

ROTARY EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIP

Frequently asked questions about
hiring a person with a developmental disability



What is a developmental disability?

This term is used to describe people with a disability who have difficulty learning, and need assistance to carry out the practical and social activities of daily living. It is a term that can be used to describe a wide range of individuals, including people with Down syndrome and sometimes people who have Cerebral Palsy or Autism.

What should I expect from an employee with a developmental disability?

Employers ask all the time about what it would be like to have a person with a developmental disability working for them. Like anyone else, people with developmental disabilities have strengths and weaknesses, talents and abilities. These talents may surprise you and can include things you would find beneficial to your workplace such as people skills, ‘hands-on’ skills, strong motivation for work, and even experience and interest in your line of work. There is someone in your community with a developmental disability who has just the skills you are looking for to enhance your business.

What do I have to offer?

You may think at first that there are no jobs at your workplace for someone with a developmental disability. Take a look around. Ask your managers to list the things that they need done and do not have time to do, or that take time away from more skilled employees. The possibilities are endless and, - you do not have to work this out alone. If you are not sure how a person with a developmental disability can fit into your business, call us. We can give you a realistic idea about the jobs that someone can do for you.

I can't offer a full time job – does that mean I can't participate?

Not at all. A part-time job maybe exactly what some people with developmental disabilities are looking for. Part-time employment can sometimes be an effective way for an employee to learn and master the skills needed for full-time employment. As more skills are learned and mastered, more hours can be added. Job sharing, seasonal and summer employment are possibilities as well.

How will this affect my other employees?

Most of the time, other employees appreciate the work a person with a developmental disability performs. Many co-workers tell us that working alongside a person with a developmental disability has enhanced their teamwork and their workplace. If an

employee resists the idea initially, it is usually because they have no idea what to expect. We can help you address this issue.

What about accommodating special needs?

If you think about it, you are accommodating the individual needs of employees all the time. This may range from providing hand rests for staff using computers, to flex time programs, to providing task lists, to simply helping a co-worker with physical tasks that they are not strong enough to do. Most of the time, making accommodations for someone is simple and does not cost your business anything at all. If necessary, there are grants available for workplace modifications or assistive technologies. Ask us for more information.

Will I have support?

Absolutely! Did you know that if you decide to hire someone with a developmental disability, a “job coach” is available to help you or your staff train the person? As your new employee learns the skills they need to do the job; the job coach fades out of the picture. If you need your employee to learn new skills later on, a phone call is all it takes to bring the job coach back to the worksite. Whether it’s two weeks, two months, two years later or even on an ongoing basis that support is needed, this resource is always there for you.

What about liability?

As a responsible employer, you are already providing a healthy and safe workplace, and your business has Workers Compensation and general insurance coverage. Hiring someone with a developmental disability does not increase your liability.

What about wages?

The minimum wage in Alberta is \$5.90/hour. Employees with developmental disabilities earn minimum wage or above depending on the job and the employer’s pay scales. Collective agreements can also accommodate employees with developmental disabilities.

How will this benefit my business?

Many employers are finding it hard to find reliable, long term, entry-level employees. People with developmental disabilities are a labour source that is vastly under-utilized by most industries and business. Many business people tell us that their customers strongly approve of their hiring an employee with a developmental disability. Your customers will respect you for it.