



Newcomers disABILITY Toolkit

Open Door Group and ISSofBC are thrilled to introduce the **Newcomer disAbility Toolkit**, which provides essential resources and insights to support newcomers with disabilities in their job search. In this toolkit, you will find informative infographics, external resources, and insights into legislation and available community services to assist you in finding sustainable & meaningful employment.

Table of Contents

Acknowledging First Peoples & Traditional Territory	2
Forward	3
A Note to Self	5
Before We Start True or False	7
Disability in Canada Infographic	9
Understanding Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility	10
Your Rights	12
Common Disabilities for Job Seekers	16
Disability Employment Services	28
Employment Programs	31
Transportation for Work	35
Employment Standards and Legal Support	37
Technology for Work	39
Volunteering for Work	42
For Other Resources	44



Acknowledging First Peoples & Traditional Territory

We are grateful to live, work, and be connected with people from across the many traditional and unceded territories covering all regions of British Columbia. We are honoured to live on this land. We are committed to reconciliation, decolonization, and building relationships with communities while increasing the awareness of Indigenous People among newcomers to these lands.

Truth and Reconciliation, requires continued learning about the history of the land we live and work on. To help with this process, we have several resources to help you understand Indigenous issues in these unceded lands since time immemorial, which is now called Canada.

We understand that it is our responsibility to honour the original peoples of this land and to increase newcomers' knowledge of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, their history, diversity and contemporary reality. This also means examining our internal knowledge, biases, systems, and policies.

"Welcome to our Homelands!" This is a greeting from Canada's First Peoples to newcomers. This **video** [🔗](#) was created by Kamala Todd, an Indigenous filmmaker and writer highlighting key messages of welcoming from Indigenous representatives across Turtle Island. It is currently available in 17 different languages, including Spanish, Farsi, Arabic, Chinese, Korean and Punjabi. You can also learn more about the Indigenous history and culture with the **Study Guide** [🔗](#).

Forward

ISSofBC has been unwavering in its commitment to delivering diverse services for newcomers for over five decades. Our work to **help immigrants build a future in Canada** includes settlement and integration services, language, career training, employment services, and job placement.

As we endeavour to build a future where we all thrive together in the community, we realize newcomers with disabilities face significant barriers to accessing services and finding employment. ISSofBC partnered with Open Door Group to develop and deliver employment-related disability resources and training to better support clients with disabilities and added this to our portfolio.

Through the partnership, we created and developed the Newcomer disAbility Toolkit targeting newcomers with disabilities. This toolkit consists of infographics, external resources, tools, and services available in the community. It also contains information on common disabilities, legislation and an overview of the 'disability ecosystem' and resources. These resources and the support of Open Door Group will assist newcomers with disabilities, jump-start their job search, and contribute to the economy.



Carla Morales
Director, Language & Career Services
ISSofBC



Alona Puehse
Chief Executive Officer
Open Door Group

Open Door Group is a non-profit organization with a mission to **improve the well-being of people through meaningful and sustainable employment**. Like ISSofBC, Open Door Group operates to ensure that ALL people have access to opportunities that give them purpose, prosperity, and belonging.

Since 1976, we have helped people to prepare for, get, and keep employment. In BC, we serve over 8,000 people annually, including newcomers with disabilities and people facing challenges finding and maintaining employment. We work with hundreds of employers in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario to recruit and retain people with disabilities.

We are honoured to partner with ISSofBC to serve and support newcomers, particularly knowing that people with disabilities may face additional challenges along their career journey.

This toolkit is an excellent example of our work together in helping immigrants build a future in Canada. For more information or support, please get in touch with ISSofBC or Open Door Group teams, as we are here to serve you.

A Note to Self

Embarking on my journey to Canada, I left behind my homeland for a life of greater equality and less discrimination. This path, paved with challenges, was even more demanding for me as a person living with Cerebral Palsy (CP). Securing my first significant job outside academia meant applying to over 300 positions.

As a writer, entrepreneur, and accessible creator with disabilities, my lifelong journey with CP has not only limited my mobility but also fueled my passion for overcoming barriers, especially in creating a more accessible world. Reflecting on this experience, I am writing a reminder to myself, and I am honoured to share it with you. It's not to teach lessons but to offer hope amid our collective struggles. I deeply appreciate your taking the time to read this. I wish you success in your job search and a fulfilled life with growth and brightness in your new home.

"Canada is a land of immense possibilities and opportunities," —I was told even before arriving here. While true, Canada also has its flaws: in the minds of many, including employers, there exist biases and assumptions about the capabilities of people with disabilities, particularly regarding what they cannot do. These attitudes create hidden but powerful barriers in our job search.

In my personal experience of working in Montreal, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Vancouver— cities now a part of me—I've seen that for newcomers, especially those from equity-deserving groups, the job hunt can be overwhelming, and I believe it is a country-wide problem.

We might feel alone in this. But remember, it's not our fault. The challenges we face aren't because of our shortcomings, but they are due to systemic issues and attitudinal barriers.

Embracing a new country shows our bravery. Hard times should never make us doubt our worth. Our shared struggles unite us, offering strength and motivation. It's important to envision the growth and achievement that come after these challenges.

Still, in a spirit of fairness and gratitude, it's important to recognize that awareness of disability inclusion is growing. There are organizations dedicated to helping us, particularly those with disabilities, to find rewarding work.

They focus on abilities and potentials, not deficits and limitations, helping us find roles where we can excel. Their support has been invaluable in bridging the gap between job seekers and employers for many, myself included. That is why I try not only to appreciate them but also to introduce them to people who need this type of service, and I am delighted to see that this toolkit is providing us with so many valuable resources.

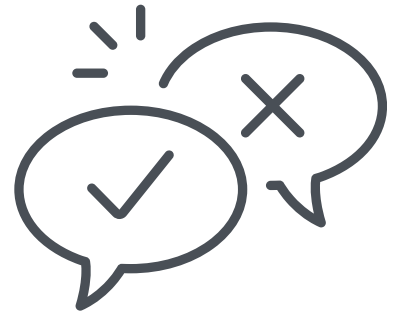
This journey is tough but also a story of hope and determination. Our efforts today inspire others to overcome their challenges. Echoing Star Wars, "May the force be with us!" as we strive to make a difference in our lives and communities.

Farshid Sadatsharifi

Project Manager at Untapped Accessibility 

Before we start...

Here is a quick True or False quiz to check your knowledge of disability in Canada.



- One in ten Canadians have a disability.

FALSE. Statistics Canada new data on disability in 2022 shows that **nearly three in ten Canadians have a disability.**

- Canada was the first country to protect disability rights in its constitution.

TRUE. When section 15 of the Charter came into effect in 1985, **Canada became the first country to grant constitutional protection to various minority groups including, people with physical or mental disabilities.**

- Less than half of the working-age Canadians with a disability are employed.

FALSE. According to the 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability, **62 percent of working-age Canadians with a disability are employed.**

- If the employee and the employer have agreed, employers can pay workers with a disability less than minimum wage in BC.

FALSE. Section 16 of the Employment Standards Act requires **employees to be paid at least minimum wage** as set out in the regulations.

- **British Columbians with a disability get disability assistance under the BC Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act.**

FALSE. Not all individuals with disabilities get disability assistance.

You must be designated as a Person with Disabilities (PWD) to receive this assistance.

- **If you have the Persons with Disabilities designation and get disability assistance, you can still work and earn money, but it will affect your assistance payment.**

FALSE. You always keep 100 percent of any money you earn yourself. Any money you earn OVER the annual earnings exemption limit will be deducted dollar for dollar from your assistance payment.

- **Workplace accommodations can only be requested if an individual receives a job offer.**

FALSE. Candidates with disabilities can request workplace accommodation at any stage in the employment relationship, including the hiring process. They can request accommodations to alter a typical interview process for physical access and other disability needs, such as a sign language interpreter.



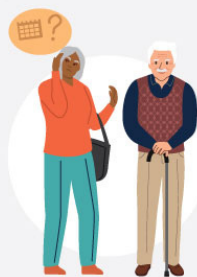
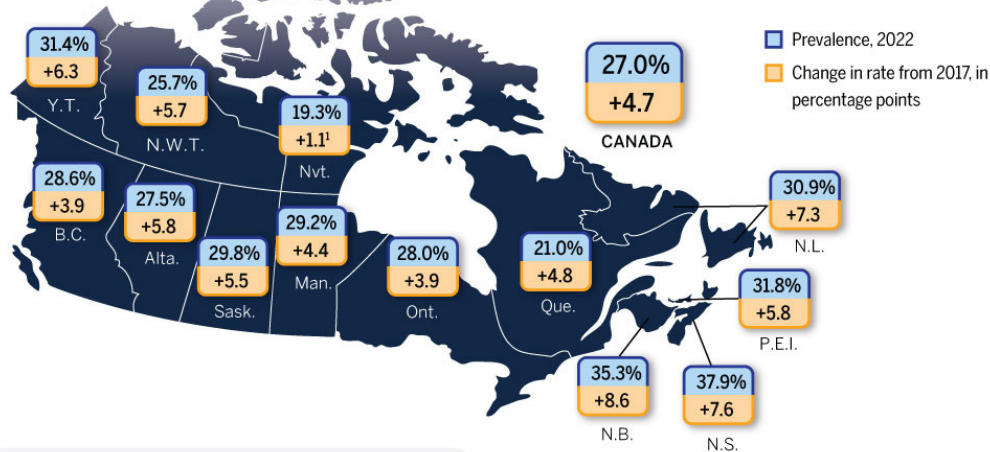
NEW DATA ON DISABILITY

in Canada, 2022

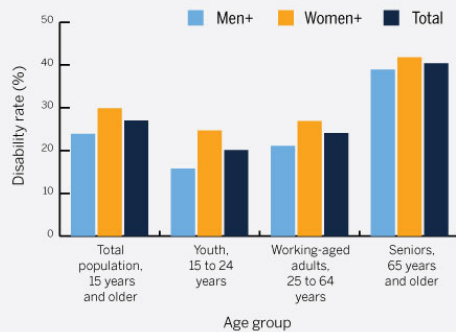
In 2022, **27.0%** of Canadians aged 15 and older, or **8.0 million** people, had at least one disability. This represents an **increase of 4.7 percentage points** from 2017.



From 2017 to 2022, the disability rate rose in all provinces and most of the territories

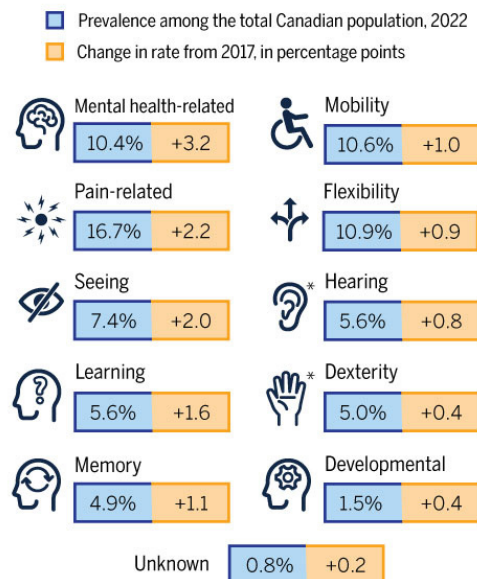


The disability rate increases with age. Growth of Canada's senior population between 2017 and 2022 contributed to the overall increase in the disability rate.



Women of all ages are more likely than men to have a disability²

From 2017 to 2022, **mental health-related, pain-related, and seeing** disabilities had the largest increases, contributing the most to the rise in the Canadian disability rate.



* Updated image

¹ The change observed since 2017 is not statistically significant at a 5% significance level, meaning that it is likely due to sampling variability.

² The category "Women+" includes women and some non-binary persons, while the category "Men+" includes men and some non-binary persons. Given the small size of the non-binary population, data aggregation to a two-category gender variable is most of the time necessary to protect the confidentiality of the responses provided.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2022.

ISBN: 978-0-660-68707-0 | Catalogue number: 11-627-M

© His Majesty the King in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of Industry, 2023



Understanding Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility

Diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility are closely linked values and principles used to support policies and practices in Canada that promote the representation and participation of different groups of individuals.

Diversity refers to the representation or the make-up of the workforce. Workplace diversity means employing people of different races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, ages, cultural backgrounds, abilities and attributes. It is also about respecting and appreciating the differences. Disability is a form of natural human diversity.

Equity means fair access, opportunity and advancement for all people. Equity differs from equality. While equality treats everyone the same way, equity considers individual needs and adjusts treatment accordingly. Equity in the workplace requires special measures and the accommodation of differences to ensure each person is provided with what they need to succeed.

Inclusion is about creating a workplace culture where everyone feels a sense of belonging and value.

In an inclusive workplace, people are comfortable being themselves, feel they have a say in the decision-making, and feel valued for the unique contributions they bring to work. Inclusion leads to increased workforce confidence and engagement.

Accessibility is about ensuring all people have access to information, products, services and environments with ease.

Physical accessibility gives everyone equal access to the work site, building, needed equipment and all facilities in the workplace. Digital accessibility ensures information and communication technology is usable and accessible to everyone. With the advancements in assistive technology, people with disabilities can fully and independently participate in the workforce.





Your Rights

Canada is committed to reducing barriers to accessibility and inclusion to ensure full participation and greater opportunities for success for all Canadians. We have a strong legal and legislative framework that guarantees the equal rights of people with disabilities. Here are the provincial and federal laws to help you understand how you are protected.

Accessible British Columbia Act

This Act became law in June 2021 and is currently in development. The government of BC is committed to creating an accessible province for people with disabilities. The government works with people with disabilities and the Provincial Accessibility Committee to develop and work with an accessibility plan, which is updated every three years. Schools and other educational institutions, municipalities, health authorities and other public-sector organizations are subject to achieving compliance with accessibility requirements by 2024.

Accessible Canada Act

The Accessible Canada Act took effect in 2019 and the overarching goal of this national accessibility legislation is to realize a barrier-free Canada by 2040. It sets out requirements to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility in 7 priority areas including employment. In 2023, federally regulated employers in Canada with at least 100 employees must publish an accessibility plan by June 1, detailing how they will remove barriers for employees and members of the public with disabilities.

Canada's Disability Inclusion Action Plan

In 2020, the Government of Canada committed to developing the first-ever Disability Inclusion Action Plan. It is guided by the principles laid out in the Accessible Canada Act. DIAP includes a robust employment strategy that will help more persons with disabilities find and keep good quality jobs, advance in their careers, or become entrepreneurs; employers make workplaces more inclusive and accessible; and increase the capacity of individuals and organizations that work to support disability inclusion and accessibility.

BC Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act

People with severe disabilities in BC can get a Persons with Disabilities designation. When you have the PWD status, you can access benefits and various forms of employment support under the BC Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act.

- The **Persons with Disabilities Designation**  provides disability assistance and supplements to individuals eligible for greater independence, including income security, enhanced well-being, and participation in the community. An individual may be designated as a PWD if they have reached 18 years of age and have a severe mental or physical impairment.

BC Employment and Assistance Act

Under the BC Employment and Assistance Act, the BCEA program helps individuals in need who have no other resources to transition to employment. It provides income assistance if they cannot fully participate in the workforce. The BCEA Act does not apply to persons with disabilities.

- The **Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers Benefit**  assists individuals who cannot work due to a long-term medical condition that impedes their ability to work AND at least one additional barrier to employment. This benefit provides individuals the time and support to overcome their barriers and move towards independence. It also gives them time to transition to other types of assistance if their health conditions worsen and require additional support.

BC Employment Standards Act

The **British Columbia Employment Standards Act** [↗](#) is a law to protect workers. It sets minimum standards for conditions of employment in the province and applies to full-time, part-time and casual workers. These include hours of work, minimum wages, overtime pay, time off work with pay and termination of employment. Employers must abide by these minimum standards. Employers can provide employees greater rights or benefits than the minimum employment standards. However, federally regulated employees, independent contractors, and self-regulated professionals such as doctors, lawyers, and accountants are excluded from the protections under the ESA.

Workers Compensation Act and Occupational Health and Safety Regulation

Under the Workers Compensation Act and Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, every person employed in British Columbia has the right and responsibility to protect their health and safety in the workplace. The three main rights of workers include the right to know any potential hazards in the workplace, the right to participate in health and safety activities and the right to refuse unsafe work.

BC Human Rights Code

The BC Human Rights Code is a law to protect and promote human rights. The Code protects you in employment from being poorly treated or denied because you have a disability. Employers have a duty not to discriminate but to take all reasonable steps to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities up to the point of undue hardship. This is called the duty to accommodate.

Canadian Human Rights Act

The Canadian Human Rights Act of 1977 protects Canadians from discrimination when they work for or receive services from the federal government, First Nations government, or federally regulated private companies such as airlines, banks, trucking companies, broadcasters and telecommunications.

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is a part of the Canadian Constitution. According to Section 15 of the Charter, every individual in Canada is protected, regardless of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability. Every Canadian is treated equally under the law. The Charter allows you to exercise your rights in a number of ways, including the right to live and seek employment anywhere in Canada. We all have a right to work free from discrimination.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Canada ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2010. Article 27 affirms people with disabilities have the right to employment, the freedom to choose different types of work and to work in an inclusive and accessible environment. Canada was one of the first countries to sign the UNCRPD.

Employment Equity Act

The Employment Equity Act is a federal law that requires employers to take active measures to improve employment opportunities, identifying and eliminating employment barriers against four designated groups, including people with disabilities, to increase representation in the workplace. This act applies to federally regulated employers and crown corporations. In their ongoing support for this commitment, the Government of Canada established a Task Force in July 2021 to review the Employment Equity Act. In response to recommendations made in the final report that the Employment Equity Act Review Task Force released in December 2023, the federal Minister of Labour and Seniors announced the federal government's plans to update and enhance the Act.

A Black man with a beard and short hair is sitting in a wheelchair, smiling and looking towards the camera. He is wearing a red, white, and blue checkered button-down shirt and dark trousers. He is holding a silver laptop on his lap with both hands. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a building and some greenery.

Common Disabilities for Job Seekers

Different cultures have different views of disability. In some cultures, there is shame attached to disability. A newcomer's cultural background may affect how they perceive their disability and how and when they seek support and treatment. Canada has come a long way in upholding and advancing disability rights. It is important for newcomers with disabilities to know that building an inclusive and accessible Canada is of value as a nation and to consider accessing the disability support services available in the community. This may be crucial to success in finding work and transitioning to a new life in Canada.

Visual Impairment

Visual impairment refers to people who are blind or have partial vision. A common misconception about individuals with visual impairment is that their job options are limited. In truth, blind or low-vision individuals work as many jobs as sighted ones. Nowadays, essential technologies such as screen readers, screen magnifiers and refreshable braille allow visually impaired employees to perform their job duties successfully and safely. Visually impaired job seekers can and should explore careers based on their interests and skill sets and not limit their options due to having a visual disability.

The **Canadian National Institute of Blind** [link](#) is an organization providing community-based services for individuals with vision loss. You do not need to be legally blind to access their services. The CNIB Foundation's **Come to Work** [link](#) program connects job seekers who are blind or partially sighted with employers who want to discover the full potential of Canada's talent.



Hearing Impairment

Hearing impairment describes people with any degree of hearing loss, from mild to profound, including those who are deaf and hard of hearing. Communication difficulties are a significant barrier to employment for these individuals. Deaf or hard-of-hearing newcomers often need to learn American Sign Language and English. Phone screening and interviews during the job application can be challenging without proper communication support. Even with reasonable accommodations, employees with hearing impairment can still face communication problems in different situations experienced at work. Nonetheless, deaf individuals work across all job sectors. Technology advancements, including teletypewriters, video relay services, real-time captioning and basic accommodations, can break down barriers and make communication more accessible in the workplace.

The **Canadian Hard of Hearing Association**[🔗](#) is a national charity. They provide hearing education, resources and support for deaf and hard-of-hearing Canadians. The **Accessible Navigation to Employment**[🔗](#) program is a national training program developed by the CHHA and Mohawk College for deaf and hard-of-hearing Canadians. This program includes nine courses that can help improve foundational skills at no cost and a 200-hour paid work placement.

The **Wavefront Centre For Communication Accessibility**[🔗](#) is a BC-based charity serving deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing British Columbians with a full range of programs, including employment services. They provide employment counselling in sign language, and disability supports such as hearing aids and alerting devices.

Physical Disability

Physical disability indicates a physical impairment or a functional limitation. A person may be born with a physical disability or acquire it due to a serious accident, injury or illness. Newcomers with physical disabilities can face various challenges when looking for work, interviewing, and working. These challenges include physical barriers and inflexible work patterns. However, with increased access to the workplace, individuals with physical disabilities can enter the labour market and pursue a wide range of job opportunities. More employers recognize the importance of accessibility and inclusion, ensuring the workplace is not mobility-limited, implementing assistive technologies and offering flexibility.

Some of the most common physical disabilities include:

- **Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Disorder** – MSDs affect musculoskeletal system, including joints, ligaments, muscles, tendons, and spinal discs. They are typically characterized by pain and can significantly limit mobility and agility. People can also acquire an MSD from work due to the work environment and repetitive and frequent work activities.
- **Cerebral Palsy** – CP is usually caused by abnormal brain development or damage to the brain, most often before birth. Symptoms of CP can vary greatly from person to person. Generally, it affects movement and muscle coordination. It is a lifelong condition.
- **Spinal Cord Injuries** – SCIs are caused by damage to the spinal cord. The result is a loss of sensation, movement, strength and body functions below the injury site. The extent of disability depends on where along the spinal cord the injury occurred and the severity of the injury.

- **Multiple Sclerosis** – MS is a potentially disabling disease of the central nervous system. It is a condition in which the immune system attacks its own body and can eventually cause permanent damage or deterioration of the nerves. When the nerves are damaged this way, the communication between the brain and other parts of the body becomes disrupted, resulting in a loss of ability to see clearly, write, speak, or walk. MS is an unpredictable disease because it is a progressive condition affecting people differently.
- **Amputations** – Amputation is the loss or absence of all or part of a limb. In general, individuals with an amputation experience a loss of function and pain. The degree of function loss and severity of pain varies.
- **Muscular Dystrophy** – MD is a group of diseases that damage and weaken your muscles over time due to the lack of a protein necessary for typical muscle function. Each type can affect different muscles and parts of the body. Some can affect the ability to move, walk and perform daily activities. MD is a progressive condition, and there is no known cure.



Neil Squire Society  is an organization that helps Canadians with disabilities achieve their potential through accessible technology. Their programs include computer tutoring, assistive technology and employment. **Creative Employment Options**  is a new Neil Squire employment program funded through the Government of Canada it is designed to help people with disabilities develop skills to achieve their employment goals.

The **Spinal Cord Injury BC**  is a non-profit organization helping people with spinal cord injuries and related disabilities. They have peer programs to try new adventures, connect, have fun and build a support network. The **SCI BC Marketplace Accessible Employment**  is a job board for postings and resumes of job seekers. **SCI InfoLine**  service is free of charge, and they provide resources and support related to SCI and living with a disability.



Mental Disability

Mental disorders are health problems affecting our thoughts, feelings or behaviour. There are many different types of mental disorders. They are usually associated with distress or impairment in social or occupational functioning. Mental disorders are nothing to be ashamed of. It is a medical condition requiring care just like any other illness and effective prevention and treatment options exist. The vast majority of individuals with mental disorders continue to function in their daily lives.

Here are some of the most common mental disorders:

- **Anxiety Disorders** – There are several different types of anxiety disorders. Still, they are characterized by excessive fear and panic and related physical signs such as a rapid heartbeat and sweating in everyday situations, which would not usually evoke an anxiety response. Untreated anxiety disorder interferes with a person's ability to function and makes it difficult to get through the day.
- **Depression** – Depression is a common but serious mood disorder. During a depressive episode, people generally feel sadness, irritability, and hopelessness. They experience a loss of pleasure or interest in activities. Their concentration, sleep and appetite are also affected. They are at an increased risk of suicide.
- **Bipolar Disorder** – Bipolar disorder is a chronic mood disorder, and the symptoms can vary. An individual with bipolar experiences intense shifts in mood with changes in behaviour, energy and activity levels. These shifts can make it challenging to carry out daily activities, and the condition may worsen with age or over time if left untreated. People with bipolar disorder are at an increased risk of suicide.

- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** – PTSD can develop in some people following exposure to a highly terrifying or threatening event. Individuals experience intense physical and emotional responses to thoughts and reminders of the traumatic event. They may repeatedly relive the event through flashbacks or nightmares. They may feel fear, anger or helplessness. They may seem uninterested or distant. The severity and duration of the disorder can vary.
- **Schizophrenia** – Schizophrenia is a chronic brain disorder that is characterized by significant impairment in perception and changes in behaviour. Symptoms include hallucinations, delusions, disorganized behaviour, trouble with thinking, lack of motivation and social withdrawal. Untreated schizophrenia can affect an individual's ability to manage symptoms to engage in daily activities and result in complications.



Thrive is a leisure and recreation program funded by Vancouver Coastal Health and delivered by Open Door Group. It is designed to support residents of Vancouver Coastal Health region experiencing mental health and substance use challenges with personal growth and meaningful community engagement. They also offer personalized employment support for individuals who are ready to work on their employment goals.

The **Canadian Mental Health Association** is a national charitable organization that provides mental health promotion and various community-based and recovery-oriented services. CMHA also offers employment workshops, including self-employment services, work placement, and training sessions to improve mental health in the workplace. Their **Individual Placement and Support (IPS)** supports individuals with serious mental illness to obtain and maintain competitive employment.

The **Coast Mental Health** is a Vancouver-based non-profit serving individuals with mental challenges with housing programs, community-based support services through the Clubhouse and Resource Centre, and **Transitional Employment Program**. They offer various employment and employment-based training, including culinary, landscaping, street cleaning, and more.



Learning Disability

Learning disability is an umbrella term for various disorders associated with learning challenges, and it can significantly hinder an individual's ability to learn and succeed in school and on the job. There are several common misconceptions about learning disability. Some people think a learning disability is caused by a visual, hearing or motor skills problem. It is sometimes mistaken for an intellectual disability or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Individuals with learning disabilities are often misunderstood as being inherently less intelligent or lazy. In reality, they typically have average or higher intelligence and are very capable. They may learn differently and slightly take longer. When provided with the right tools and accommodations, individuals with learning disabilities can successfully do their jobs in the workplace.

The **Learning Disabilities Society** [🔗](#) is a BC-based non-profit charity serving children, youth and adults with learning differences. Collaborating with academic institutions, they offer individualized programs targeting student-specific learning needs. **RISE Now** [🔗](#) is a program designed for adult learning, providing individualized support for adults with suspected or diagnosed learning disabilities to work towards their education or employment goals. Their services include pre-employment training and employment basics for entry or return to the workforce.



Developmental Disability

Developmental disabilities are a group of conditions due to an impairment in physical and mental functioning which begins during childhood years. In many cases, the direct cause is unknown, but they are always related to the brain and nervous system development. The conditions are usually life-long and can affect day-to-day living. The most common developmental disabilities are Intellectual Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Down Syndrome and Cerebral Palsy. While it's true that many individuals with developmental disabilities may need to develop some work-related skills and require supported employment, they are highly employable and willing to contribute to the workplace.

The **Community Living British Columbia** [CLBC](#) is a provincial crown corporation that funds support and services to adults with developmental disabilities or who have Autism or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and also need support with daily tasks. If an individual is eligible for CLBC support, they can choose to access employment support through a CLBC service provider. CLBC has contracts with service providers to provide **employment supports** [CLBC](#). The **Learning, Inclusion, Friendship and Employment (LIFE)** [LIFE](#) service is for CLBC clients interested in employment and want to connect to the community, build friendships and learn new things.

The **Developmental Disabilities Association** [DDA](#) is a community living agency that provides over 50 programs and services to children and adults with developmental disability and their families. Their adult services include residential, day, respite services and employment programs. **Jobs West** [Jobs West](#) is the supported employment division of the DDA. Jobs West assists adults with developmental disabilities in preparing for, finding, and keep community-based work placements. **Starworks** [Starworks](#) is a social enterprise created to hire people with developmental disabilities to perform light labour and assembly work.

Pacific Autism Family Network [↗](#) is a network of support for individuals and families with autism and related neurodiversity. **EmploymentWorks** [↗](#) is a 12-week program that offers employment preparedness training and support to autistic adults and persons with disabilities. The program is designed for individuals who want to enter or return to the workforce, and who are willing to develop and practice the skills needed to support employment success.



A man with a disability, wearing a high-visibility yellow vest over a blue shirt, stands in a factory or industrial setting. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. In the background, there are orange robotic arms and industrial equipment.

Disability Employment Services

For some job seekers with disabilities, traditional job search assistance may not be sufficient to meet their employment needs. They may require an individualized approach or additional support to find gainful employment. Newcomers with disabilities may not be aware of these specialized employment services.

Customized Employment

Customized employment is an alternative to traditional employment for individuals with more complex needs. By finding an individualized match between the interests, strengths and conditions of a job seeker and the identified business needs of an employer, customized employment achieves an employment relationship that meets the needs of both. It is designed for each individual to bring their unique contribution to the business and may take the form of task reassignment, job carving, job sharing or self-employment.

Job Coaching

Some individuals with disabilities may require assistance to learn and carry out job duties. Job coaching is on-the-job support and guidance usually provided at the start of the employee's job placement. It is a one-on-one training tailored to the employee's needs to reduce the support and increase independence over time. Job coaching can also help an employee when a barrier is identified during employment. It can support the employee in working on the areas for improvement and sustaining their performance.

Workplace Accommodation

Employers are legally obligated to provide reasonable accommodation when an employee identifies a disability requiring accommodation. While accommodations vary widely and are unique to the employee, typical accommodations may include accessibility, work routine, physical environment, and learning supports. There are assessments, tools, and resources available to help newcomers with disabilities learn the practical and suitable accommodations they need to succeed in the workplace.

Assistive Technology

Assistive technology refers to equipment and devices that increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. Assistive technology in the workplace helps individuals to work around their limitations and learn and perform job tasks more efficiently and independently. Numerous assistive technology solutions are available for different types of disabilities, including vision, hearing, speech, learning, developmental, mobility, and mental health.

Disability Management Planning

Many individuals with disabilities find it hard to gain employment. Sustaining a job, however, takes greater effort. Some disability conditions are continuous and more stable, while others may change, progress, or fluctuate. It may be relatively easier to manage the disabilities in the former case. Yet, it is not uncommon for individuals to experience brief periods when their conditions interfere with daily activities. For individuals with changing disabilities, their conditions can be unpredictable, making it difficult to maintain employment. Disability Management Planning is a collaborative plan developed with the individual with disability that outlines practical steps and strategies to prevent or manage interruptions in their wellness minimizing a breakdown in a work placement and preventing job loss.



Employment Programs

WorkBC Employment Services

WorkBC Centres throughout the province support individuals in finding and keeping a job. Services are available to all unemployed or precariously employed British Columbian citizens legally eligible to work in B.C. WorkBC works with each person to learn more about their strengths, needs, and interests to assist them in finding a good job that pays a living wage.

WorkBC Employment Services include:

- **Personal employment planning:** Develop short and long-term work goals, including exploring what training/education may be needed to reach those goals.
- **Group or individual workshops:** Learn how to search for jobs, apply, and create/edit a resume.
- **Job search services:** Searching for a job can be stressful. Receive assistance with resume and interview preparation, job search planning, and more to help individuals find the right job.
- **Wage subsidy:** Provides employer funding to offset hiring costs while the new employee gains valuable on-the-job training and work experience. This work experience opportunity could land the new employee a job that leads to a long-term career.
- **Skills enhancement services:** Attend training to upgrade skills (short duration training, occupational skills training, high school diploma, or academic upgrading). If individuals need additional training to secure long-term sustainable employment, funding for tuition, books, living support, child care, or other related costs may be available.

- **Customized employment**: Jobs can be customized to meet the needs, skills, abilities, and competencies of a person with a disability. It is a thorough approach that meets the employer's requirements and the individual's needs.
- **Work experience placement services:** Gain meaningful, recent work experience and skill development that will support the individual to achieve sustainable employment.
- **Job sustainment services:** Assists newly employed people or people working a part-time, seasonal, or casual job to succeed in keeping their job through coaching and mentoring, essential work clothes, and more.
- **Financial supports:** Provides costs related to an individual's employment activities (e.g., interviews, training). Supports could include child care, transportation costs, essential work clothing, tools, supplies, or equipment. The WorkBC Centre will complete a financial needs assessment to understand the required support.
- **Self-employment services:** Eligible individuals receive business owner skills development support to build and implement a business plan and become self-employed. It allows individuals to concentrate on building a sustainable business by providing financial assistance while receiving business advice and support.





WorkBC Assistive Technology Services

Assistive Technology Services provides equipment and devices to help individuals with a work-related barrier due to a disability or a functional limitation thrive in the workplace. This may include barriers related to travelling to and from the workplace. Services are available to BC residents legally eligible to work and 16 years of age or older. Individuals who need assistive equipment, devices, or disability supports to start work or to avoid losing their current work, self-employment or volunteer work that is part of a longer-term goal of employment are eligible for ATS support.

Supports available through Assistive Technology Services include:

- Assistive devices, equipment and technology
- Ergonomic supports (e.g. ergonomic furniture, lighting systems)
- Restorative supports (e.g. canes, crutches)
- American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting and captioning services
- Communication and hearing devices related to work
- Workplace access and modification
- Vehicle modifications

Items not funded through Assistive Technology Services:

- Medical treatments and therapies
- Items for daily living
- Employment services and case-management supports (e.g. job coaching, employment and skills training, wage subsidies, etc.)
- Supports and services that are not employment or volunteer-related

STRIDES - Opportunities Fund Program

The Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities Program supports various programs and services nationwide. This program supports persons with disabilities in gaining employment and assists employers in hiring persons with disabilities.

Open Door Group's STRIDES (Solution-focused, Training, and Recruitment promoting Inclusive and Diverse Employment Success) aims to support individuals with disabilities in their journey toward employment, self-employment and career advancement by providing funding for training, wage subsidies, adaptive equipment and self-employment training to job seekers with disabilities.

Job Quest

The Job Quest Employment Program at ISSofBC works in collaboration with Open Door Groups to provide disability-related employment support for newcomers with disabilities. The services include disability-specific job search assistance, coaching, and job retention supports.

Jobs In Demand

The Jobs In Demand program offers a focused 6-8 week skills training initiative for unemployed or underemployed individuals facing multiple barriers, such as limited work experience, lack of social networks, housing instability, or having a disability. Targeting high-demand sectors like Social Services, Hospitality, Skills, and Trades, this program equips participants with industry-specific training and certifications to enhance employability in British Columbia.

A close-up photograph showing the front wheel and lower frame of a wheelchair on a metal ramp. The ramp has a yellow safety line. In the background, another wheelchair is partially visible on the same ramp. The scene is outdoors on a paved surface.

Transportation for Work

The lack of reliable transportation creates a barrier to employment for individuals with disabilities. Some individuals cannot access a private vehicle or cannot drive due to their disabilities. Those who drive may still face additional problems, including finding accessible parking and the cost of vehicle modification and maintenance. Here are some affordable and accessible transportation options for individuals with disabilities.

Transportation Supplement [↗](#)

BC Employment and Assistance Program for Persons with Disabilities provides a \$52-a-month transportation supplement. An annual bus pass allows unlimited access to any scheduled BC Transit Bus or other transportation needs.

BC Ferries Discounted Passengers Fare [↗](#)

BC Ferries offers discounts for passengers with a BC Ferries Accessible Fare Identification (AFI) or CNIB card.

HandyDART is TransLink's door-to-door, shared-ride service for people who cannot use conventional public transit without assistance due to physical, sensory, or cognitive disability. Drivers come to customers' homes, help them board the vehicle, and get to the door of their destination safely.

Handycard is a photo-identity card for customers who cannot use conventional public transit without assistance. Cardholders are entitled to Concession fares and their attendant travel for free.

TaxiSaver is a supplementary service to HandyDART available to people with permanent disabilities who already have a Handycard. TaxiSaver provides a 50 percent discount toward the cost of taxi rides with participating taxi companies.

CNIB ID Compass Card

TransLink is partnered with CNIB to provide Metro Vancouver residents who are legally blind with unlimited travel on transit for no fare.

Driving Miss Daisy offers transportation services with personal assistance for seniors and people with disabilities. They can provide one-time service or regularly scheduled personalized and customized services daily, weekly or monthly.





Employment Standards and Legal Support

A newcomer to BC may need to learn what to expect from an employer. It is, however, vital that they understand that by law, all employers in BC must maintain specific standards and working conditions and protect their rights as an employee.

Employment Standard Branch

If a newcomer has a question about employment standards in BC or needs help with an issue about their work, they can contact the Employment Standards Branch, who will respond with the relevant information. The Employment Standards Branch, however, cannot provide legal advice.

Disability Law Clinic Legal Services [🔗](#)

The DLC at Disability Alliance BC provides summary advice and referral services for individuals with disabilities across BC at no cost. They can help individuals with disabilities regarding workplace accommodation or wrongful dismissal due to disability. If newcomers live in British Columbia, have a disability, and need legal advice about one of these issues, they can contact the Disability Law Clinic for assistance.

Access Pro Bono Employment Standards Program [🔗](#)

APB Employment Standards Program provides free legal representation to low-income individuals appearing before the Employment Standards Branch and the Employment Standards Tribunal.





Technology for Work

Technology is changing life for all, but especially for those living with a disability. Computers, mobile devices, and the internet can give them more autonomy and improve their quality of life. With the advances in assistive technology, people with disabilities can independently perform a broader range of tasks. Therefore, access to technology is essential for the success of newcomers with disabilities. They can have greater access to information, services and opportunities. They can overcome barriers and limitations. They can become more efficient and thrive in the workplace. Below are some resources for affordable technology in Vancouver.

reBOOT Canada reSTART

The reSTART program provides dependable, warrantied and supported low-cost refurbished laptops and desktops to eligible individuals. Individuals who rely on social assistance can purchase a computer through reSTART.

Computer Comfort

The Computer Comfort is a Neil Squire Program providing a refurbished donated computer, one-on-one computer tutoring and ongoing technical support at no cost.

Digital Jumpstart

The Digital Jumpstart is a free online program that helps people with disabilities improve their digital literacy and join the workforce. They also have resources for assistive technology, low-cost internet bandwidth and a professional assessment focused on accessibility and basic ergonomics.

Vancouver Community Network

VCN is a nonprofit internet service provider providing free services to individuals, including free internet access via dial-up, free computer help, free public access to the internet, computers, and referrals for used computers.

UBC Learning Exchange

The Learning Exchange is a community-based program offering year-round free programs. Individuals can sign up for a computer workshop, join one of the pop-up tech café for technical questions or just drop-in to use a computer or WIFI.

Tech for Good

Nowadays, most mobile devices have many assistive technology features built in. The Tech for Good program is a collaboration between TELUS and March of Dimes Canada, providing people with disabilities customized recommendations and training on assistive technology for mobile devices.

Internet for Good

TELUS Internet for Good offers subsidized high-speed internet to people receiving disability assistance at \$10 per month with the option to buy a low-cost, refurbished computer.





Volunteering for Work

Volunteering involves giving personal time to help others and support the community without financial gain. It can also benefit the volunteer. For newcomers with disabilities, the benefits of volunteering can be significant. They can meet like-minded people and build their local support network. It provides an environment to practice and improve their language skills. It is a great way to learn the Canadian culture and soft skills. They can gain Canadian experience and develop new skills. Their volunteer coordinator or supervisor may be a future reference for employment. Finally, it is an effective way for newcomers with disabilities to gauge diversity and inclusion in a company or an industry and determine if it is a place they would like to work.

Here are some places to consider for volunteering. If you know an organization you would like to volunteer, you can contact them directly and ask if they have volunteer opportunities.

Disability Foundation

Disability Foundation is a charity supporting six charitable societies that provide accessible and meaningful activities year-round. They have abundant volunteer jobs.

City of Vancouver

The City of Vancouver is a diverse, inclusive and supportive workplace. The City and Park Board has many volunteer opportunities to fit your goals, skills and schedule.

Canucks Autism Network

The CAN Explore Volunteering  program provides Autistic youth and adults an opportunity to volunteer in various community settings. They do not require a formal autism diagnosis for adults. The Explore Volunteering program encourages community engagement while developing experience, work skills, and communication and social skills.

Volunteer Connector

The Volunteer Connector is a new platform of GoVolunteer, a charity providing digital volunteer engagement solutions across Canada. You can browse volunteer opportunities that match your interests and skills using the Volunteer Connector.





For Other Resources

As welcoming as Canada is, the reality of many newcomers with disabilities may prove difficult. Lack of proficiency in the English language often limits their employment options. Securing housing may be challenging when they are still unemployed. Newcomers living with a disability or health conditions require health care or disability support services. Some may need financial assistance to help their transition. Participation in recreation and leisure may be challenging, while such activities are essential to staying well and building a network. They may need support with exploring their new community and getting involved. They may also require interpretation or translation to access the necessary services. These challenges can make finding and keeping meaningful work difficult for them.

BC211  is a free service that connects people with local resources and services in the community, including food, shelter, mental health, addiction, legal and finance and more.

New To BC  is all about making connections. It is a library settlement initiative that connects newcomer immigrants and refugees with essential settlement information, public libraries, other service provider organizations, and, ultimately, BC communities. NewToBC plays a unique role in the settlement sector by offering services that are responsive to the evolving needs of newcomers, that complement and raise awareness about resources and services offered by public libraries and other service provider organizations, and that support BC communities as they welcome growing newcomer populations.

BC Refugee Hub  is an online resource hub created by ISSofBC in partnership with the Provincial Government of British Columbia to assist and empower individuals and organization in the refugee resettlement process. It serves as a resource centre providing access to the latest publications and relevant statistics on all refugee categories throughout the entirety of BC, including resources on employment and mental health.

If you need more information or support to learn about your new community, please contact the **Settlement Services**  near you.



CONTACT Open Door Group

www.opendoorgroup.org

info@opendoorgroup.org

(604) 872-0770



CONTACT ISS of BC

www.issbc.org

info@issbc.org

(604) 684-2561



This document has been designed to meet WCAG 2.0 accessible standards and guidelines, although with some limitations. Please send feedback to info@opendoorgroup.org for suggestions on improvement!