

New Brunswick Association for Community Living

Position Statement on Employment

Purpose

To ensure that people who have an intellectual disability can work for real wages in inclusive workplaces throughout New Brunswick and receive the necessary education, training and support to obtain and maintain full or part time employment as they may choose.

Background

People who have an intellectual disability are increasingly demonstrating that they can work and contribute to the economic life of our communities. Yet, too many people (as high as 80% in some areas) are either unemployed or under-employed. Many people with an intellectual disability are denied the opportunity to achieve their potential as workers and taxpayers and, as a result, live in poverty and rely on provincial social assistance and other government programs. The social and economic cost of this exclusion from the labour market is great.

While government and community programs exist to assist people to achieve employment, many factors still contribute to the low representation of people with an intellectual disability in the labour force. These include:

- The lack of adequate planning and preparation for employment for youth with intellectual disabilities who graduate from high school.
- Misperceptions on the part of employers about the abilities of people who have an intellectual disability and about the employer's right to terminate a person's employment for valid reasons.
- The continued use by employers of hiring practices that directly or indirectly discriminate against people with an intellectual disability (for example, practices that require entry level employees to have skills in multiple areas).
- A social service system that supports sheltered/activity-based programs rather than employment - leading people in some communities without access to needed employment supports.
- The lack of employment supports for people who require longer-term support on the job.

- The lack of access to career/job training opportunities for people who will not attend postsecondary education.

As today's labour market tightens, it is economically imperative that people who have an intellectual disability are provided with real opportunities to work in our communities. The government of New Brunswick sees the need to ensure that all working aged New Brunswickers have access to employment and is currently working to implement a labour market participation strategy for people with disabilities. It is anticipated that some of the factors identified above will be addressed through the effective implementation of this strategy. Additional action will no doubt be required to ensure that the labour market potential of people who have an intellectual disability will be fully realized.

Principles

- All working aged adults have the right to seek and obtain employment and contribute to the economic life of our communities and to receive any short or long term support that they may require to find and maintain employment.
- The employment of people with intellectual and other disabilities benefits the well being of people who are employed, employers and businesses, and the broader community.
- All employers (public and private) have the duty to provide reasonable accommodations as well as employment opportunities for people who are excluded from the labour market.
- Workplaces should reflect the diversity of the population within our communities.
- Employers and businesses have an important role and responsibility to ensure that people with intellectual and other disabilities are actively and productively engaged in the labour market.
- Employers and businesses must have quick and easy access to the support that they may require to hire and accommodate workers with intellectual and other disabilities.

Position Statements

It is NBACL's position that:

1. Access to adequate and appropriate employment opportunities for real pay is central to inclusion within the community and for ensuring the well-being of all people, including people who have an intellectual disability.

2. Government policies and programs must recognize and act on the clear economic imperative of ensuring that people with intellectual and other disabilities are fully included in the provincial labour force.
3. New Brunswick's education and workforce development systems must together provide the resources and programs necessary to ensure that youth with an intellectual disability are engaged in meaningful person centred employment planning and preparation long before they graduate from high school.
4. Workforce development and disability support systems must ensure that people have access to a variety of supports when such supports are required to find and maintain successful employment. This includes access to long term paid support in the workplace when this is required.
5. Income support policies and practices must provide strong incentives to ensure that people with intellectual and other disabilities are encouraged to seek and maintain employment.
6. All people have the right to be paid industry-standard wages and benefits associated with their position (starting with minimum wage), with the same protections provided to other employees. Where appropriate, government programs can provide short or long-term wage subsidies.
7. Workforce development systems and employer/business organizations must be encouraged and supported to collaborate to address labour market needs through the creation of employment opportunities for people who have an intellectual disability.
8. Government policies and programs must encourage and facilitate the transition from sheltered/activity-based programs to community employment for real pay for people being served by community agencies.
9. The public service at the federal, provincial and municipal levels (including Crown corporations) must ensure that people with an intellectual disability are adequately and appropriately represented in the public workforce. This may require that proactive measures are taken to ensure that people are equally represented and accommodated.
10. People with intellectual and other disabilities must be afforded opportunities and the necessary supports for employment training through multiple means including postsecondary education, expanded apprenticeship opportunities and on-the-job training opportunities.