

**Cree Human
Resources
Development
Employment
Initiative for Persons
with Disabilities**

Getting Employed

**Dr. Rose-Alma J. McDonald
Katenies Research and
Management Services
March 13, 2014**

Effective labour market programming for people with disabilities requires multiple elements

- **Facilitating job search**: providing information about opportunities; marketing skills through implementing an effective action plan and addressing accessibility issues that come to the fore when looking for work
- **Cultivating employment opportunity** (recruitment): increasing employer awareness of the talents and capacities of people with disabilities and helping to create accommodating workplaces;

Effective labour market programming for people with disabilities requires multiple elements

- **Developing human resources**: enhancing and further developing marketable skill sets and where necessary, providing access to work-related aids, devices and supports.
- **Employee retention**: receiving supports once in the workplace to improve labour market attachment and positive integration into the workplace. Providing retraining and/or workplace adaptations where necessary for those on the job when injury or illness occurs.

Disability Rates

- *The disability rate among young adults is almost **three times higher** for Aboriginal people than for non-Aboriginal people*
- *Disabilities affecting mobility and agility are most common, but **hearing and visual disabilities** affecting a large portion of the Aboriginal population are also prevalent.*
- **Sixty-six per cent** of Aboriginal adults with disabilities are affected by a mild disability, **22 per cent by a moderate disability** and **12 per cent by a severe disability.**

What is Disability

- **Disability is a measure of difficulty in performing an activity** in a manner, or within the range considered normal, for human beings.
- This refers to **impairments of mobility, sensory and intellectual abnormalities** of psychological, physiological or **anatomical structure or function**.
- Disability, therefore, is something that is **experienced by the person as a whole**.

The Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) seven disability types are:

- Hearing disabilities
- Seeing disabilities
- Speaking disabilities
- Agility disabilities
- Mobility disabilities
- Mental/learning disabilities
- Physical disabilities not classified elsewhere

An effective labour market strategy for people with disabilities requires multiple elements:

- **Facilitating job search:** providing information about opportunities; marketing skills through implementing an effective action plan and addressing accessibility issues that come to the fore when looking for work;
- **Cultivating employment opportunity** (recruitment): increasing employer awareness of the talents and capacities of people with disabilities and helping to create accommodating workplaces;

An effective labour market strategy for people with disabilities requires multiple elements:

- **Developing human resources:** enhancing and further developing marketable skill sets and where necessary, providing access to work-related aids, devices and supports; and
- **Employee retention:** receiving supports once in the workplace to improve labour market attachment and positive integration into the workplace. Providing retraining and/or workplace adaptations where necessary for those on the job when injury or illness occurs.

What the Literature Says About What Works

- **Financial disincentives** to work have traditionally been a key barrier to persons with disabilities in terms of acquiring economic independence.
- Many social assistance systems classify persons with disabilities as **permanently unemployable**.

There are three key building blocks critical for including persons with disabilities in the work force and in society in general.

- **Disability supports:** which include a wide range of goods, services and supports tailored to meet the individual requirements for daily living. This could include technical aids or devices, special equipment, homemaker services, attendant or interpreter services, life skills, physiotherapy and occupational therapy or respite care.
- **Employment:** that includes equal access to opportunities for education, training and employment which together comprise the basis for economic independence.

There are three key building blocks critical for including persons with disabilities in the work force and in society in general.

- **Income:** *in terms of an **income safety net** which provides financial assistance for persons with disabilities if self-support is impossible or insufficient to meet basic needs.*

There are several challenges persons with disabilities face that best practices in employability assistance need to address

- **Negative societal perceptions and stereotypes** that contribute to a lack of self-confidence. When preparing persons with disabilities for employment one of the greatest challenges is to ensure that the environment for training or development is supportive of the client to built up their self-esteem.
- **Staff with expertise, experience and understanding** are required to address the barriers and issues faced by people with various types and degrees of disability.

Several Challenges Persons With Disabilities Face (continued)

- **There needs to be a good match between the needs of the employer and the clients skill set and abilities.** An unsuccessful match may erode the confidence of a client and prevent them from taking on other opportunities.
- **Many Aboriginal persons with disabilities lack trust in the entire system of government sponsored support.** The challenge is to nurture relationships that build trust and confidence in the program in promoting awareness of the support that is available.

Several Challenges Persons With Disabilities Face (continued)

- **Many employers have a general lack of knowledge about persons with disabilities and the value they can offer as employees.** Employers need to be educated about the accommodations and technologies that are available to them. In addition it is important to find employers that will focus on the individual's abilities as opposed to disabilities.
- **The cost of disability supports need to be accessible and affordable.** For an employment arrangement to work ongoing support must be ensured and adequate to meet the needs of the client. Also, many clients cannot afford supports that cost thousands of dollars.

Several Challenges Persons With Disabilities Face (continued)

- **Education, training and transition plans must be flexible and accessible to ensure better educational attainment for persons with disabilities.** This will ensure a better economic future through employment in terms of work and salary.
- **There must be flexibility in selection criteria for client eligibility for service.** Up-front screening is important to ensure the success of the client in the program and to determine their likelihood of benefiting from services.

Several Challenges Persons With Disabilities Face (continued)

- **Women with disabilities have the lowest rate of labour force participation and one of the highest rates of poverty.** This is a double disadvantage to this target group in a labour market context. **Source (HRSDC 2002)**

Best practices must also address demographic challenges

- Many Aboriginal communities are **dispersed geographically** which result in limited resources and capacity to do employment outreach to distant communities.
- **Transportation is a huge challenge** in rural areas. Lack of transportation can prevent people with disabilities from accessing programs, educational institutions and employment. **Rural areas** also have limited housing, health and wellness facilities, and support groups for persons with disabilities.

Best practices must also address demographic challenges

- Rural areas often have **seasonal employment opportunities** rather than stable year round employment. Adequate training opportunities and technical support are also often lacking.

Key Findings of What Works Well by Disability Type and Related Challenges (Source: HRSDC 2002)

Disability Type and related challenges	Comprehensive Assessments	Work Readiness & Skills trng	Knowledgeable Staff	Employer Ed. and Awareness	Adaptive Technology	Job Place-ments	Job Coaching	Flexible Work Arrange-ments	On-going support
MENTAL	DISABILITIES								
Low self esteem and confidence	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Lack of knowledge of persons strengths/ Limitations	X	X	X			X	X		X
Stigmas in the workplace		X	X	X			X		X
Negative side effects of medication	X		X	X				X	X
Cyclical nature of the disability	X		X	X		X		X	X

Key Findings of What Works Well by Disability Type and Related Challenges (Source: HRSDC 2002)

Disability Type and related challenges	Comprehensive Assessments	Work Readiness & Skills trng	Knowledgeable Staff	Employer Ed. and Awareness	Adaptive Technology	Job Placements	Job Coaching	Flexible Work Arrangements	On-going support
DEVELOPMENTAL	INTELLECTUAL	DISABILITIES							
Lack of confidence and self-esteem	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Incorrect perceptions/ myths about developmental abilities			X	X		X	X		X
ADDICTIONS									
Lack of self confidence	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Complex personal issues	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Lack of basic living skills and routine	X	X	X			X	X	X	X

Key Findings of What Works Well by Disability Type and Related Challenges (Source: HRSDC 2002)

Disability Type and related challenges	Comprehensive Assessments	Work Readiness & Skills trng	Knowledgeable Staff	Employer Ed. and Awareness	Adaptive Technology	Job Placements	Job Coaching	Flexible Work Arrangements	On-going support
Other Non-Visible	Disabilities:	Depression	Environmental	Sensitive					
Lack of understanding about the disability			X	X		X	X	X	X
Lack of support groups	X	X	X						X
Lack of confidence and self esteem	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X

What is required to address the challenges and barriers to meeting the needs of Aboriginal persons with disabilities

- **Negative perceptions of and attitudes towards people with disabilities** are the most significant barriers toward the full participation of people with disabilities in the labour market according to the literature. **Client centred services that assist individuals in taking responsibility** for their future increases self esteem and confidence levels. This is an important first step in the process of overcoming the attitudinal and societal barriers to employability. (2002)
- **Community-based employment or job placements** are highly successful in allowing persons with disabilities to get greater exposure to a range of employment opportunities. This gives clients a chance to develop employability skills within a realistic employment environment.

What is required to address the challenges and barriers to meeting the needs of Aboriginal persons with disabilities

- **On-site facilitators and job-coaches** availability to employers who provide employment or job placements to clients with disabilities give them the opportunity to learn how to create a supportive environment and for clients to feel safer about asking questions or requesting clarifications.
- **Long term follow up and continued support for both clients and employers** helps to break down societal barriers. This also addresses lack of awareness of employers about disabilities and to see how persons with disabilities can contribute in a positive way to their company and to society in general.

What is required to address the challenges and barriers to meeting the needs of Aboriginal persons with disabilities

- **Reducing environmental barriers** enables persons with disabilities to enter, and remain in, the workforce. These include support services, transportation, training, washroom accessibility, affordable child care, etc.
- **Reduction of educational barriers** through programs designed to teach the basics such as literacy skills, computer skills, life skills, inter-personal skills and job-readiness skills are essential to successful integration into the work force.

What is required to address the challenges and barriers to meeting the needs of Aboriginal persons with disabilities

- **Eliminating and reducing financial disincentives** by providing income support programs that exempt a portion of wage earnings in order to allow persons with disabilities to financially benefit from making the transition to work. (HRSDC 2002)

Best practices that increase employability and employment programming access for people with disabilities are characterized by

- They are highly **client focused** based on the fact that the programs are flexible and tailored to meet the needs of each individual. Employment and educational plans are created to each client's abilities and limitations.
- **Services are holistic** and consider the individual's likes, dislikes, abilities and limitations, housing, family situation, technological needs for school and work and social and interpersonal skills.

Best practices that increase employability and employment programming access for people with disabilities are characterized by

- The importance of **education and/or on the job training** is the starting point of the client's employment pursuits as an essential part to their acquiring gainful employment.
- **Increased awareness of employers** and the general public about the value that people with disabilities bring to society and our work places is very important.

Best practices that increase employability and employment programming access for people with disabilities are characterized by

- **Partnerships with employers** is an important tool to allowing clients a chance to get a job placement, as well as, improving their chances of employment after the placement.
- **Highly dedicated and committed leadership and staff** are the backbone to getting to know clients and to providing the individual services they need.

Best practices that increase employability and employment programming access for people with disabilities are characterized by

- **Being supportive and challenging** allows clients to make their own decisions and assume certain responsibilities.
- **Wage subsidies** for employers provides financial incentives for employers to provide job placements and provide financial flexibility when taking on clients with special needs. (HRSDC 2002)

We found consistency in the characteristics of best practices as follows:

- Services were **holistic and client focused**.
- There was a disability program co-ordinator and **staff trained in disabilities issues**.
- Staff were **caring, dedicated and committed** to meeting the needs of Aboriginal clients with disabilities.

We found consistency in the characteristics of best practices as follows:

- **Partnerships with employers were essential** and involved education and awareness of the contributions of persons with disabilities to society and the work force.
- **Assessments and screening** were essential to the success of the client and in terms of assisting clients with career choices and in case management.
- **Client support** was ongoing and client follow up was essential to client success.

We found consistency in the characteristics of best practices as follows:

- **Flexibility was essential** in terms of client eligibility for services and in program delivery.
- **Disability supports** were key in terms of reducing environmental barriers such as accessibility, transportation, interpreters, etc.

Source: Showcasing Best Practices in Developing Effective Employment Strategies for Aboriginal People with Disabilities 2007

Discussion

- As an employer what has your experience been with employing persons with disabilities?
- What were the challenges, if any?
- What would you recommend to other employers of persons with disabilities in terms of best practices?

The greatest success stories are those of people who, having recognized a problem, transformed it into an opportunity.

Any Questions?

Niawan:kowa for your time.

For More Information Contact

Dr. Rose-Alma J. McDonald

613-575-2533

info@kateniesresearch.com