

# Fact Sheet 8: Retention and Inclusive Culture

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*Evidence-Based Disability Employment Practice Recommendations for Canadian Employers*

## About this fact sheet

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This fact sheet presents the retention and inclusive culture recommendations from An Employer Guide to Disability Employment Practices in Canada (Anyinam et al., 2026), a convergence synthesis of 95 Canadian grey literature documents produced by 53 independent organizations. The full guide covers eight domains across the employment lifecycle. This sheet addresses Retention and Inclusive Culture.

The recommendations below are condensed for ease of use. Jurisdictional notes, full source document lists, and detailed quality appraisals appear in Chapter 10 of the full guide.

## About the evidence

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Canadian federal departments, provincial and territorial human rights commissions, accessibility offices, and national disability organizations all publish guidance for employers. The convergence synthesis identified practices where multiple independent organizations arrived at the same recommendation without coordinating with one another.

Convergence classification reflects how many independent organizations support the practice: Strong (six or more sources), Moderate (four to five sources), Low (three sources). Each supporting document was appraised using the CRAAP framework (Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, Purpose). The quality flag reports the proportion of sources that scored High on this appraisal: Full confidence (75% or more), Moderate confidence (50–74%), Quality flag (below 50%).

## Why retention and inclusive culture matter

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An inclusive workplace culture sustains the engagement, productivity, and retention of employees with disabilities over the long term. Policies establish the framework, but culture is shaped by leadership behaviour, peer attitudes, communication practices, and the extent to which accessibility is integrated into standard operations rather than treated as an exception. The 20 recommendations in this fact sheet draw on convergence from up to 25 independent Canadian sources.

## Recommendations

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### **Recommendation 8.1 Provide information and communications in accessible formats**

**Convergence:** Strong **Quality:** Full confidence (88%) **Sources:** 25 independent organizations

Provide all workplace information and communications in accessible formats. Hard-code or embed captions on videos so subtitles play automatically. Offer materials in multiple formats: large print, digital, plain language, audio, and formats compatible with screen readers. Survey employees to understand what is working well and what barriers remain. Use multiple channels for communication: email, intranet, town halls, and one-on-one conversations. Add alternative text to all images. Ensure internal communications, training materials, and onboarding resources meet accessibility standards.

### **Recommendation 8.2 Build an inclusive workplace culture that values diversity and respects dignity**

**Convergence:** Strong **Quality:** Full confidence (92%) **Sources:** 24 independent organizations

Build a workplace culture that genuinely values diversity and respects the dignity of every employee. This requires consistent communication, sound judgement, and operational flexibility from managers. Include a commitment to diversity and inclusion as a required qualification in position descriptions. Ensure fully inclusive environments throughout the full employee life cycle. Equity means recognizing that an employee with a disability may need adjustments, such as a wider cubicle for a wheelchair user, to be successful. Identify practical, timely, and cost-efficient solutions that respect the employee's dignity, privacy, comfort, and autonomy.

### **Recommendation 8.3 Establish employee resource groups, disability networks, and peer support structures**

**Convergence:** Strong **Quality:** Full confidence (88%) **Sources:** 17 independent organizations

Create employee resource groups and disability networks. These give underrepresented employees psychosocial support, a space to share experiences, and interpersonal connections. Coordinate disability management through committees or interdisciplinary teams assigned meaningful roles. Consult these groups when developing policies, evaluating accommodations, and addressing workplace barriers. Community organizations can supplement internal capacity, particularly for small and medium-sized employers. Ask employees with disabilities directly, through surveys, focus groups, or resource group discussions, whether the workplace supports their needs.

### **Recommendation 8.4 Build accommodation and accessibility into workplace policies and practices at the design stage**

**Convergence:** Strong **Quality:** Full confidence (93%) **Sources:** 14 independent organizations

Design accommodation and accessibility into workplace policies and practices at the outset, rather than retrofitting after a need arises. Assess the accessibility of your built environment, website, marketing materials, and online job application process. Partner with accessibility organizations or consultants for assessments. Review existing training and work experience programmes through an intersectional accessibility lens. Set representation targets consistent

with workforce availability. Use workplace accommodation as a strategy to attract and retain talent, recognizing that accessible design improves the work environment for all employees.

### **Recommendation 8.5 Provide disability awareness and inclusion training to all employees**

**Convergence:** Strong **Quality:** Moderate confidence (67%) **Sources:** 12 independent organizations

Provide disability awareness and inclusion training to all employees, not just managers. Hire training companies led by persons with disabilities or freelance consultants with lived experience. Include practical content on unconscious bias, disability etiquette, and how to interact appropriately. Measure the impact of training programmes using pre- and post-training surveys. All employees who interact with the public must be trained on accessible customer service where this is a legislative requirement. Training should be repeated, not one-time.

### **Recommendation 8.6 Address attitudinal barriers, stigma, and misconceptions about disability in the workplace**

**Convergence:** Strong **Quality:** Full confidence (75%) **Sources:** 12 independent organizations

Address attitudinal barriers, stigma, and misconceptions about disability directly and systematically. Do not stereotype persons with disabilities into particular jobs. Each individual should succeed based on personal strengths, not assumptions. Invest in ableism-awareness training that helps staff understand how ableism manifests in daily organizational processes and HR practices. Break down barriers for all disabilities, including non-evident ones. Ensure all persons designated to make decisions related to accommodation have training on human rights principles, workplace discrimination, and diversity. Address the common misconception among employers that they lack access to support, funding, and best practices by connecting them with available resources.

### **Recommendation 8.7 Senior leadership champions disability inclusion with executive accountability**

**Convergence:** Strong **Quality:** Full confidence (82%) **Sources:** 11 independent organizations

Senior leaders must visibly champion disability inclusion. This means active participation in training programmes, public statements of commitment, and executive accountability for outcomes. Add metrics and targets on disability inclusion to the performance assessments of managers and executives. Use job exit information to identify trends and opportunities to improve retention of persons with disabilities. Report aggregate findings. The degree of leadership commitment determines whether inclusive policies are realized in practice.

### **Recommendation 8.8 Support employee self-identification and voluntary disclosure in a safe environment**

**Convergence:** Strong **Quality:** Full confidence (86%) **Sources:** 7 independent organizations

Create a safe environment for employee self-identification and voluntary disclosure. Encourage candidates and employees to share accommodation needs without requiring disclosure of their specific disability. Do not tie disclosure to eligibility for accommodation. Train managers to

respond to disclosure with empathy, recognize barriers, and share support options. Poor responses to disclosure discourage both current and future employees from seeking the accommodations they need. Self-identification for employment equity purposes should be voluntary and distinct from the accommodation process.

### **Recommendation 8.9 Include workplace health, safety, and emergency response planning for employees with disabilities**

**Convergence:** Strong **Quality:** Full confidence (100%) **Sources:** 7 independent organizations

Include employees with disabilities in workplace health, safety, and emergency response planning. Develop individualized workplace emergency response information for employees with disabilities who require assistance during an evacuation. Establish backup plans in case the designated support person is unavailable. Let employees know in advance about loud noises, bright lights, or other sensory aspects of emergency drills. Identify and address any hazards in the workplace that may pose particular risks to employees with specific disabilities.

### **Recommendation 8.10 Provide workplace training and capacity building for employees with disabilities**

**Convergence:** Strong **Quality:** Moderate confidence (71%) **Sources:** 7 independent organizations

Provide targeted workplace training, professional development, and capacity-building supports for employees with disabilities. Ensure access to training with the supports employees need, including accommodated formats and flexible scheduling. Build the business case internally for accommodated training in skilled trades and other sectors. Develop capacity during slower business periods. Recognize that when persons with disabilities receive appropriate training and supports, they make a valuable contribution to the organization.

### **Recommendation 8.11 Regularly review and update accommodation and accessibility policies**

**Convergence:** Strong **Quality:** Full confidence (83%) **Sources:** 6 independent organizations

Review and update your accommodation and accessibility policies regularly, at minimum annually or as required. Ensure the policy remains an evolving document tailored to your organization's current needs. Check for new legislative requirements, including provincial accessibility standards, which are introduced and updated on prescribed timelines. Building accessibility standards are also changing gradually. Stay current and ensure compliance.

### **Recommendation 8.12 Engage persons with disabilities in policy development and workplace decision-making**

**Convergence:** Strong **Quality:** Full confidence (83%) **Sources:** 6 independent organizations

Involve persons with disabilities in policy development and workplace decision-making. Engage staff to help identify barriers in workplace policies and practices. Ensure participation is voluntary and occurs during paid hours. Ask good questions, including difficult ones, and listen. Give weight to the suggestions of staff with disabilities in the decision-making process.

Accessibility and inclusion are shared organizational responsibilities and should be developed collaboratively, not imposed unilaterally.

### **Recommendation 8.13 Develop an accessibility or inclusion strategic plan with measurable goals**

**Convergence:** Moderate **Quality:** Full confidence (100%) **Sources:** 5 independent organizations

Develop an accessibility or inclusion strategic plan with measurable goals. Design the plan based on feedback from employee engagement. Include specific, time-bound targets for representation and equity. Monitor progress and publicly report on it. Approach the work with a long-term view: a three-year rolling plan can help structure efforts. The plan should outline commitments to accessibility across emergency response, training, employment, information and communication, and the built environment.

### **Recommendation 8.14 Ensure supervisors and managers model inclusive behaviour and leadership**

**Convergence:** Moderate **Quality:** Full confidence (100%) **Sources:** 5 independent organizations

Ensure supervisors and managers model inclusive behaviour every day. Build their capacity to understand and respond to the needs of employees with disabilities, as gaps in supervisory understanding are a significant barrier. If employees show signs of mental stress or physical discomfort, ask if they need help. A manager does not need diagnostic information to connect an employee with assistance. Clarify work priorities and roles to prevent excessive stress. Encourage supportive working relationships among team members. Provide regular training on responding to disclosure, recognizing barriers, and sharing support options.

### **Recommendation 8.15 Schedule regular check-ins, one-on-one meetings, and structured feedback**

**Convergence:** Moderate **Quality:** Full confidence (80%) **Sources:** 5 independent organizations

Schedule regular check-ins and one-on-one meetings with all employees, including informal coaching and formal performance reviews. Use these conversations to ask how the work environment can work better for each person. Identify whether any type of assistance might enable the employee to better perform their job functions. Keep track of challenges, complaints, and turnover to identify patterns and areas for improvement. Encourage staff to give each other constructive positive feedback.

### **Recommendation 8.16 Use employee engagement surveys and feedback mechanisms for inclusion**

**Convergence:** Moderate **Quality:** Moderate confidence (50%) **Sources:** 4 independent organizations

Use anonymous employee surveys and structured feedback mechanisms to measure inclusion and identify barriers. Ask employees how they feel about the existing work environment and culture. Listen to their answers and respond. Track results to make data-driven improvements. Transparently report on progress. Establish a process for receiving and responding to feedback about accessible service. Provide multiple ways for people to submit feedback.

### **Recommendation 8.17 Signal social inclusion and public commitment to disability inclusion**

**Convergence:** Moderate **Quality:** Full confidence (100%) **Sources:** 4 independent organizations

Make your commitment to inclusion visible. Display inclusion signage, badges, or posters in your workplace. Commit publicly on your website, social media, and in job descriptions. Clarify social and situational expectations for all employees. Allow social events to be optional and do not allow workplace decisions to be made at social occasions. Discuss workplace norms openly, including communication preferences, with all employees.

### **Recommendation 8.18 Review compensation, benefits, and career advancement through an equity lens**

**Convergence:** Low **Quality:** Full confidence (100%) **Sources:** 3 independent organizations

Review compensation, benefits, and career advancement opportunities with an equity lens. Examine salaries within your industry and within your organization by diversity group. Correct any inequities. Provide a living wage for hourly employees. Review benefits offerings to identify groups that could benefit from different or better coverage. Ensure performance evaluations reflect the strengths of diverse employees and are aligned with essential job tasks, including any modifications made for employees with disabilities.

### **Recommendation 8.19 Apply disability-informed performance management before imposing discipline**

**Convergence:** Low **Quality:** Full confidence (100%) **Sources:** 3 independent organizations

Before imposing discipline, consider whether a disability may be a factor in the behaviour that led to the concern. This is particularly important where the employer is aware or should be aware of a disability. Seek to understand the situation before concluding that performance expectations have not been met. Ensure performance management accounts for accommodations and that evaluations are not based on stereotypes. During restructuring, consider whether there will be a negative impact on employees with disabilities and what measures can address this.

### **Recommendation 8.20 Provide structured onboarding, job shadowing, and workplace orientation**

**Convergence:** Low **Quality:** Full confidence (100%) **Sources:** 3 independent organizations

Provide a structured onboarding, job shadowing, and workplace orientation process that works for all employees. Offer assistance with form completion. Ask candidates to tour the workplace and explain all aspects of the work. Provide information on how different workers learn. Include a coworker or staff member to help new employees settle in. Describe a clear timeline for orientation milestones and offer hands-on experience with job tasks early in the process.

## **For the full evidence base**

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Each recommendation in this fact sheet is drawn from Chapter 10 of An Employer Guide to Disability Employment Practices in Canada.

Anyinam, C., Coffey, S., Da Silva, C., Graham, L., & Godin-Jacques, C. (2026). *An employer guide to disability employment practices in Canada: Evidence-based recommendations from a convergence synthesis of Canadian grey literature. Building Employment Pathways for People with Disabilities Project, National Educational Association of Disabled Students.*

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