

Employing people with intellectual disability

Introduction

Employing people with intellectual disability can improve the workplace for everyone.

All people can bring new ideas and perspectives to the way we work.

Managers who employ people with intellectual disability say:



“Do it; and make sure you’re prepared.”

Hiring and supporting a person with intellectual disability well requires a commitment to building a workplace culture that values:

- clear expectations
- building trust
- honest feedback
- recognition of individual skills
- a commitment to workplace adjustments

Here are some tips to think about:

1. Give people with intellectual disability the opportunity to be employed

“Don’t say no to them. Just let them try and I’m sure they’ll do great, because even though we don’t look perfect we are perfect. We will do a good job.”

2. Look beyond the person’s individual role. How else can they be part of and contribute to the organisation?

When you employ someone, consider all the ways they can be involved, including staff meetings and events. When people are included in all parts of the workplace culture it means their job can be easier, more enjoyable and more meaningful.

Include these things in the position description and think about how to make them work for everyone. Include regular scheduled supervision.

3. Understand your motivation and any attitudes that you or others may have; making sure everyone is prepared to be welcoming

Being ready to welcome people into the workplace requires understanding and self-reflection about some of the common attitudes about people with intellectual disability, and really thinking about how we include people at work.

// I just would like it if organisations didn't think they were doing people a favour. It's that mindset of going "We're doing a good thing." That's not how you employ people. That's not the reason why. So if you can shift that sort of mindset, I think that's pretty important. //

If you are not sure that everyone in the organisation is ready to be welcoming and supportive, you may choose to provide training and have conversations about what is expected of people and what support they can provide to their colleagues.

4. Have clear, accessible systems and processes in place

Commit to providing information in plain English or easy to read formats including:

- emails and other internal communication
- policies and procedures
- orientation and training

Provide clear information about workplace adjustments and make sure all employees understand the law in relation to discrimination. You can ask for advice and support relating to your workplace.

// ...it's brought (the organisation) to examine some of our processes and systems and ... now we can simplify some of those things because they're maybe unnecessarily too complex and all that isn't needed. //

For more information:

- Watch Episode 1 of VALID's Let's Work web series
- Read pages 52-57 in the VALID Employment Project consultation report
- Visit Inclusion Australia's Everyone Can Work website
- Watch CID's My Work Matters

