

# Abilities to Work



## Invisible Disabilities At Work-In Work



# Learning Outcomes

1. Learn about disabilities and employment in Ontario
2. Get to know what invisible disabilities are
3. Identify the challenges and solutions of invisible disabilities in the workplace

# Abilities to Work

- Formed as the Coalition for Persons with Disabilities in 1985, incorporated as not-for-profit in 1995
- In transition to new identity of Abilities to Work Focused on accessibility in employment
  - Employment services for clients/participants
    - Finding
    - Securing
    - Maintaining
    - Pathways to careers, education, entrepreneurship, training

# Abilities to Work (continued)

- Employer Services
  - Accessibility audits
  - Accessibility education for organizations
- Community Services
  - Services presentations for community agencies
  - Accessibility education for community agencies
  - Cross referrals
- Employment Ontario Service Provider
- Ontario Disability Support Program Service Provider
- Government of Canada funding for Work Readiness Program

# Abilities to Work (continued 2)

- 3 Offices:
  - Mississauga
  - Brampton
  - Orangeville
- 30 staff
- Support all education, skills levels and disability-types
- Actively engaged with other support organizations and agencies for Social Determinants of Health (employment, medical, financial, housing, etc.)
- Provide bridge to important life decisions

# A Bit About Me

- Executive Director of Abilities To Work
- Spent over 20 years in post-secondary education
- Microbiologist
- ADHD

# What is a Disability?

## **World Health Organization**

*Disabilities* is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations.

# In Canada

*Disability* is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and mind and features of the society in which they live. A disability can occur at any time in a person's life; some people are born with a disability, while others develop a disability later in life. It can be permanent, temporary or episodic. Disability can steadily worsen, remain the same, or improve. It can be very mild to very severe. It can be the cause, as well as the result, of disease, illness, injury, or substance abuse.

# Ontario Human Rights Code

Section 10 (1) of the Code defines “disability” as:

- a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,

# Ontario Human Rights Code (contd)

- b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- d) a mental disorder, or
- e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

# United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)

## Article 27. 1.

States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment

# Keep it Simple



- 1. We are all different**
- 2. We all have value**

# Disabilities in Canada

- Canadian Survey on Disabilities (2017)
  - 22% (8.3 million) of Canadian population had one or more disabilities.
  - Prevalence increases with age:
    - Ages 15-24 = 13%
    - Ages 75 and above = 47%
  - Women (24%) more likely to have a disability than men (20%)

# Disabilities in Ontario

- 24.1% of Ontario population with one or more disabilities
- Population of Ontario in 2020 = 14.7 million  
(39% of total population of Canada)
- Persons with disabilities in Ontario = 3.5 million people
- Underestimate
- Disabilities impacts vast majority of population

# Disabilities and Employment - Canada

- Total population in labour force = 80.8% (15.1 million)
- Total employed = 76.0% (14.1 million)

## Persons without disabilities

- Total in labour force = 84.8% (12.6 million)
- Total employed = 80.1% (12.0 million)

## Persons with disabilities

- Total in labour force = **64.7%** (2.5 million)
- Total employed = **59.3%** (2.1 million)

# Disabilities and Employment - Ontario

- Total population in labour force = 80.2% (5.7 million)
- Total employed = 76.0% (5.4 million)

## Persons without disabilities

- Total in labour force = 84.8% (4.8 million)
- Total employed = 80.7% (4.6 million)

## Persons with disabilities

- Total in labour force = **63.0%** (0.9 million)
- Total employed = **58.4%** (0.8 million)

# Disabilities and Employment in Peel

- Peel Population = 1.5 million In 2020
- Labour force = 888,900
- Persons with disabilities in Peel = 188,447
- Persons with disabilities in Labour force = 118,722
- Persons with disabilities employed = 110,053

• Persons with disabilities unemployed = 8,669

• Majority of small/medium sized businesses in Ontario say they have never hired a person with a disability



# Disabilities and Employment in Peel (continued)

- Peel Population = 1.5 million In 2020
- Labour force = 888,900
- Persons without disabilities in Peel = 700,443
- Persons without disabilities in Labour force = 593,984
- Persons without disabilities employed = 479,345
- Persons with disabilities unemployed = 24,353
- Unemployment rate for persons with disabilities is higher, 4.6% compared to 4.1%



# Disability Types

Disability Type	Percentage	Disability Type	Percentage
Pain-related	14.5	Dexterity	4.6
Flexibility	10.0	Learning	3.9
Mobility	9.6	Memory	3.8
Mental Health	7.2	Developmental	1.1
Seeing	5.4	Unknown	0.6
Hearing	4.8		

# Disability Types by Age

Disability Type	Total	15-24	25-64	65 and above
Pain-related	14.5	4.4	13.5	26.2
Flexibility	10.0	1.7	8.2	22.8
Mobility	9.6	1.6	7.3	24.1
Mental Health	7.2	7.8	7.6	5.4
Seeing	5.4	2.4	4.9	9.7
Hearing	4.8	0.9	3.6	12.2
Dexterity	4.6	1.1	3.5	10.9
Learning	3.9	5.5	3.8	3.3
Memory	3.8	2.5	3.6	5.4
Developmental	1.1	2.4	1.0	0.5
Other	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.8

# Invisible Disabilities



**Not all disabilities  
← look like this**

**Some  
→ look like this**



# Invisible Disabilities (continued)

An invisible disability is a physical, mental or neurological condition that is not visible from the outside, yet can limit or challenge a person's movements, senses, or activities.

*Invisible Disabilities Association*

An invisible disability is a disability that is not immediately noticeable. They can include brain injuries, chronic pain, mental illness, gastro-intestinal disorders, and much more. Because they're not obvious to spot, invisible disabilities may be overlooked and misunderstood.

*Rick Hansen Foundation*

# Challenges

Disclosure

Stigma

# Disclosure

Past Experience

Privacy

Discrimination

No Need

Don't Know How

# Stigma

They're Lazy

They're Sick Again

They Look Fine To Me

They Just Need to Suck-It-Up  
Like The Rest Of Us

# Solutions

Legislation

Accommodation

Accessibility

Universal Design

# Legislation

- Canadian Human Rights Act
- Accessible Canada Act
- Ontario Human Rights Code
- AODA - Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
  - Passed in 2005

# Accommodation – Autism Spectrum Disorder

Area	Accommodation	Area	Accommodation
Attentiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Apps for Memory</li> <li>- Job Restructuring</li> <li>- Written Instructions</li> </ul>	Environmental Sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alternative Lighting</li> <li>- Scent-Free</li> <li>- Noise Cancelling Headphones</li> </ul>
Time Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assistive Technology</li> <li>- Checklists</li> <li>- Task Separation</li> </ul>	Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flexible Schedule</li> <li>- Support Animal</li> <li>- Remote Work</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Behaviour Modification</li> <li>- Mentoring</li> <li>- Verbal Responses</li> </ul>	Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additional Training</li> <li>- Modified Breaks</li> <li>- Policy Modification</li> </ul>

# Accommodation - ADHD

Area	Accommodation	Area	Accommodation
Attentiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Apps for Memory</li> <li>- Organizers</li> <li>- White Noise Machine</li> </ul>	Executive Functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Timers</li> <li>- Wall Calendars and Planners</li> <li>- Noise Cancelling Headphones</li> </ul>
Time Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assistive Technology</li> <li>- Reminders</li> <li>- Task Separation</li> </ul>	Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flexible Schedule</li> <li>- Support Animal</li> <li>- Impulse Control Apps</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alternative Communication</li> <li>- Mentoring</li> <li>- Verbal Responses</li> </ul>	Multi-Tasking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additional Time</li> <li>- Ergonomic Equipment</li> <li>- Positive Reinforcement</li> </ul>

# Accommodation – Auditory Processing

Area	Accommodation
Attentiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Apps for Memory</li> <li>- Flexible Schedule</li> <li>- Verbal Cues</li> </ul>
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additional Training</li> <li>- Mentoring</li> <li>- Written Instructions</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Behaviour Modification</li> <li>- Assistance</li> <li>- Verbal Responses</li> </ul>

# Accommodation - Depression

Area	Accommodation	Area	Accommodation
Attentiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Task Separation</li> <li>- Job Restructuring</li> <li>- Written Instructions</li> </ul>	Memory Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reminders</li> <li>- Support Person</li> <li>- Apps for Memory</li> </ul>
Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Behaviour Modification</li> <li>- Therapy</li> <li>- Supervisory Methods</li> </ul>	Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flexible Schedule</li> <li>- Support Animal</li> <li>- Remote Work</li> </ul>
Executive Functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recorded Materials</li> <li>- Wall Calendars and Planners</li> <li>- Verbal Responses</li> </ul>	Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additional Training</li> <li>- Modified Breaks</li> <li>- Policy Modification</li> </ul>

# Accommodation - Anxiety

Area	Accommodation	Area	Accommodation
Attentiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Task Separation</li> <li>- Job Restructuring</li> <li>- Checklists</li> </ul>	Medication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Medication Reminders</li> <li>- Rest/Private Area</li> <li>- Remote Work</li> </ul>
Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Behaviour Modification</li> <li>- Therapy</li> <li>- Supervisory Methods</li> </ul>	Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flexible Schedule</li> <li>- Support Animal</li> <li>- Supervisory Methods</li> </ul>
Ringling in Ears	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Noise Abatement</li> <li>- Noise Cancelling Headphones</li> <li>- Captioning</li> </ul>	Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additional Training</li> <li>- Modified Breaks</li> <li>- Policy Modification</li> </ul>

# Accommodation - Addiction

Area	Accommodation	Area	Accommodation
Attentiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Task Separation</li> <li>- Apps for Memory</li> <li>- Modified Workspace</li> </ul>	Cognitive Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Counting Aids</li> <li>- Electronic Organizers</li> <li>- Uninterrupted Work Time</li> </ul>
Non-Compliant Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Behaviour Modification</li> <li>- Therapy</li> <li>- Supervisory Methods</li> </ul>	Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flexible Schedule</li> <li>- Support Animal</li> <li>- Mentoring</li> </ul>
Executive Functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recorded Materials</li> <li>- Wall Calendars and Planners</li> <li>- Written Instructions</li> </ul>	Fatigue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Periodic Rest Breaks</li> <li>- Job Restructuring</li> <li>- Remote Work</li> </ul>

# Accommodation – Cognitive Disability

Area	Accommodation	Area	Accommodation
Executive Functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recorded Materials</li> <li>- Wall Calendars and Planners</li> <li>- Written Instructions</li> </ul>	Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Task Separation</li> <li>- Electronic Organizers</li> <li>- Wall Calendars and Planners</li> </ul>
Time Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Behaviour Modification</li> <li>- Therapy</li> <li>- Supervisory Methods</li> </ul>	Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Colour-Coded Materials</li> <li>- Reading Pen</li> <li>- Optical Character Recognition</li> </ul>
Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Talking/Large Display Equipment</li> <li>- Mathematics Software</li> <li>- Written Instructions</li> </ul>	Environmenta l	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accessible Workstation</li> <li>- Dual Monitors</li> <li>- Remote Work</li> </ul>

# Accessibility



# Universal Design

## 7 PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN:



Equitable



Flexibility



Simple &  
intuitive



Perception  
information



Tolerance  
for error



Low physical  
effort



Size &  
space

# Mythbusting – Ontario Chamber of Commerce

- Persons with disabilities are less reliable in the workplace
  - FACT – 86% of persons with disabilities rate average or better than the general workforce in attendance with 20% lower employee turnover rates
- Persons with disabilities are less loyal to employers
  - FACT – Employees with disabilities in accessible organizations have 72% higher retention rates compared to colleagues without disabilities
- Persons with disabilities are less productive in the workplace
  - FACT – 75% of employees in small/medium sized organizations meet or exceed expectations
- Persons with disabilities are a higher safety risk
  - FACT – 98% of employees with disabilities rate average or better on safety than their counterparts without disabilities

# Tips for Success

1. Disclosure
2. Knowledge
3. Accommodation Plan
4. Clear Expectations
5. Open Communication
6. Regular Feedback

# Will an Invisible Disability Stop My Goals?

- Dan Aykroyd
  - ASD



- Lil Wayne
  - Epilepsy



- Halle Berry
  - Diabetes



- Tom Cruise
  - Dyslexia



# Will an Invisible Disability Stop My Goals? (continued)

- Rana Dugabatti

- Vision Loss



- Chris Rock

- NVLD



- Ryan Gosling

- ADHD



- Richard Branson

- ADHD
- Dyslexia



# Check-In

1. Learn about disabilities and employment in Ontario
2. Get to know what invisible disabilities are
3. Identify the challenges and solutions of invisible disabilities in the workplace

# Quote

**"Aerodynamically the bumblebee shouldn't be able to fly, but the bumblebee doesn't know that so it goes on flying anyway"**

- Mary Kay Ash (founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics)

# Abilities to Work



Thank You!!

Questions?

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

