monitor, which allows him to better view his experiments, especially the ones conducted on mice. "Without it I wouldn't have been able to get anywhere," says Sukhai.

Sukhai advises employers to "look beyond the disability." He says that it is important employers keep an open mind in their hiring practices, focusing on what people with disabilities can do, rather than what they can't do. He says barrier-free hiring is key to improving the opportunities of people with disabilities in the workforce, but that doesn't mean employers should decide to hire people with disabilities and then simply give jobs to the first 100 people who come in fitting that description.

He also says creating a barrier-free workplace environment – in technology, physical space, the installation of elevators and wheelchair ramps, etc. – goes beyond meeting the needs of people with disabilities.

"It's important that employers realize the initial costs involved in these types of things will be offset by the long-term benefits they provide," says Sukhai. "Don't think of an accommodation as something that will benefit one person; think of how many people will benefit in the long run."

Sukhai says he chose to disclose his disability at the end of his interview with his graduate supervisor, so that it wouldn't be the focus of the interview. But he says employers need to remember that people with disabilities are not required to disclose to an employer, and may not choose to do so.

"I'm happy and comfortable with my disability," says Sukhai. "But not everyone is like that, and it took me a while to get to this point. Employers cannot fault someone for not disclosing, or even for deciding to disclose somewhere down the road, after they are hired."

He says that people with disabilities who are seeking career employment must also remember to maintain a positive attitude, be confident in their own abilities, and to realize they have to do things for themselves. He says people who keep these things in mind will find that employers want to help them succeed and grow.

"There's an old saying, give a man a fish, he eats for a day; teach a man to fish, he eats for a lifetime," Sukhai says. "I've been taught to fish by some very gifted people."

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## Diverse Opportunities at GE Canada

Terry Peach, Manager, Organization and Staffing, GE Canada

GE is a Global Company, operating in over 100 countries around the world. Innovation is the engine that drives GE growth, and has since the days of Thomas Edison.

Some recent examples of product innovations coming out of GE include a 4-D ultrasound that allows parents and doctors to see real time 3D pictures of the fetus, and an oven that cooks using light. GE is made up of very diverse businesses, each one a world leader in its industry. This includes technology businesses such as Power Systems, Medical Systems, Industrial Systems, Plastics, Specialty Materials, and Aircraft Engines, financial services such as Commercial Finance, Equipment Leasing, Insurance and Consumer Finance, consumer goods such as Lighting and Appliances, and entertainment and news through NBC and its subsidiaries and affiliates. People at GE share and live certain core values. They share a commitment to integrity, performance and change. These values drive the way GE operates, assesses performance, and promotes leaders.

GE values diversity in its employees and is committed to being a global employer of choice. In the words of Chief Executive Officer, Jeff Immelt, "GE should be a workplace where talented people can live their dreams – where it is diverse and with a vibrant culture." At GE Canada there are many initiatives to help make diversity a reality. In order to remain a global employer of choice, it is very important for GE Canada to have a representative workforce. GE Canada businesses set employment equity goals and targets each year. Recently, a digital dashboard was created to regularly track the representation of the four designated groups (women, visible minorities, Aboriginal peoples and people with disabilities). This dashboard is generated every quarter and provides a graphical snapshot of the numbers of each of the designated groups in comparison to their external availability. This allows business leaders to assess their progress in achieving employment equity goals.

GE Canada also offers diversity training to all employees in order to build awareness and sensitivity to issues of diversity. There are currently three diversity-related workshops offered to all employees. The Diversity Awareness workshop provides participants with a general overview of core issues, such as the definitions of Employment Equity and Diversity, and GE's workplace equity policies and strategies. The Harassment Prevention workshop gives participants an opportunity to learn more about workplace harassment and how to prevent it. By using case studies and group discussions, this workshop provides employees with useful strategies for dealing with workplace harassment and resolving complaints. The Diversity Leadership course offers managers and team leaders tools for not only managing diverse groups, but also leveraging the diversity within their teams. Online diversity training is also currently being developed so that remote employees have the opportunity to benefit from the training.

GE Canada also promotes and celebrates workplace diversity through local Diversity Councils, such as the one at the Canadian Headquarters - Meadowvale. This committee is made up of about fifteen employee volunteers from nine different GE Canada businesses. The Meadowvale Diversity Council organizes Lunch and Learn workshops and coordinates other diversity-related activities and events. Currently a Disabilities Awareness Lunch and Learn is being organized through the Ontario March of Dimes.

GE Canada is committed to improving the status of persons with disabilities within their organization. Outreach recruitment is one important aspect of this commitment. GE Canada has partnerships with several community agencies, such as Ontario March of Dimes, Link-Up employment agency, Strategic Employment Solutions, Canadian Paraplegic Association and Canadian National Institute for the Blind. By sending these agencies job postings on a regular basis, GE Canada is able to refer qualified applicants with disabilities to job openings and maintain a database of prescreened resumés that remain on file if any suitable positions become available. In addition to this, many internship positions are routinely posted with Ability Edge. Job fairs and conferences are also avenues that are used to meet and recruit qualified candidates with disabilities. For instance, GE Canada attended the Abilities 2003 job fair, and the NEADS conference 2002. The company has participated in the People in Motion trade show to create



awareness in the disabled community about opportunities available within the organization. By engaging in these ongoing projects and developing new initiatives, GE Canada would like to become more successful in attracting high caliber candidates with disabilities.

GE Canada's partnership with the E.C. Drury School for the Deaf is yet another example of its commitment to people with disabilities. For over fifteen years, the two organizations have worked together to offer a co-operative education program for students to gain hands on work experience. Each year, three co-op students from the E.C. Drury School complete their co-op terms at GE Canada. The students are accompanied by a sign language interpreter for their interview and first visit to the company. After this, individual accommodations are made for these students so that they may successfully complete their co-op terms. For instance, workplaces have been modified for students with multiple disabilities. In addition to the co-op partnership, GE Canada has offered a career orientation program to E.C. Drury students, including organizing a yearly trip to the National Technological School for the Deaf in Rochester, N.Y. and a computer skills training program. Many of the co-op students from E.C. Drury have gone on to attain summer employment with GE Canada. An example of a success story from this partnership can be seen in Natasha, a former E.C. Drury co-op student who was offered employment with GE Canada. Natasha has been working with the Corporate Properties, Services and Operations group for the past four years. GE Canada has worked with Natasha, her parents and the E.C. Drury School to ensure that she has any accommodations she needs to do her job successfully. For instance, Natasha's co-workers have attended company sponsored sign language training so that they can communicate with her. Also, she has been provided with a vibrating pager for emergency procedures. Natasha's manager describes her as an excellent employee and a valued member of the team.

GE Canada makes every possible effort to create a workplace that is welcoming to people with disabilities, with a policy of accommodation for individual needs. The company will continue its efforts to recruit and retain people with disabilities so that it can truly be a global employer of choice. Learn more about GE at [www.ge.com](http://www.ge.com) and GE Canada at [www.ge.com/canada](http://www.ge.com/canada)



## Persons with Disabilities Succeed: Some Examples from Halifax

By Stephen Noel, Employment Counselor, Saint Mary's University

I've been working with university students, as an Employment Counselor, for six years. In that time I've seen every myth and stereotype shattered - "blown out of the water!" These are just a few of many success stories that I've witnessed. Like all persons with disabilities, these individuals have had to overcome obstacles and barriers, some real and concrete, and others attitudinal. As I recall, each of these individuals expressed that the greatest barriers to their success in the employment market were attitudinal.

If one could sum up my experience working with people with disabilities, I'd have to say that it is all about attitude. Every disabled student I've seen has demonstrated a work ethic and a degree of determination that is truly extraordinary. I've known some students with great limitations who could get good jobs very easily. Their attitudes and the way they present themselves make them "stars" in any arena. It's all about progressive attitudes and thinking and that includes our own as well as those of employers doing the hiring.

Leigh Derry graduated with a Political Science degree, from Saint Mary's University in 1988. Through the course of his degree, Leigh, who has Spina Bifida, gained a lot of knowledge and strengthened some general skills. He went on to pursue a college diploma in computer applications to follow his interest in computers and to develop more specific skills to make himself more competitive in the labour market.

When he completed the computer studies program, Leigh hit the streets to look for work. After a lengthy period of applying for many jobs, during which Leigh remained active and proactive in his job search, things began to turn around. Just prior to being hired as a help-desk specialist with a large telecommunications company's Internet Service, Leigh had several good employment prospects. A job with a telecommunications company was the one he wanted most. He was hired and he's still working full-time with the same company six years later. Leigh's success appears to be the result of wise career planning and persistence in his job search.

Alex Orbegoso, who is blind, graduated from Saint Mary's University in 1998 with a Sociology degree. A multi-skilled individual, Alex is a musician who also speaks several languages. Alex had 'worked at' several different jobs before graduating from university. Upon completing his degree Alex quickly began job-searching. Over time he became an effective, diligent job searcher, writing quality cover letters and resumés, while networking with employers. Alex found a full-time contract job as an employment counselor. Through this work he further developed his networking skills and learned to conduct himself as a professional in the field.

After the contract position, Alex continued his job search and before long he found a full time job in telephone banking as a Customer Service Representative with a major bank. The use of Text-to-Speech and Braille Display computer technology enables Alex to perform all the tasks of a Telephone Banking Customer Service Rep.

Nadine Legier, has a love for learning! She completed a Bachelor of Arts degree with honours in English from Saint Mary's University. After which she moved on to pursue a Masters degree from the University of Guelph. Nadine completed her Masters degree and has since gone on to a career as a university professor. She now teaches at both Saint Mary's University and Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax. At this time she is contemplating further study to complete a doctoral degree.



## The Ability Edge Perspective

By Maryon Urquhart, Director, Customer Relations, Career Edge

For employers interested in hiring high potential people for entry-level positions, a significant trend is emerging – graduates with disabilities are in demand. Canada’s major organizations clearly understand the importance of ensuring their workforces reflect the diverse communities in which they operate. As a result, increasing numbers of progressive employers are seeking skilled people with disabilities.

The challenge facing many employers today is how best to recruit qualified college and university graduates with disabilities and then retain them in their workforce.

One way employers are addressing this challenge is by using internships to access and identify graduates with disabilities who are ready to enter Canada’s labour market.

Ability Edge is Canada’s internship program designed for graduates with disabilities who seek career-launching opportunities. The Ability Edge program is run by Career Edge, a not-for-profit, private sector organization that specializes in arranging entry-level internships across Canada for all types of university, college and high school graduates. Career Edge has managed internships for 5,500 graduates since starting in 1996.

Ability Edge is an important part of Career Edge operations. Ability Edge began in 1999 as a pilot project of Career Edge and the Canadian Bankers Association. After the successful pilot, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) agreed to provide additional funding to Ability Edge as an operation of Career Edge.

As of May 2003, a total of 86 graduates with disabilities have worked as Ability Edge interns at major employers, including Bell Canada, BMO Financial Group, CIBC, General Motors of Canada, NCR, Noranda, RBC Financial Group, Scotiabank, Sprint Canada and TD Bank Financial Group.

The results from Ability Edge are encouraging. Approximately 60 per cent of Ability Edge interns have gained permanent employment at the organizations that hosted their internships. This clearly indicates the value that Ability Edge interns bring to the workplace.

Much of this success is due to the support that Ability Edge interns receive throughout their six-, nine- or 12-month internships. Career Edge and the organizations that host interns work together to:

- incorporate career-building responsibilities into each Ability Edge internship;
- provide on-the-job coaching;
- offer career counselling services, as required.

These services help smooth out what can be a difficult transition from school to the workplace and give interns the experience and confidence they need to excel in a professional environment. Some of the best practices instituted by Ability Edge hosts can apply to any employer. These include:

**Start at the top.** The best organizations set specific recruitment goals for hiring people with disabilities. These goals receive high-level support within the organization, usually from the CEO or another top decision-maker. These goals extend to individual departments, are integral – not an optional extra – to departments’ annual plans and are linked to executives’ compensation. Good intentions are not enough to open the doors to new talent with disabilities. The key is to take clear action, then provide rewards and recognition when recruitment goals are achieved.

**Coordinate the effort.** Top-down initiatives often start the process. To continue the momentum, the best organizations synchronize their recruitment and accommodation efforts across departments and lines of business. One effective tactic is to provide central funding to cover the costs of any necessary accommodation services. Another way is to share information about assistive technologies, such as what computer programs are available and supported by an organization’s IT department, and make this knowledge known throughout all divisions.



**Offer wide-ranging opportunities.** A key success factor with Ability Edge internships is the positions available encompass a variety of fields. Internships range from technology-related intranet support positions, to commerce-based marketing analysts/assistants, to liberal arts-trained HR specialists. This allows interns with disabilities to find responsible positions that fit their skills, training and interests throughout an organization, rather than being restricted to designated departments that may lack career-building potential.

**Develop HR proactivity.** Effective human resources departments take the lead in assisting interns and new hires with disabilities. This proactivity begins early in the selection process, such as by raising the issue of accommodation at the initial recruitment stage and identifying the specific tools a person with special needs requires to do the job. Organizations deliver a powerful message of support when their HR staff follow through and have those tools in place for an intern's or employee's first day. Such support is further enhanced when HR professionals regularly contact the person with a disability. For example, when an Ability Edge internship nears completion, a best practice developed by effective HR departments is to take the initiative and identify suitable job opportunities across their organizations, not just within one department, then make those opportunities known to the intern.

**Provide ongoing support.** Access to on-the-job training and mentoring are integral to each Ability Edge internship and a significant contributor to the success of our interns and host organizations. We've found that, in addition to providing an encouraging coach and/or supervisor, interns with disabilities benefit greatly from two additional, yet low-cost, support services. One is having access to affinity groups of colleagues. The other is meeting senior level people who have similar disabilities. Being mentored by a role model within an organization or profession – someone who can provide perspective on career development – is among the most powerful ways to ensure people with disabilities do well in their workplace.

Despite such best practices, the marketplace for graduates with disabilities remains extremely fragmented. Connecting employers and graduates with disabilities remains a major challenge. In fact, the number of Ability Edge internships across Canada is currently limited by the scarcity of qualified intern candidates, not by the opportunities.

Among the challenges is the definition and self-identification of graduates with disabilities. At Ability Edge, we've seen that graduates with disabilities can be reluctant to associate with specific programs for people with disabilities. There's a good reason for this. Many graduates with disabilities have found ways to cope with their disabilities and don't require accommodation at work. These individuals want to take on mainstream responsibilities when they enter the workforce, without the risk of being categorized into special positions.

Ability Edge internships, like all Career Edge internships, are designed to be entry-level opportunities that build futures. Each placement becomes an example to employers that internships create value in their workplace, while interns gain workplace experience and skills that will last throughout their careers.

Due to employer demand for high-potential graduates with disabilities, landing an Ability Edge internship has become less competitive than a conventional Career Edge internship. As of mid-2003, the ratio between graduates registered for internships and actual internship opportunities available across Canada was 40 to 1 for Ability Edge, compared to 400 to 1 for Career Edge.

Despite these favourable conditions, reaching graduates with disabilities remains difficult. At many education institutions, the on-campus career centres operate separately from the offices set up to assist students with disabilities. Dealing with two departments doubles the amount of effort required by employers seeking candidates and by graduates with disabilities seeking jobs.

To address this, Ability Edge continues to partner with education institutions, employers and community agencies, including NEADS, to stimulate greater awareness, communication and cooperation about internships and broader employment/workplace issues. By forging effective working relationships between organizations, all stakeholders can streamline the recruitment process.



An example of an effective practice to accelerate the recruitment and hiring process is circulating electronic internship postings and notifications of opportunities to targeted career centres. To expand the candidate pool, Ability Edge is now using e-mail alerts, which augment the web-based recruitment and application process launched in 2002 for Career Edge.

As Canada's leading national internship program for graduates with disabilities, Ability Edge is positioned to help maximize this country's human resource potential. Our aim is to work with employers, prospective interns and all types of employment-oriented agencies to promote the internship experience as a low-risk, cost-effective and viable way for graduates with disabilities to gain permanent, fulfilling jobs.

### **How Ability Edge Works**

Ability Edge is a program that links employers and graduates with disabilities who seek career-launching opportunities. By working as Ability Edge interns, qualified graduates gain up to 12 months of workplace experience. Ability Edge is operated by Career Edge, a not-for-profit organization that has managed internships for 5,500 graduates at more than 850 companies.

- Employers, known as "hosts," work with Career Edge/Ability Edge to design entry-level internships that include meaningful responsibilities, plus on-the-job coaching.
- These internships, which are for six-, nine- or 12-months, are posted on the Career Edge/Ability Edge website and at appropriate community agencies and/or college/university career centres.
- Graduates register on-line with Career Edge/Ability Edge and apply to internships.
- Career Edge pre-screens candidates who apply to Ability Edge internships.
- The host interviews candidates and selects an intern.
- The selected interns become employees of Career Edge and work directly at their hosts. As of mid-2003, the stipend Career Edge pays each intern is \$1,500/month.

More information about the program is available at [www.abilityedge.ca](http://www.abilityedge.ca).



## **Profile: Jacob Fehr**

### **Software Developer**

By Neil Faba

Jake Fehr's business card may list his occupation as Software Developer, but appearances can be deceiving.

Fehr says that a typical workday in Shaw Communications' Calgary office involves "a bit of everything". In addition to performing development work on new software projects, he says his day usually also involves some support work on existing software, conducting bug fixes on the company's Pay-Per-View technology, and performing product support, as well as other duties.

"The good thing about it is it's not cookie-cutter," says Fehr of his job. He says the fact there is only a small number of employees in his department has presented him with the opportunity to experience such a broad range of duties. "If we had a bigger staff, I would just be a software developer."

Fehr, who has a visual impairment, says he found his current job thanks to an internship opportunity. He says being able to get a foot in the door through internship allowed him to gain knowledge and experience in an industry he had no previous background in outside of his studies.

An internship at Shaw, Fehr says, also allows young people the chance to work on projects that would normally be reserved for those who've been with the company for a number of years. This creates potential employees who possess a vast knowledge of the company once the internship has ended.

"Once our interns are done, they move on to a lot of responsibility," he says. "They learn a lot in 8 to 12 months."

Fehr says that it's true that experience is important in many jobs, given the contacts and knowledge long-term players in an industry can bring to a company. But, he adds, employers should also realize that experience isn't all that's important. While students right out of school may not have years of employment in their chosen field, more often than not, they possess the key skills and attributes that make up a valuable employee.

One of the challenges many people with disabilities face when hunting for employment is the decision of whether to disclose their disability to a potential employer. Fehr says he always discloses, but chooses to wait until the end of a job interview before mentioning he has low vision. He says he simply explains the disability, and how it might effect how he conducts the duties of the job. "I think

that way, the employer focuses on the interview, rather than the disability,” says Fehr.

Another workplace challenge, both for employees with disabilities and their employers, is the issue of accommodations. Fehr says that, overall, he has had good experiences in seeking accommodations from employers. Most of the time, he is able to get around his disability by simply moving closer to the information he is reading or viewing, but he says that his supervisors at Shaw further accommodated him, without his even asking, by giving him a 21-inch monitor to work with, early in his tenure with the company. He now has two large screens at his disposal.

He says employers should realize that accommodating employees with disabilities isn’t always an expensive or time-consuming venture. “There are less expensive alternatives in some cases,” he says, “you just have to look and do some research.” For example, Fehr says he found a video card that allowed him to zoom in on computer images, which was much cheaper than the ZoomText software that many people with visual impairments use.

Fehr says that both people with disabilities and employers need to work together to understand each other’s needs and abilities. People with disabilities need to focus on their own skills and abilities, rather than their disabilities, and need to build the confidence required to sell themselves to employers. Employers, in turn, need to be willing to put aside any preconceived notions, and be willing to take a risk on someone who may not fit the typical mould of a new employee.

Fehr says there are a few people with mobility or visual impairments at Shaw, which creates a positive environment within the company.

“People with disabilities really add diversity to the workforce,” he says. “It shows people with disabilities can have productive careers, and shows the company is an inclusive employer, that they don’t discriminate based on ability.”



*“People with disabilities really add diversity to the workforce,” Fehr says. “It shows people with disabilities can have productive careers, and shows the company is an inclusive employer, that they don’t discriminate based on ability.”*



## **Navigating the Waters: A National Employment Initiative of the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres**

By Susan Forster, National Project Manager, Navigating the Waters

Navigating the Waters is a national employment initiative coordinated by the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres (CAILC)\* with funding provided by the Opportunities Fund, Human Resources Development Canada. Anyone with any type of disability between the ages of 16 to 64 who is unemployed is eligible for individualized support through Navigating the Waters (NTW) to reach employment and employment-related goals.

Since 1997 Navigating the Waters has supported over 3550 persons with disabilities and 1108 (31%) of these participants subsequently became employed full-time or part-time, including a small number of individuals who chose self-employment. Each year our Centres also work directly with youth with disabilities who are often looking for their first job in the labour market.

NTW is delivered locally in most of CAILC's Member Centres. For a list of locations or to contact us, see the end of this article.

A Career Development Facilitator in each Centre taking part in NTW works one-on-one with each person with a disability to meet individual needs. Some participants require pre-employment supports and could be in the process of beginning the journey toward employment. Others are looking for a volunteer placement, a work experience program, or want to upgrade their skills through taking courses (such as literacy training), completing high school, or enrolling in college or university.

However, many participants are job ready. And many of our Career Development Facilitators work directly with employers and are very willing to provide qualified candidates for job postings.

In recruiting post-secondary students and graduates with disabilities, the following tips may be helpful:

- Clearly state in each job posting that you encourage qualified people with disabilities to apply;
- Routinely place your ads with the Office for Students with Disabilities at your local college and/or university;
- Make a practice of sending job postings to your nearest Independent Living Resource Centre and/or large disability service provider(s);
- When setting up job interviews routinely ask candidates, who have self-identified as a person with a disability, if accommodation is needed during the interview;
- Hire a summer student with a disability. Many disabled job seekers need that first job to get real work experience. You will be providing a wonderful opportunity for a young person with a disability and you may later be able to hire that student when he or she graduates;
- Cultivate your contacts in the educational/disability community so that you can develop a file of résumés;
- Ensure disability is a consideration in all recruitment and human resource functions.

Workplace accommodation is an area that many employers are not familiar with. Here are some tips:

- Disabled job seekers vary in how much they know about accommodation in the workplace. However, through necessity many young people with disabilities have had to become their own "accommodation experts";



- Ask the prospective employee directly how best you can accommodate him or her in your workplace. You may discover a wealth of knowledge on workplace accommodation just by tapping into your new employee's own expertise in this area;
- If this is not the case, then you may wish to contact your nearest Independent Living Resource Centre or relevant disability service provider(s) for information and resources;
- It is really crucial for the success of workplace accommodation, for all those involved in the process, to work as a team;
- The employee with a disability needs to play as active a role in this process as he or she is able to in order for the workplace accommodation to be a real success.

Through Navigating the Waters and my own personal experience as a person with a disability, I have seen that once hired many people with disabilities do not receive the same opportunities for promotion as do their non-disabled colleagues. As an employer, it may be useful to view the employee with a disability as an individual first and as an employee with a disability second. Disability is one characteristic of that person. If you see the person first then you may be better able to see the potential of your new employee. These tips form the basis for developing an accessible and effective employment program.

Our successes with Navigating the Waters are varied. Here are some examples. One young participant now holds down two part-time jobs in retail. Another individual, who became disabled as an adult, re-trained to become a school bus driver. Other participants have been hired to work for the public service, started their own businesses, become Web site designers and published books. One participant became a dairy farmer, while another was appointed to the Ontario Human Rights Commission; yet another person was hired by one of our Independent Living Centres to work in its Peer Support Program.

We are very proud of the achievements of the Navigating the Waters initiative. One effective practice of NTW is that most of us who work on the program, including our Career Development Facilitators and myself as Manager, are also persons with disabilities. If you are an employer whose organization is large enough to have a Human Resource Department, consider hiring a young graduate who is a person with a disability as a Human Resources Consultant. Then you too would be putting into the workplace a person with valuable skills that come with lived experience.

If you would like more information on Navigating the Waters, here is a list of locations across Canada:

British Columbia:	Duncan, Nanaimo, Richmond, Vernon, Victoria
Alberta:	Calgary
Saskatchewan:	Regina, Saskatoon
Manitoba:	Winnipeg
Ontario:	Collingwood, Kapuskasing, Kingston, Ottawa, Parry Sound; St. Catharines, Thunder Bay
Quebec:	Montreal, Trois-Pistoles, Val D'Or
New Brunswick:	Shippagan
Nova Scotia:	Halifax
Newfoundland & Labrador:	St. John's

For contact information on each location, email or call Susan Forster, National Project Manager, CAILC at [projects@cailc.ca](mailto:projects@cailc.ca) or (613) 563-2581 X14.

\*The Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres (CAILC) is a national umbrella organization with 24 member Independent Living Resources Centres across Canada. Centres are run by and for persons with disabilities. We coordinate Navigating the Waters and many other disability projects. To find out more about CAILC and the Independent Living philosophy that underlies all that we do we welcome you to visit our website at [www.cailc.ca](http://www.cailc.ca).



## Champions Career Centre: An Overview

By Melissa Trono, Information Resources Manager

(Champions Career Centre is made possible by funding through Alberta Human Resources and Employment and the Government of Canada).

Champions Career Centre (CCC) is an innovative, tri-sector partnership of non-profit disability organizations, government agencies and major Alberta companies committed to advancing the workforce participation of persons with disabilities. Based in Calgary, Champions was designed to support and not duplicate the rehabilitation programs of its partnering agencies. While partners have different perspectives and bring unique and distinctive resources to the partnership, they share a common goal: to facilitate and integrate people with disabilities into today's workplace. Champions and its partners are solely focused on helping individuals with disabilities prepare to find employment, further their education, and fulfil their career goals. Champions provides comprehensive, integrated, coordinated services.

CCC services include: individualized assessment, collaborative employment Action Plan, resource centre, career planning, acquisition of employability and employment skills through individual and workshop formats, supported job search, employment placement, education/training placement, and community support services. Follow-up support is maintained through monthly contact over a 180-day period with additional job coaching, personal support, adaptive technology or Disability Related Employment Supports (DRES) as required. The Case Management model is applied to all stages of the service delivery to ensure timely and individualized response to client need.

People may access CCC services both informally and formally. Informally, or in a self-directed manner, people may use the computer lab and library resources or sign-up for a workshop. Formally, or for those who want to work directly with a Client Services Coordinator or Job Developer, attendance at an Orientation Session (scheduled each Tuesday) is required to begin the CCC process. Orientation materials are available in alternate formats such as Braille and large-print. Interpreters for deaf clients are scheduled upon request.

An extensive interview is conducted by the Intake Coordinator following the orientation. This assists in determining CCC eligibility with questions regarding: the nature of the disability, interests, education, transferable skills, and motivation. Previous job placement interventions and identified barriers to employment lead to an observation if the client is "Ready, Willing and Able" to successfully enter the job market. Clients deemed ineligible are referred to appropriate external resources and encouraged to access CCC at a later time.

Eligible clients then proceed to working collaboratively with a Client Services Coordinator (CSC). Through a Workability Assessment, the client's employment needs are identified. This information becomes the foundation for the development of the Action Plan. The CSC and client interact as the 'hub of the wheel', facilitating access to resources which address the identified client needs. Qualified and proven service provider agencies act as 'spokes of the wheel' to present the best available combination of community skill and experience to meet specific needs. Information is coordinated by the CSC to ensure that the highest quality of service and outcomes are achieved. Client satisfaction measurements are taken at service completion to ensure the highest level of quality and service.

Once employment and employability skills are acquired, the person with a disability is equipped to enter into Supported Job Search. CCC Job Developers (JDs) have the prime objective to assist clients to secure full or part-time sustainable employment. They actively market the clients to employers, research opportunities, maintain current job market information, and provide knowledgeable feedback on job search activities. The JDs meet regularly and systematically with clients to schedule individual and group sessions, provide job leads, and facilitate discussion to generate job-seeking strategies. They facilitate the matching of skills and interests to employment positions.

For those applicants with disabilities whose limitations prevent participation in the main stream Supported Job Search program, service providers provide the Supported Job Search on an



individual basis. Identical expectations for job leads, feedback, support, placement and follow-up are held, but activities are monitored by the CSC through bi-weekly reports, with client satisfaction surveys completed at the end of service.

Upon placement, CCC creates a systematic schedule of follow-up dates for contact with both the client and employer. The first contact occurs on the second day of employment to ensure mutual satisfaction. Concurrently, DRES program supports are discussed and activated to ensure timely response should adaptive technology and/or worksite modifications be required.

Second contacts occur following one-week of employment, at which time a formal interview based on a CCC-designed set of questions documents placement satisfaction and progress. Thereafter, the client and employer are contacted on a monthly basis.

If at any time during or following the employment placement, issues require individual job coaching or support intervention, the CSC accesses the external resources necessary to ensure continued job placement success. During the 180-day follow-up period, should the job placement be deemed unsuitable or the client is unable to continue, CCC resumes active Supported Job Search activities with the client. The acceptable outcome remains appropriate long-term employment.

### **Champions Career Centre Job Development: “Connecting Employers and People with Disabilities”**

Today the challenges and opportunities of the job developer are greater than ever and the need for these services is felt more acutely than ever by those we serve. Never has there been a greater need for job developers to take an intelligent, business-minded, proactive and revolutionary approach to creating employment opportunities in the Calgary area.

The Champions Career Centre (CCC) Job Development Team believes that people who access our services are ready, willing and able to work and should be seen as potential applicants for job vacancies that become available in their chosen fields.

No longer is a company or organization contacted for only a job placement. Instead, CCC must have something valuable to offer. CCC seeks to establish ongoing and mutually beneficial partnerships with those with whom we work.

The Job Development (JD) Team has very much evolved over the past year. With each change, the merge of traditional and non-traditional job development techniques has improved the services available to job seekers with disabilities associated with CCC programs and services.

The JD Team provides regular opportunities to reconnect with all applicants who access CCC services. ‘Client Sessions’ are organized to have small groups of applicants meet each other, discuss and receive feedback on job development strategies, review individual job targets and articulate mutual responsibilities between the Job Developers and the client. Applicants are excited about getting together, learning from each other, and being part of future directions. CCC’s own commitment to hiring people with disabilities enables staff to identify with what applicants experience in facing barriers to employment.

The job search process is clearly outlined to all applicants. So, each individual is active in the job search and has the support of the JD Team. Sharing resources, developing marketing strategies, looking for opportunities in non-traditional environments, and encouraging volunteerism are some examples of JD assistance. But it remains with the applicants to develop job placement and job retention skills to serve them over a lifetime. Applicants have a right to quality services at CCC. They also have a responsibility to their partnership with CCC.

Traditionally, Job Developers would be seen out and about, knocking on employers doors trying to convince them to hire job seekers with disabilities. To some degree, this is still practiced, but the Job Developers at CCC have taken a much different, more effective approach. The JD Team is promoting the organization as an agency which has qualified, educated, ready, willing and able applicants prepared to fill employment vacancies. Employers are now knocking on our door, since we are being considered as a valuable extension of their Human Resources Departments.



When a new employee is needed, CCC is in the forefront in assisting to fill the position with our candidates. It is the JD Team's vision to develop a database of employers in the Calgary region that will match vacant positions and the perfect person for the job!

Services to employers include: pre-screening applicants, checking references, and ensuring a proper "fit" between employee and applicant. After placement, JDs are in constant communication with the employer and the successful applicant to ensure that everything is progressing smoothly. Open dialogue is encouraged and if there is a problem, the JD Team work together toward a solution. As well, the JD Team offers sensitivity training sessions to increase understanding about hiring job seekers with disabilities and to provide an opportunity to discuss any concerns. JDs can also assist employers in accessing information regarding workplace accommodation and any employment supports for the new employee if necessary.

Over the course of the next year, the JD Team will be evaluating the new strategies and approaches that have been implemented and assess their effectiveness to ensure that any changes are made in due time. The JD Team will concentrate on facilitating presentations on CCC to employers, service providers, and non-profit and government agencies. The Team will utilize career fairs, trade shows, and informational gatherings to successfully position CCC as an agency of choice for job seekers with disabilities in Calgary.

Employers are invited to engage in a partnership characterized by respectful and equal exchange of resources and opportunities. Our Web site has complete contact information for companies interested in our services.

### **Useful Resources**

Please note that the full library holdings of the Champions Career Centre may be viewed on our Web site at: [www.championscareercentre.org/resources.html](http://www.championscareercentre.org/resources.html)

The following resources are offered by the Champions Career Centre as suggested readings for employers:

- Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative Employer Toolkit, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Ottawa, 1998.
- Assessing Learning Difficulties in the Workplace, Bow Valley College, The University of Calgary and the Calgary Learning Centre, 2001. (CD-ROM)
- Barrier-Free Employers: Practical Guide for Employment Accommodation for People with Disabilities, Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2001.
- Changing Perspectives: A Resource for Hiring Persons with Disabilities, Employabilities, 2001. (1 video & CD-ROM)
- Creating a Welcoming Workplace for Employees with Disabilities, Treasury Board of Canada, 2000.
- Design for Success: An Employer's Guide to Learning Disabilities, Eva Nichols, LDAO, 1994.
- 'Disability Friendly Strategies for the Workplace', JTPR Workplace Connection, June 2003.
- The Disability Handbook: A Guide to Understanding Individuals with Disabilities, EmployAbilities & CFNSA, 2002.
- Diversity: A Strategy to Meet Your Need for Skilled Workers, AHRE, 2002.
- Employ with Expertise: A Toolkit for Success in Hiring Individuals with a Disability, WORKink Alberta, 2002.
- Employees who are Parents of Children with Disabilities: A Guide for Employers, The Roehrer Institute, 1998.
- An Employer's Guide to Multiple Sclerosis in the Workplace, Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, 1996.



- Employers' Viewpoint: Hiring Employees with an Intellectual Disability, The Roeher Institute.
- Employment Accommodation Service, Canadian National Institute for the Blind, 2002.
- Employment Series for Persons with Disabilities: Tips for Employers, Alberta Human Resources and Employment, 2000.
- Epilepsy and Employment: A Guide for Employers and Employees, Epilepsy Association of Calgary.
- Hiring Someone with an Intellectual Disability: A Tool Kit for Employers, Canadian Association for Community Living.
- Listen Up! Hiring a Deaf Employee can be Rewarding, On Site Placement Services Association, 2002.
- A Manager's Guide to Employing Persons with Psychiatric Disabilities, Ministry of Supply and Services Canada, 1995.
- Nobody's Perfect... An Employer's Introduction to Learning Disabilities, Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, 1994.
- A Place for All: A Guide to Creating an Inclusive Workplace, Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2001.
- Policy on the Provision of Accommodation for Employees with Disabilities, Treasury Board of Canada, 1999.
- Tapping the Talents of People with Disabilities: A Guide for Employers, Conference Board of Canada, 2001.
- Think About It! Hiring an Employee with a Mental Health Issue or Illness can be Rewarding, On Site Placement Services Association, 2002.
- A Way with Words: Guidelines and Appropriate Terminology for the Portrayal of Persons with Disabilities, Office for Disability Issues, Human Resources Development Canada, 1998.
- Working Well: An Employer's Guide to Hiring and Retaining People with Mental Illness, Agnes Vandergang, Canadian Mental Health Association, 2002.
- Working with Hearing Loss: A Guide for Employees, Employers and Entrepreneurs, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, 2000.
- Workplace Accommodation Survey, The Roeher Institute.

(The above list is current at June 2003)

For those interested in more information about Champions Career Centre, please call (403) 265-5374; (403)265-5309 (TTY), visit [www.championscareercentre.org](http://www.championscareercentre.org), or email: [info@ccerc.com](mailto:info@ccerc.com)



## **The Federal Government's STARR (Science and Technology Abilities Recruitment and Retention) Initiative and Hiring within the Federal Public Service**

STARR (Science and Technology Abilities Recruitment and Retention) is an innovative partnership among eight science-based departments and agencies to recruit and retain persons with disabilities into scientific and technical positions with the Federal Public Service. STARR was created to bring the representation of persons with disabilities to a fair and equitable level across departments and agencies through the active recruitment of students and new graduates. This initiative includes visible minority persons with disabilities, aboriginal persons with disabilities and women with disabilities.

The program is offered through the following departments and agencies:

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada: [www.agr.gc.ca](http://www.agr.gc.ca)
- Canadian Space Agency: [www.space.gc.ca](http://www.space.gc.ca)
- Environment Canada: [www.ec.gc.ca](http://www.ec.gc.ca)
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada: [www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca](http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca)
- Health Canada: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca)
- National Defence: [www.drdc-rddc.gc.ca](http://www.drdc-rddc.gc.ca) or [www.forces.gc.ca](http://www.forces.gc.ca)
- Natural Resources Canada: [www.nrcan.gc.ca](http://www.nrcan.gc.ca)
- National Research Council: [www.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/careers](http://www.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/careers)

The purpose of STARR is to provide a number of students with disabilities who are enrolled in science and technology programs at universities and colleges across Canada with job training through participation in various work experience programs offered by the partnering departments and agencies. It also supports the establishment of methods to encourage career development of persons with disabilities within the partnering departments and agencies. In order to be considered to participate in the program, an applicant must be a Canadian citizen, eligible to work for the Federal Government, self-identify as a person with a disability and be studying or have graduated in the field of science and technology, or, have relevant experience in science or technology fields. Students who are returning to full-time studies in the fall can apply through the Federal Student Work Experience Program. Graduates can apply through the Post-Secondary Recruitment program. Information on both of these programs is available at: [www.jobs.gc.ca](http://www.jobs.gc.ca)

The program was developed because the Federal science and technology departments and agencies recognized people with disabilities as a "community at risk" not sufficiently represented in government jobs. There is a substantial gap between the government's stated commitment to be more inclusive, especially in the share of positions held by persons with disabilities and the number actually employed. The Science and Technology Ability Recruitment and Retention (STARR) Initiative supports the government's strategies to achieve a more representative, inclusive workforce and to project the Public Service as an employer of choice, while addressing the future, specific science and technology needs of each partnering department and agency.

The STARR program complements two other federal employment initiatives: Co-operative Education Programs (Co-op) and the Federal Student Work Experience Program (FSWEP). There are 5,000 Co-op students hired from 150 universities and colleges across Canada, with the Public Service as the largest employer of Co-op students in the country. Applicants to this program must be pursuing full-time studies as defined by post-secondary institutions and registered in a co-operative education/internship program recognized by the Public Service Commission. Four month work terms begin in January, May or September. At the end of each Co-op placement, a written evaluation of the student's performance is submitted to the educational institution for approval of credits. The FSWEP receives applications from 90,000 students nation-wide and about 10,000 are hired to work in the public service for the summer. To be eligible for FSWEP, applicants must be recognized as full-time in an accredited academic institution (part-time students with a disability are eligible to apply) and returning to full-time studies in the next academic term.



A Co-op student can return for another Co-op/Internship work term in the same or similar position within the Department if she/he has previously worked under the Co-operative Education/ Internship Program. If all parties agree (manager, student and educational institution), Co-op students can do back to back work terms, which are two consecutive Co-op work terms of four months each. FSWEF students can be re-employed for another work term in the same or a similar position within the Department if they have worked the previous year under the Program. Co-op students can be re-employed under FSWEF.

The Federal government's Post-Secondary Recruitment Program (PSR) is a national initiative aimed at recruiting post-secondary graduates to fill entry-level positions in the Public Service. PSR is an excellent source of candidates for managers wishing to renew and rejuvenate the federal workforce and to meet Employment Equity objectives. There is an inventory of post-secondary graduates, which provides immediate access to qualified applicants. Jobs can be posted on the PSR Web site at any time during the year at: [www.jobs.gc.ca](http://www.jobs.gc.ca)

(This article was prepared from text on the STARR Web site: [www.sciencetech.gc.ca/STARR/starr\\_e.shtml](http://www.sciencetech.gc.ca/STARR/starr_e.shtml) and notes from a presentation by Mario D'Arcy, National Recruitment Director, Health Canada at the NEADS Student Leadership and Employment Forum in Vancouver on March 14, 2003.)



## The NEADS Online Work System (NOWS)

By Jennison Asuncion

The National Educational Association of Disabled Students' NEADS Online Work System (NOWS) is the organization's latest technology-based advancement. NOWS leverages the power of the Internet, empowering our members to independently seek out and apply for meaningful summer, part-time and/or full-time employment as well as internship opportunities. In tandem with this mission, NOWS provides a unique bilingual channel for Canadian employers to advertise employment opportunities to a targeted audience, namely, post-secondary students and graduates with disabilities. Moreover, it will provide employers with the largest searchable database of its kind of post-secondary educated candidates with disabilities in Canada.

Two years ago, the National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) received funding through the Office of Learning Technologies (OLT), Human Resources Development Canada to develop CampusNet. At that time, the objective was to launch an online community of learning, where student leaders with disabilities could share and exchange advocacy-related strategies, best practices and other relevant information regarding what was taking place on their campuses with like-minded peers. Recognizing that a logical next step was to address the employment needs of these students upon graduation, we applied for and received additional funding to add tools and resources to aid in the transition from school to work. The NEADS Online Work System (NOWS) is a component of this focus on employment. Other tools include resumé writing tips, interview techniques, and employment search advice.

NOWS finds similarities with, but never claims to be as robust as, other Internet-based job resources such as Monster or Workopolis. For example, employers cannot conduct any searches based on the information contained within candidates' resumes. Rather, one will only be able to search based on information provided by candidates in their registration profile (e.g., job category for which they are seeking employment). Based on this information, one would then need to download and review individual resúmes. Likewise, candidates are unable to use keyword searching as part of their job search exercise, a feature that one can find on many web-based job sites.

Nevertheless, with increasing numbers of students with disabilities entering into and completing post-secondary education, there is certainly a need for a service such as this to exist. Now more than ever, NEADS is seeing increasing numbers of students with disabilities graduating into the workforce, actively pursuing the same types of competitive positions as their non-disabled peers. Moreover, these students are also seeking part-time employment during school, or internships to complete their degrees. It is assumed that recruiting and retaining such individuals, would be a cornerstone of any company's hiring equity practices. With this in mind, NEADS hopes that whether it is via your campus career and placement services office, or similar unit within your organization, your company will consider NOWS as part of your overall staffing strategy.

For more information about NOWS or to register, visit [www.now.s.ca](http://www.now.s.ca) or contact the NEADS office at (613) 526-8008.



## Recruitment of Students with Disabilities

By Miguel Aguayo, M.S.W., Diversity Recruiter, CIBC

College student and recent alumni represent the future because their training consists of the most recent development in any particular field. High performance companies recognize this fact and design recruitment strategies and programs that help them tap into this valuable talent pool. Large organizations, for example, have dedicated teams that engage in campus and graduate recruitment activities to keep the organization in a constant state of talent revitalization. This team is quite successful in generating a large pool of job applicants from colleges and universities for summer jobs, co-op placement, or direct entry into the workforce. Despite having an efficient campus strategy, my experience is that the conventional campus recruitment strategies are not easily applied when recruiting students with disabilities.

Traditional campus recruitment often involves registering an exhibit booth on the designated 'career day'. This is successful in bringing the employer and a prospective job candidate together because it is convenient for the student. However, campus career days are not effective when trying to engage in a focused recruitment of a single segment of the population. This is because recruiters have no control over who approaches the booth. The population of students with disabilities ranges from visible to invisible, from mild to profound, from physical to sensorial, to medical to cognitive. Recruiters cannot always identify a person with a disability unless they are recognized because of mobility aids (e.g., wheelchair, white cane, etc.) or choose to self-identify and disclose the existence of a disability. This means that much time can be spent speaking with individuals who do not have disabilities and participation in these types of career fairs tends to yield low outcomes for recruiters trying to reach out to students with disabilities.

Focused recruitment campaigns can target candidates from a specific subsection of the student body because they target a program. The employer works with the campus career services office to hold information sessions that attract prospective job seekers from a specific academic program, such as MBA students. This approach is different as the recruiter can develop a communication strategy to draw in a motivated pool of candidates. This leads to success that can be measured in the number of resumés collected and the number of students interviewed, and, ultimately, hired.

The focused campaign approach, from my experience, is hard to execute when trying to recruit students with disabilities. The major difficulty in planning a targeted campaign is that this is an attempt to target a characteristic rather than an academic program. The administrators of any academic program (i.e., bachelor of business administration) are not allowed to share which and how many students with disabilities are enrolled — that is, if they know at all. At best, program administrators can provide a space and a generalized announcement. This gives recruiters a low level of access and little feedback to determine if this approach will be successful, which places the session at risk that few or no students will come.

Targeting the Disability Services Office seems like a logical access point as students with disabilities register at the centres. They also have capability to reach out to this group. However, that is easier said than done. This is because the disabilities services' mandate is to provide access to the academic facilities and employees in these centres tend not to have the capacity to engage in career counselling. When a recruiter makes contact with the intention of offering employment opportunities to students with disabilities, they are, with a few exceptions, referred to the career services office. Once placed at the career services door, recruiters find themselves back to the starting point, which is a limited ability to reach out to a specific sub-group of their student body.

Despite the challenges that are described above, there are a few recruitment strategies I've found that offer success in attracting students with disabilities. They include making myself available for events that are initiated by the school (college or university) rather than attempting to stage something unique; drafting articles for the career services newsletters that discuss issues related to disclosure, the recruitment process, how employers assess for skills/attributes, etc.; and, finally, relying on the e-mail notification of available job opportunities that is forwarded to students with disabilities by the disability services and through special programs, such as the National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS). This combination of approaches tends to get the message out more effectively than any single approach I've encountered and it works because it is compatible with campus life, which is very fast-paced and constantly evolving in terms of the programs, calendars, and extracurricular activities.



## Meeting the Workplace Needs of Canada's Disabled High-Tech Workers

By Neil Faba

Pursuing a career in the sciences can be a daunting endeavour. From the challenges of coursework both in and outside the lab during post-secondary studies, to the challenges posed by the work a new scientist or engineer faces when entering the workforce, there is no question the learning curve can be steep.

Add a disability into the mix, and those challenges grow yet again. But Reid Mulligan hasn't let any of that deter him. Mulligan graduated with an undergraduate degree in Electrical Engineering in 2002, from Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario. While being an engineering student with Cerebral Palsy set him apart from others in his program, Mulligan says he got through most of the trials and tribulations sent his way just the same as any other student would.

Mulligan, who used a wheelchair to move around the campus but is able to walk when not traveling long distances, says the chair did pose some challenges at school, such as in the tight spaces of research labs.

"Lab situations were a bit difficult," he says. "But I was able to get up out of the chair when I needed to. If I had had to be in the chair all the time, it would have been harder. Those labs weren't too accessible."

Mulligan says being at Carleton University was helpful in general in terms of accessibility. The university's buildings are all connected by an underground tunnel system that, while designed in large part to allow students to avoid the harsh winter weather in Ottawa, provides a quick and easy way for students with disabilities to get from class to class.

Similar to Carleton, many post-secondary campuses in Canada offer fairly good accessibility for students with disabilities. Perhaps consequently, a substantial number of Canadians with disabilities hold college or university degrees. According to 1998 statistics from the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), more than one-third of persons with disabilities in the country have graduated from an institute of higher learning.

But, the representation of people with disabilities in the labour force as a whole, and in the science and technology fields in specific, remains low. Further 1998 research by the CCSD indicates that of post-secondary graduates age 16 to 34, almost 40 percent of those with disabilities were out of the workforce for that entire year. By contrast, the figure among those without disabilities was only 2.8 percent.

Frank Smith, National Coordinator of the National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) – an organization dedicated to aiding and improving the educational experiences of post-secondary students with disabilities – says the high number of unemployed college and university-educated people with disabilities is due to a number of factors, not the least of which is the different levels of accommodations found on campuses and in the workplace.

"It may be easier to succeed at school than in the workplace, because many campuses already have disability service centres for students, and accommodations-related equipment available," says Smith. "Companies don't always have the resources available, in terms of accommodations programs or adequate building renovations."

Sanjeet Singh echoes Smith's thoughts about the divide between accommodations available at school and in the workforce. Singh, a NEADS board representative who completed an undergraduate degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Calgary and is currently working towards a Master of Science with a focus on GPS systems, has a visual impairment.

Singh says he required a computer monitor larger than the standard size to complete his lab work, since he couldn't see the data on the screen. Although he says it took a lot of time going through different administrative channels before he got what he needed, Singh ended up getting a 36-inch screen to make use of at school. What he didn't approach the disability service providers



on campus for, Singh says, he was able to find through the Canadian National Institute for the Blind.

But his experience in the workplace has been different. Singh says an internship opportunity at Nortel was a challenge for him and the company, and introduced him to some of the accommodation issues he may face throughout his working career.

Singh uses ZoomText, a software program that magnifies the size of computer fonts for easier readability. As a result, he says he again required a larger computer screen to properly display his work so he could read it. While he eventually got the larger screen, Singh says it took a good eight months before it became available.

“The internship was a major transition issue for me,” Singh says. “There were certain expectations on both sides. I wasn’t sure what to expect in the work environment, and companies aren’t always equipped for such sudden challenges.”

NEADS is beginning to expand its mandate beyond helping students with disabilities through post-secondary education, by attempting to first bridge the gap between qualified students with disabilities and employers willing to hire people with disabilities, and then by attempting to provide employers with information on the effective accommodation of employers with disabilities.

“Companies are telling us in some cases that they’re willing to hire and accommodate people with disabilities, but they’re not getting the applications,” says Smith. “Other companies are already hiring people with disabilities, but they may not all be model companies in terms of provision of accommodations. That’s where we come in.”

A NEADS project currently in the works is the creation of a guidebook for employers. The book will include information on how best to advertise job vacancies to post-secondary graduates with disabilities, how to accommodate, and what organizations employers can turn to for help on these matters.

This guidebook - using profiles of employees with disabilities and other practical resources - includes information on how best to advertise job vacancies to post-secondary graduates with disabilities, how to accommodate, and what organizations employers can turn to for help on these matters. It is a follow-up on the NEADS publication, *Employment Connections: A Transition Toolkit for Youth with Disabilities*, which provides graduates with disabilities information on companies and organizations that have programs designed to employ skilled people with disabilities. Both books are a direct result of the organization’s Student Leadership and Employment Forums, which have been held across the country over the past five years, bringing students and employers together to discuss key issues.

NEADS also provides valuable information on its Web site, [www.neads.ca](http://www.neads.ca), for students with disabilities in school and entering the workforce, as well as for disability service providers and employers. CampusNet, a NEADS online project, provides a venue for student leaders with disabilities across the country to communicate electronically. Soon, CampusNet will also include a job bank for students, which will further assist persons with disabilities to make their presence felt in the workplace.

Reid Mulligan knows how challenging the employment situation can be not only for science graduates with disabilities, but all persons with disabilities. He says he has actively looked for work in his field since graduating, though nothing has turned up so far. Still, he remains positive.

“It’s difficult, but that’s also just how the market is right now,” Mulligan says. “I’m trying to keep my knowledge up in the meantime, by reading my textbooks. And I’m starting to look at organizations that help people with disabilities find jobs. I’m not too worried.”

(This article first appeared in the online science magazine “Next Wave” in June 2003. Next Wave is a publication of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.)



## The Canadian Centre on Disability Studies

By Gary Annable

The Canadian Centre on Disability Studies (CCDS) is a consumer-directed, university-affiliated centre dedicated to research, education and information dissemination on disability issues. Through our activities, we promote the full and equal participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of society, working in partnership with the disability community, the corporate sector, the academic world and governments.

CCDS is guided by the philosophies of independent living and community living, emphasizing human rights, self-determination, interdependence, equality, a cross-disability focus, and full and valued participation in the community. Members of the disability community are key participants in directing CCDS policies and activities. Our offices are located in Winnipeg, but much of our work is at the national and international levels. (Major international CCDS projects exist in Russia and the Ukraine.)

CCDS's research program has conducted studies on a range of disability issues since 1996, including youth employment, home-based employment, self-employment, literacy and healthcare. Descriptions of our current and past research projects (including many downloadable reports) can be found at [www.disabilitystudies.ca/research.htm](http://www.disabilitystudies.ca/research.htm)

One particularly exciting current research project is a longitudinal study examining the school-to-work transition experiences of post-secondary students with disabilities. This study will follow a group of university and college students with disabilities from graduation to one year post-graduation. During the first phase of the study (2002), students with disabilities who attended universities and colleges in Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, and Halifax were interviewed just before or after graduating.

During the second phase of the study (October 2003 to September 2004), recent graduates with disabilities—including those who participated in the first phase—will be interviewed about their experiences making the transition from university or college to the labour force. A report that will be published in the Fall of 2004 will describe the participants' experiences seeking employment, starting new jobs, the responses of employers to requests for workplace accommodations, what career and job search supports the participants found most and least useful, etc.

We are using a participatory research process that includes the study participants in the data analysis and report writing process. An advisory committee that guides and advises the project is made up of representatives of the National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) and the Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Post-Secondary Education (CADSPPE), as well as employers, and university and college career and employment advisors.

This study is funded by Human Resources Development Canada's Office for Disability Issues. Funding from the Royal Bank Financial Group supports the work of CCDS's Royal Bank Research Chair on this and other CCDS projects.

If you would like more information about CCDS's Research, International, Education, or Disability Information Network programs, please visit our web site ([www.disabilitystudies.ca](http://www.disabilitystudies.ca)). For further information about the school-to-work transition study, contact:

Royal Bank Research Chair  
Canadian Centre on Disability Studies  
56 The Promenade  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3B 3H9

Tel: (204) 287-8411  
TTY: (204) 475-6223  
Fax (204) 284-5354  
Email: [researchchair@disabilitystudies.ca](mailto:researchchair@disabilitystudies.ca)



## Profiles of Employment-Related Organizations

By Neil Faba

The following section reviews a variety of organizations across Canada, which offer services to both job seekers with disabilities, and to employers looking to hire people with disabilities. Some of these organizations can help employers with matters such as workplace assessment and accommodations, or diversity training for existing employers, and some of the organizations help employers and qualified employees with disabilities connect with one another. Still others offer a wide array of services, helping employers in recruitment and hiring, and also in ensuring good employer-employee relations once a position has been filled.

### Reaching E-Quality Employment Services

This Winnipeg-based non-profit agency offers services to both local job seekers with disabilities, and employers hiring people with disabilities.

Reaching E-Quality assists employers by attempting to match up job seekers with disabilities, through contact with agency users, as well as through employment and training programs run by the agency.

The Reaching E-Quality Enhanced Internship Training Partnership Program aids people with disabilities and employers in making the right match by offering either:

- 12 weeks of paid internship training at a partner company, where possible, leading to paid employment; OR
- Up to 12 weeks targeted wage subsidy (an agreed upon percentage of the company's standard wage paid by Reaching E-Quality), for a company looking to directly hire people with disabilities, to offset costs of training and accommodations.

Employers interested in this program can contact Project Coordinator, Tracy Schubert, at (204) 947-1609, ext. 230.

The Reaching E-Quality Hiring Incentive Project offers job seekers up to two-week, 80-hour job placements, at a wage of \$7.00 per hour, paid by the agency. The expectation is that host employers will offer ongoing employment for participants once the placement ends, if employee performance has been satisfactory to that point. For more information, employers should contact Project Coordinator, Paula Harris, at (204) 947-1609, ext. 236.

Reaching E-Quality's Web site also presents many links of information and interest to employers looking to hire people with disabilities.

Reaching E-Quality Employment Services  
1200 Portage Ave., Suite 305  
Winnipeg, MB

Tel: (204) 832-REES (7337)  
Email: [info@re-es.org](mailto:info@re-es.org)  
Web site: [www.re-es.org](http://www.re-es.org)



### **Line 1000**

This Ottawa non-profit employment agency for people with disabilities has been in business since 1979. The agency works with community partners, employers and job seekers to assist people with disabilities in the job market.

Line 1000 provides free recruitment support for employers seeking to hire people with disabilities. This is achieved through:

- Candidate Screening – Line 1000 candidates are screened by agency staff to ensure they have the educational credentials and skills required for successful transition to the labour force.
- Online Candidate Inventory – The agency offers employers the opportunity to search and review skill profiles for hundreds of candidates.
- Advice and Information – Line 1000 provides employers with advice on employment equity strategies, accessibility and accommodations.
- Financial Information – Employers can access information on training and subsidy programs available for the hiring of people with disabilities.
- Skills Training Partnerships – The agency works with companies to determine job skill requirements, pre-screen candidates, and assist with other services.

Line 1000

1355 Bank St., Suite #1  
Ottawa, ON K1H 8K7

Tel: (613) 526-1000

Fax: (613) 731-3510

TTY: (613) 731-1621

Email: [placement@line1000.ca](mailto:placement@line1000.ca)

Web site: [www.line1000.ca](http://www.line1000.ca)

### **Champions Career Centre**

This organization was established to connect employers with Albertans with disabilities. It assists both job seekers and employers to ensure workplace challenges are overcome.

Champions Career Centre assesses clients seeking employment, and works with employers looking to hire people with disabilities, to ensure the right match is made between employer and the job candidate.

The centre's job developers also work to educate community businesses about the skills and abilities of the working-age disabled population. They inform employers of financial supports available in the event a company hires a person with a disability for full-time, permanent employment.

In addition to information on the services offered by the centre, their Web site lists several resource materials that employers can look to for advice on hiring and accommodating people with disabilities.

Champions Career Centre  
839-5<sup>th</sup> Ave. SW  
Suite 650  
Calgary, AB T2P 3C8

Tel: (403) 265-5374

Fax: (403) 265-5675

TTY: (403) 265-5309

Email: [info@ccerc.com](mailto:info@ccerc.com)

Web site: [www.championscareercentre.org/index2.html](http://www.championscareercentre.org/index2.html)

(Please see the article submitted by the Champions Career Centre)



## **Ontario March of Dimes**

This organization is mandated to serve the needs of adults with physical disabilities. It works with employers to properly assess clients' skills and abilities, and to help clients to properly and fully function in the workplace.

The Ontario March of Dimes also assists employers to match available job opportunities with clients seeking employment, who fit the needs of those employers hiring. It conducts follow-up discussions with clients and employers after a successful job placement has been made, to ensure that both employer and employee are meeting expectations.

Finally, the organization's Supported Employment Program considers the concerns of both employer and employee to address barriers in the workplace, to ensure on-the-job success.

Ontario March of Dimes Provincial Office  
10 Overlea Blvd.  
Toronto, ON M4H 1A4

Tel: (416) 425-3463  
Toll-free: 1-800-263-3463  
Fax: (416) 425-1920  
Email: [info@dimes.on.ca](mailto:info@dimes.on.ca)  
Web site: [www.dimes.on.ca](http://www.dimes.on.ca)

## **Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW)**

The CCRW is a Canada-wide network of organizations and individuals supporting meaningful and equitable employment for people with disabilities. The Council offers a variety of programs and services linking employers and job seekers with disabilities, including:

- The CCRW's WORKink Web site offers tools for job seekers with disabilities, such as articles on employment issues, private chat rooms for discussion with employment counsellors specializing in the employment of people with disabilities, and an 'Ask ECO (Employment Counsellor Online)' advice column. Employers submit articles to WORKink on subjects of interest to job seekers, post employment opportunities for people with disabilities, access information on hiring practices and workplace accommodations, and have their questions answered through the 'Ask a Disability Specialist' feature.
- The Web Access Employment Network (WAEN), a joint project between the CCRW and Human Resources Development Canada, is an online meeting place for job seekers with disabilities and employers. It provides a databank of resumés from qualified job candidates, which employers can look to when filling positions.
- The Job Accommodation Service (JAS) is comprised of two services. The first, Job Accommodation Information Services, offers a toll-free number that both employees with disabilities and employers can use to find information on questions of workplace accommodations. Job Accommodation Assessment Services is a fee-based consultation service for workplaces or individuals. The service provides assessments of individuals and workplaces, to determine what accommodations are needed for an employee with disabilities to do his or her job effectively.
- The Skills Training Partnership (STP) aims to provide individuals with disabilities with the skills and experience needed to fill positions with partnering employers. The program is a partnership between employers, trainers, service providers and job seekers with disabilities. The STP prepares partner organizations' management and employees with sensitivity training in preparation for job placements, and secures guaranteed employment for people with disabilities who have completed training with their host employers.



- Fit-to-Work offers specialized training sessions for employers and employees, concerning the return to work of injured workers, or to address issues of hiring people with disabilities. Sessions include group discussions with employees, and case studies examining employment situations and experiences. The program is designed and delivered by experts in disability, and diversity management.

Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work  
500 University Ave, Suite 302  
Toronto, ON M5G 1V7

Toll-free: 1-800-664-0925  
TTY: (416) 260-9223  
Email: [info@ccrw.org](mailto:info@ccrw.org)  
Web site: [www.ccrw.org](http://www.ccrw.org)

### **Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)**

The CNIB is a national organization providing services to Canadians with vision impairments. The Institute's Employment Accommodation Service recruits and refers job-ready clients to employers, and aims to demonstrate the benefits of hiring people who are blind. Through a partnership with Workopolis, an online database of qualified job candidates with visual impairments is accessible online at [cnib.workopolis.com](http://cnib.workopolis.com).

In addition to the services offered by the national office, the CNIB's branch offices across Canada offer their own programs and information services. Consult the Institute's Web site for your local office.

Canadian National Institute for the Blind  
1929 Bayview Ave.  
Toronto, ON M4G 3E8

Tel: (416) 486-2500  
Fax: (416) 480-7677  
Web site: [www.cnib.ca](http://www.cnib.ca)

### **Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)**

The CMHA is a national organization promoting the mental health of all Canadians, and serving the needs of all mental health consumers, their families and friends. The association provides general information on mental health, helps those with mental illnesses secure meaningful employment, and assists employers in accommodating employees with psychiatric disabilities. A wealth of information, including guidebooks for employers seeking hiring and accommodations information, is available on the CMHA's Web site, or can be ordered through the site.

Canadian Mental Health Association  
8 King St. E, Suite 810  
Toronto, ON M5C 1B5

Tel: (416) 484-7750  
Fax: (416) 484-4617  
Email: [national@cmha.ca](mailto:national@cmha.ca)  
Web site: [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)



### **Canadian Paraplegic Association (CPA)**

The Canadian Paraplegic Association is a national organization, comprised of individual, not-for-profit provincial divisions, dedicated to delivering programs to individuals with spinal cord injuries and other physical disabilities. Among the services the CPA offers are those aimed at helping people with physical disabilities find employment opportunities, and services to assist employers in assessing workplace accessibility and job accommodation needs. Each provincial division of the CPA offers its own programming, details of which can be found on provincial Web sites. Visit the CPA's national Web site to link to your provincial office.

Canadian Paraplegic Association  
1101 Prince of Wales Dr., Suite 230  
Ottawa, ON K2C 3W7

Tel: (613) 723-1033  
Fax: (613) 723-1060  
Email: [info@canparaplegic.org](mailto:info@canparaplegic.org)  
Web site: [www.canparaplegic.org](http://www.canparaplegic.org)

### **Neil Squire Foundation**

The Neil Squire Foundation is a national non-profit organization aimed at providing education, technological and career development for people with physical disabilities. The Foundation offers programs and services that can help employers find trained people with disabilities for employment opportunities.

The EASE (Employment Access Skills Enhancement) Program is designed to enhance the employability of people with physical disabilities. The program works to improve the vocational, technical and personal skills needed for employment. Among the EASE Program's modular steps are those that examine workstation technical needs, explore and guide career choices, and improve job search skills. Finally, the program offers ongoing employment-related support to those who secure work opportunities through involvement in EASE.

The Foundation's Consultation and Assessment Services assess client needs and recommend assistive technologies for office, home and school. The organization's team of occupational therapists, kinesiologists, technologists and research engineers provide computer technology adaptations, ergonomic assessments, technical training, and educational workshops on assistive technologies.

The Neil Squire Foundation has offices in Vancouver, Victoria, Regina, Fredericton, Moncton, and Ottawa. Information on the foundation's programs and contact information for their various offices can be found on the Web site.

Neil Squire Foundation  
Suite 220-2250 Boundary Rd.  
Burnaby, BC  
V5M 3Z3

Tel: (604) 473-9363  
Fax: (604) 473-9364  
Email: [info@neilsquire.ca](mailto:info@neilsquire.ca)  
Web site: [www.neilsquire.ca](http://www.neilsquire.ca)



## Resources for Employers

The following pages detail some resources in print, online and in other forms, which can offer employers advice on hiring, accommodating, and effectively working with people with disabilities. In this section you will find resource materials from the Canadian and American governments, along with some organizations and individuals aiming to increase the representation of people with disabilities in the workforce.

### **Barrier-Free Employers: Practical Guide for Employment Accommodation for People with Disabilities, online resource ([www.chrc-ccdp.ca/ee/bfe-eso.asp](http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/ee/bfe-eso.asp)).**

This online guide from the Canadian Human Rights Commission is designed to aid employers who have questions regarding hiring and accommodating people with disabilities in the workplace. Information on the duty to accommodate, as set out in the Canadian Human Rights Act, is included, as are links to the Employment Equity Act and a Framework for Compliance to the Act. Another section details how to ensure a workplace is accessible to people of all abilities, from the interview process, to making adjustments in an organization's physical environment.

Brief descriptions are given for various types of disabilities, and a selection of common accommodation considerations is listed, giving employers an idea of the sorts of changes that might be required in order for an employee with a disability to effectively do his or her job. Finally the guide offers an FAQ section, discussing common questions employers have regarding accommodation, from the costs involved in accommodating, to how best to prepare other employees who will work with a person with a disability.

### **Succeeding Together: People with Disabilities in the Workplace, online resource ([www.csun.edu/%7Esp20558/dis/emcontents.html](http://www.csun.edu/%7Esp20558/dis/emcontents.html)). Goldstein, Terry, Christina Simonds, and Courtney Sanders.**

An American publication, much of the legal information within this online publication is American in focus. However, the information included is extensive and of value to employers everywhere. A section details various disabilities and ways for employers to effectively interact with people with disabilities. There is also good information for employers looking to write a comprehensive job description, so that both employers and employment candidates are aware of a position's duties. A section on interview techniques discusses how to ensure the interview is accessible, questions that should not be asked of a candidate, how to effectively test applicants with disabilities, and specific interview guidelines for candidates with specific disabilities. Finally, the document contains good information on average accommodation costs and types.



**Preparing For and Conducting an Effective Job Interview, online resource ([www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/ek99/jobinter.html](http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/ek99/jobinter.html))**

This tip sheet, compiled by the U.S. Department of Labor, provides brief but informative ideas on effectively conducting a job interview with a person with a disability. The information, presented in point form, is listed under the headings Preparing for the Interview, and Conducting the Interview.

**United States Office of Disability Employment Policy, Publications page ([www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/publicat.htm](http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/publicat.htm))**

This page offers links to a selection of documents put out by this U.S. government office, aimed at both employers looking to hire people with disabilities, and those persons with disabilities looking for employment. The material examines the importance of hiring people with disabilities, how to recruit the best candidates, effective ways to accommodate, how to prepare employees working with someone with a disability, and other key topics. Also, there is a variety of information on relevant American laws and regulations. Although much of the material is American-focused, it is comprehensive and relevant to employers in Canada and elsewhere.

**Tap into Employability: An Employers Guide (Community Action Network, 2001)**

This Canadian guide places an emphasis on how hiring and managing people with disabilities can be much the same as those without disabilities, with some exceptions. The book covers methods employers can use to ensure people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to apply for and obtain employment, and looks at how to effectively manage people with disabilities – covering topics such as accommodation and termination.

**Tapping the Talents of People with Disabilities: A Guide for Employers (The Conference Board of Canada, 2001)**

This guide emphasizes how hiring people with disabilities can improve a company's image in society, and attract a new client base in those individuals with disabilities. It is suggested that employers work with employment agencies and organizations that assist people with disabilities, in order to recruit qualified candidates and create a more diverse workforce. Also of note, the guide discusses the value of working with post-secondary campus centres for people with disabilities, and of offering internships to locate and train skilled people.

**Other valuable resources:**

Creating a Welcoming Workplace for Employees with Disabilities, Treasury Board of Canada, 2000.

Disability, Job Accommodations and Their Costs, Roeher Institute, 2000.

Employ with Expertise: A Toolkit for Success in Hiring Individuals with a Disability, WORKink Alberta, 2002.

Hiring Someone with an Intellectual Disability: A Tool Kit for Employers, Canadian Association for Community Living.

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## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Employers

By Neil Faba

This section is intended to provide brief, informative answers to some questions employers may have regarding the hiring of people with disabilities. It was developed by consulting a variety of references and sources, including reports from NEADS' Student Leadership and Employment Forums that have been held across Canada in the last two years. The reports on these forums are available on the NEADS Web site: [www.neads.ca](http://www.neads.ca) More detailed information can be found by consulting the resources and organizations mentioned throughout this guidebook. Employers with questions about hiring people with disabilities may also contact NEADS directly for help in finding answers.

### **Why should I hire people with disabilities?**

The short answer is that, while they may require certain accommodations in order to fulfill job duties, people with disabilities can do the job. 1996 Census figures show that more than one-third of Canadians with disabilities have some form of post-secondary education – 26 per cent with college diplomas, and 7 per cent with university degrees – and this number is on the increase. Despite this, the number of unemployed people with disabilities is significantly higher than those without disabilities. According to a recent joint federal and provincial government report, entitled *In Unison 2000: Persons with Disabilities in Canada*, 43 per cent of persons with disabilities were participating in the labour market in 1995, only about half that of people without disabilities.

Hiring people with disabilities can create a feeling among all employees that their employer is truly inclusive and forward thinking, which can only have positive implications for workplace morale. Further, companies with disabled employees may help to attract customers with disabilities, increasing business.

The ability to secure meaningful employment is vitally important for people to feel like full participants within society. People with disabilities deserve the opportunity to participate in the labour force, and employers, clearly, would be remiss in overlooking this group of potential employees.

### **What types of jobs can people with disabilities do?**

People with disabilities are capable performers in the employment market. The availability of workplace accommodations, where required, and the willingness of management and fellow employees to allow people with disabilities to perform to their maximum ability, are the only things most people with disabilities require.

It is important to keep in mind that, while people with disabilities often have some form of post-secondary education, they do not always have the practical training and employment experience of those without disabilities. This is due in large part to the fact many of those with disabilities do not have summer employment or part-time jobs during school months, for a variety of reasons. However, if given the opportunity to succeed, people with disabilities excel in the workplace.

Employers can utilise the abilities and education that people with disabilities possess, by offering internships and co-op placements. We encourage organizations to register with the NEADS Online Work System (NOWS) at [www.now.ca](http://www.now.ca), which helps employers and job-seekers with disabilities connect. At the same time, Ability Edge ([www.abilityedge.ca](http://www.abilityedge.ca)) offers excellent internship opportunities with national companies.



### **I want to hire people with disabilities. Where should I look to find qualified candidates?**

The simple answer is that qualified job seekers with disabilities can be found anywhere those without disabilities can. That said, there are certain things to keep in mind, and resources that may be of use, if employers are seeking to advertise specifically to those with disabilities.

First, employers looking to hire should ensure that the methods being used to advertise employment vacancies are inclusive. This means making sure job advertisements are written in such a way as to demonstrate your willingness to consider job seekers with disabilities. Employers should present postings in alternate formats (large-print, Braille, etc.) to reach all candidates.

Secondly, investigate venues that provide ready access to a group of qualified people with disabilities, through which you can advertise employment opportunities. Good places to look include post-secondary disability resource centres and student groups, and community organizations that assist people with disabilities to find jobs. Some of these organizations are profiled in this guide. Finally, many campus career centres are more than willing to help employers reach an audience of qualified people with disabilities.

### **Will a job candidate disclose a disability before I hire him or her?**

Just as all disabilities are different, and have different impacts depending on the person, the decision to disclose a disability varies from individual to individual. Certain candidates may disclose when an interview is granted, if they require an accessible interview location, or accommodation during that first meeting with an employer. Others, primarily those with mobility impairments, may have visible disabilities and decide not to mention them for that reason. Still others have invisible disabilities, and depending upon the nature of the disability may not be comfortable discussing it in an interview.

Whether a job candidate chooses to disclose a disability before or during an interview, or after the position has been offered to them, it is important for the employer to listen to the information being disclosed, and to make it clear to the individual that the company is willing to ensure any accommodations that might be needed will be put in place, in order for the employee to fully and effectively operate in the workplace.

### **What do I do if I am presented with accommodation needs?**

A common misconception is that workplace accommodations are expensive for the employer. On the contrary, many of the accommodations sought by people with disabilities are easy to fulfill, and cost little or no money. Some employees may require a modified workstation, technology such as a TTY or software to increase on-screen text size, or simply a modified work schedule to allow for medical treatments.

Accommodations that may be larger in scope or expense, such as the inclusion of a ramp outside a building, or installing an accessible restroom, may be eligible for funding assistance through government grants or programs set up by non-profit organizations for people with disabilities. Information on some of these programs and organizations can be found in this guidebook.

### **How do I prepare my staff to work with a new employee with a disability?**

In certain workplaces, an employee with a disability will be able to simply fit into the environment and no special consideration need be considered to prepare staff. In other situations, there may be a need for staff to be prepared with information and ideas before a person with a disability begins a position. Whether the employer chooses an informal information session or more formal sensitivity training, the key goal is to prepare staff to work harmoniously.

Various organizations – the Ontario March of Dimes, for one – provide assistance to employers seeking to arrange sensitivity training sessions for employers. Consult the organizational profiles in this guide to find other groups that offer such services.





