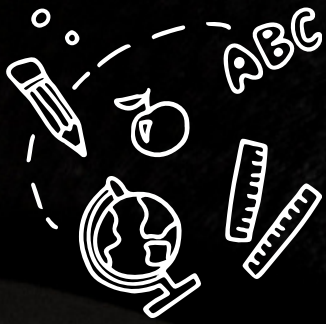# Transitioning Young Disabled People from School into Work: An Effective Guide by Glen McMillan 2023

Authored by Glen McMillan
CEO Children with Disability NZ
https://www.childrenwithdisability.co.nz/

Transitioning Young Disabled People from School into Work: An Effective Guide by Glen McMillan 2023

Table of Contents

1# Introduction

The Challenge of Transition: Imagine the daunting task of stepping out into the world after years of formal education, carrying dreams, aspirations, and the desire to lead a fulfilling life. For many young people, this transition from education to employment is filled with excitement and uncertainty. However, for young individuals with disabilities, this leap can present unique challenges, magnified by societal perceptions and structural barriers.

Context: In the modern era, progress has been made in various fields, bringing inclusivity and accessibility to the forefront. Yet, the employment sector remains an area where disparities for young disabled individuals persist. As per reports, young people with disabilities face higher unemployment rates and often find themselves in jobs that do not tap into their potential or offer growth prospects.

Importance: Employment is not just a means to financial independence; it's a crucial element of personal identity, dignity, and social integration. As such, the issue of transitioning to employment for young disabled individuals isn't just about getting a job. It's about the affirmation of their capabilities, their worth, and their rightful place in society.

Objective: Through this discourse, our aim is to shed light on strategies and tools that can make this transition smoother. We believe that by equipping educators, caregivers, employers, and policymakers with the right knowledge and resources, we can pave a path for young disabled individuals that leads not just to employment, but to a career filled with growth, respect, and fulfilment. In the succeeding sections, we will explore current challenges, best practices, and innovative solutions that can usher in a change, and shape a brighter, inclusive future for all.

2# Employment training for a disabled child is not determined by a strict age.

Employment training for a disabled child is not determined by a strict age but rather by the individual needs, capabilities, and desires of the child, as well as the nature and severity of the disability. However, preparing for employment can and should be thought of holistically and can start in early childhood in more general terms.

Early Childhood and Elementary School (Ages 3-11): At this stage, the focus is typically on building foundational skills and self-awareness. Social skills, daily living activities, and basic educational foundations are emphasised. Encouraging play with peers, participation in group activities, and developing routines can set the groundwork for future employment skills.

Middle School (Ages 12-14): Transition planning can begin during these years in many school systems. This involves identifying strengths, interests, and necessary supports. Soft skills, such as communication, responsibility, and teamwork, can be cultivated.

High School (Ages 15-18): This is often when more formal employment training starts, especially as part of transition planning in the special education process. Students might participate in job shadowing, internships, or part-time jobs. They can also take vocational courses or training programs suited to their interests and capabilities.

Post-High School and Adulthood (Ages 19 and up): Depending on the individual, further vocational training, post-secondary education, or direct entry into the workforce might be the next step. Ongoing supports, accommodations, and on-the-job training can continue, as needed.

Some important things to keep in mind:

Start with Strengths and Interests: Always begin by considering the child's strengths, preferences, and interests. Tailored approaches are the most effective.

Involve the Child: It's crucial to involve the child in the planning process. Even if they cannot communicate traditionally, their preferences and inclinations can often be observed in other ways.

Consider Formal Assessments: Vocational assessments can be useful in understanding the child's capabilities and potential areas of interest.

Collaboration is Key: Collaborate with teachers, therapists, counsellors, and potential employers to create a tailored plan for the child.

Focus on Life Skills: Employment isn't just about job-specific tasks. Being punctual, understanding workplace norms, and navigating social situations are also crucial.

Legal Rights: Be aware of the legal rights that protect individuals with disabilities in the workplace, and the accommodations they might be entitled to.
Minimum rights of employees New Zealand https://www.employment.govt.nz/starting-employment/rights-and-responsibilities/minimum-rights-of-employees/
The minimum rights of an employee are the responsibility of the employer. These protect employees at work.

Remember that "employment" can mean various things, from traditional jobs to supported employment, to self-employment, or even volunteer positions. The goal should be fulfilling, meaningful participation in society, whatever form that takes for the individual.

3# The importance of starting young

Transitioning Young Disabled People from School into Work: The Importance of Starting Young
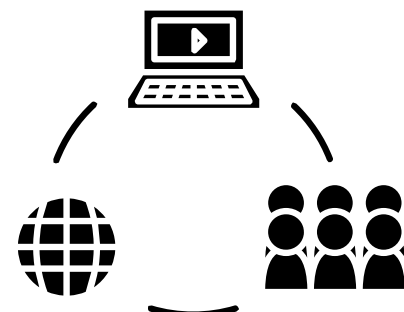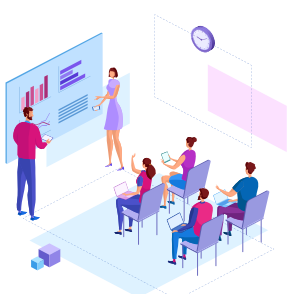
The transition from school to work can be a challenging period for any young person. However, for young people with disabilities, this process often presents unique challenges and barriers. Despite these challenges, it is crucial to start the transition process early to maximize opportunities and improve long-term employment outcomes. Here's why:

Skills Development and Practical Experience:

Starting young provides the opportunity for students to develop the skills and gain the practical experience they will need in the workplace.
Early exposure to work environments can help students identify their interests, strengths, and areas that may need further support.
They can enrol in vocational training programs, internships, or part-time jobs to gather work experience, making them more attractive candidates for employment after school.

Self-Advocacy and Confidence Building:

Learning to advocate for themselves and their needs is vital for young disabled people.

Early exposure to work settings allows them to practice communicating their needs, asking for accommodations, and understanding their rights.

Confidence is built through repeated success and learning from failures in real-world situations.

Establishing Networks and Building Relationships:

Networking is a critical component of job searching and career advancement.

Early exposure to the workplace allows young disabled people to build relationships with mentors, colleagues, and other professionals who can help guide and support them in their career journey.

Individualised Transition Planning:

Starting the process early provides ample time for comprehensive transition planning.

Schools, parents, and service providers can collaborate to create Individualised Transition Plans (ITP) tailored to each student's unique needs, interests, and goals.
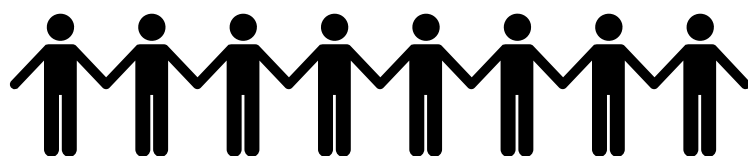
These plans can address various areas such as work skills, post-secondary education, life skills, transportation, and other supports.

Shifting Societal Perceptions:

When businesses and organisations have early and consistent interactions with young disabled people, it challenges stereotypes and biases about disability.
Employers get firsthand experience of the capabilities, potential, and value young disabled people bring to the workplace.
Over time, this can lead to more inclusive hiring practices and workplace cultures.

Addressing Additional Support Needs:

Starting early allows for a more extended period to identify and implement necessary supports.
Whether it's assistive technology, modified work tasks, or additional training, early transition planning ensures that these supports are in place when the individual enters the workforce.

Promoting Lifelong Independence and Financial Stability:

Employment not only provides income but also fosters a sense of purpose, belonging, and independence.
The sooner a young disabled person enters the workforce, the better their chances of achieving long-term financial stability and independence.
In conclusion, the importance of starting the transition process from school to work early for young disabled people cannot be understated. Early preparation, skills development, and practical experiences pave the way for successful long-term employment, improved quality of life, and greater societal inclusion. Schools, parents, service providers, and businesses all play a crucial role in making this transition smooth and effective.

4# Understanding disability: Challenges and potential

Introduction

CONFUSION WITH TIME

Understanding disability requires a holistic view that goes beyond mere definitions. It involves considering the personal experiences of individuals with disabilities, societal perceptions, and the inherent challenges and potentials that come with disability. By delving into these aspects, we can foster a more inclusive society that values all individual's unique capabilities and contributions.

Types of Disabilities

Physical Disabilities: These refer to conditions that affect physical functionality such as movement or dexterity. Examples include cerebral palsy, spinal cord injuries, and amputation.

Sensory Disabilities: These are disabilities that affect one or more senses. The most common sensory disabilities impact sight (blindness or visual impairments) and hearing (deafness or hearing impairments).

Intellectual Disabilities: This category pertains to challenges with intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour. Examples are Down syndrome, Fragile X syndrome, and other cognitive impairments.

Psychiatric Disabilities: These are conditions related to mental health, such as depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and anxiety disorders. These may not always be visible but can significantly impact daily living and functioning.

Unique Challenges

Discrimination: People with disabilities often face discrimination in various forms. This can be due to societal biases, stereotypes, or misinformation about their capabilities.

Access: Physical infrastructure, like buildings and public transport, might not always be designed for accessibility. This creates barriers for individuals with disabilities to participate fully in community activities.

Miscommunication: Communication can be a challenge, especially for those with sensory or intellectual disabilities. There can be misunderstandings or lack of accessibility in information dissemination.

Economic Challenges: Many individuals with disabilities face unemployment or underemployment, limiting their economic potential and independence.

Social Isolation: Due to lack of accessibility or societal biases, many individuals with disabilities might face social isolation or limited social opportunities.

Potential

Unique Strengths and Skills: Every individual, regardless of their disability, brings a unique set of strengths and skills. For instance, a visually impaired individual might have enhanced auditory or tactile skills. Recognizing and harnessing these strengths can lead to innovative solutions and approaches in various fields.

Diverse Perspectives: Individuals with disabilities often have unique experiences and viewpoints, which can bring richness and depth to discussions, designs, and problem-solving scenarios.

Inclusive Innovations: When we design for inclusivity, we often end up creating solutions that benefit everyone. For example, the development of voice-activated technologies not only assists those with mobility impairments but has also simplified tasks for the broader population.

Economic Contribution: By tapping into the potential of individuals with disabilities and ensuring they have equal employment opportunities; societies can boost economic growth and enhance diversity in the workforce.

Conclusion

Understanding and addressing the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities is not only a matter of justice and equity but also a means to tap into a vast reservoir of potential that can benefit societies at large. It's crucial that we shift our perspective from seeing disability as a limitation to recognising the unique strengths and skills that individuals with disabilities bring to the table.

5# Importance of the use of positive language

Transitioning young disabled people from school into work is a critical phase in their lives, marking their evolution from students to active participants in the workforce. Ensuring that

this transition is smooth and successful is vital, not just for the individuals involved, but for society. One often overlooked yet fundamental aspect of this transition is the use of positive language. Here's why it's so important:

Building Self-esteem and Confidence: Positive language can greatly boost a young disabled person's self-esteem. When they are constantly surrounded by affirmative words and reinforcement, they start believing in their capabilities, which directly influences their confidence to step into the workforce.

Challenging Stereotypes: There are many stereotypes and misconceptions about disabled individuals. By using positive language, we can begin to challenge and change these false beliefs. For instance, referring to someone as a "person with a disability" rather than a "disabled person" emphasises the individual first, not the disability.

Promoting Inclusion: Language plays a significant role in shaping societal attitudes. Positive language promotes inclusivity, making it clear that young disabled individuals are just as much a part of our society and workforce as anyone else. This can influence employers' decisions and coworkers' attitudes.

Setting the Right Expectations: Positive language sets the tone for what is expected from young disabled individuals, not in terms of limiting them, but in terms of what they can achieve. This can have a direct impact on their performance and the opportunities they are given.

Encouraging Peer Support: When peers, educators, and employers use positive language, it establishes an environment of support. This is crucial because transitioning from school to work can be challenging, and having a supportive community can make all the difference.

Impacting Legislation and Policies: The way society talks about young disabled individuals can shape legislation and workplace policies. Positive language can push for more favourable and inclusive policies, ensuring that young disabled individuals have equal opportunities and are not discriminated against.

Broadening Perspectives: It's essential for everyone—employers, coworkers, educators, and families—to see the potential in young disabled individuals, not just the challenges they face. Positive language helps shift the narrative from one of pity or limitation to one of capability and potential.

Encouraging Personal Growth: Positive language can inspire young disabled individuals to set higher goals for themselves and to continue personal development, which can be critical when entering the workforce.

In conclusion, the transition from school to work is a pivotal moment in a young disabled person's life. The language we use plays a huge role in shaping their experiences, beliefs about themselves, and how society perceives them. By prioritising the use of positive language, we can create a more inclusive, supportive, and equitable society that recognises the potential in every individual.

6# Building a strong foundation: School programs and activities.

Education, at its core, is more than just an acquisition of knowledge; it's a process that shapes an individual's understanding, values, and capabilities. Schools, as foundational institutions in society, have the power to influence students' development in profound ways. Let's delve into how integrated classrooms, specialised curricula, and extracurricular activities serve to foster holistic growth.

Inclusive Education: Benefits of Integrated Classrooms

1. Diverse Learning Experiences: Integrated classrooms provide students an environment filled with peers from various backgrounds, abilities, and perspectives. This exposure allows students to learn from each other, fostering an understanding of diversity.

2. Socio-Emotional Growth: Such classrooms enable students to develop empathy, respect, and patience as they interact with peers who might have different needs and challenges.

3. Reducing Stigmas: Students in inclusive settings are less likely to harbour prejudices and misconceptions about disabilities or differences. They learn to see beyond labels, focusing on individual strengths and attributes.

4. Collaborative Learning: Integrated classrooms often employ collaborative learning strategies, allowing students to work together and capitalise on each other's strengths.

5. Real-world Preparation: The world outside is diverse. Preparing students in an inclusive setting gives them a more accurate representation of the real world, promoting inclusivity and acceptance in the broader society.

Specialised Curricula: Tailored Teaching Methodologies

1. Individual Learning Styles: Recognising that students learn differently, tailored teaching caters to varied learning styles, ensuring that each student can grasp concepts in a manner most effective for them.

2. Addressing Specific Needs: For students with special needs, disabilities, or talents, a specialised curriculum can offer the right pace, resources, and support to ensure they achieve their full potential.

3. Motivation and Engagement: Customised content can be more engaging, leading to improved motivation and better retention of information.

4. Comprehensive Assessment: Specialised curricula often come with nuanced assessment tools that provide insights into a student's progress and areas of improvement, leading to better support.

Extracurricular Activities: Boosting Self-confidence and Skill-building

1. Broadened Skill Set: Beyond academic knowledge, students learn team building, leadership, time-management, and many other valuable skills that come in handy later in life.

2. Social Interactions: These activities offer students more opportunities for social interactions, helping them develop interpersonal skills and form deeper friendships.

3. Passion and Interests: Extracurriculars provide a platform for students to discover and nurture their passions, be it in sports, arts, or other areas.

4. Self-Esteem and Confidence: Achievements in these activities instil a sense of self-worth and confidence in students.

5. Resilience and Persistence: Through extracurricular activities, students face challenges, learn from failures, and develop resilience and persistence, which are invaluable life skills.

In conclusion, by incorporating a balance of inclusive education, specialised curricula, and extracurricular activities, schools can provide students with a well-rounded, enriching experience that lays a solid foundation for their future.

7# Transition planning: Step-by-Step

Transition planning is essential for students with disabilities as they move from high school into the next phase of their lives, whether that's post-secondary education, employment, independent living, or another endeavour. Here's a more detailed step-by-step breakdown:

Start Early: Begin planning during high school.

Pre-Assessment: Even before high school, identify the strengths, preferences, interests, and needs of the student. This will form the foundation of the transition plan.
Awareness: Ensure that the student, family, educators, and other stakeholders are aware of the importance of transition planning.
Research: Understand the options available after high school – college, vocational training, employment opportunities, etc.
Individualised Planning: Tailored approach depending on the disability.

Identify Supports: Recognise the services, accommodations, or technologies that might be required based on the student's needs.
Engage Professionals: Depending on the nature of the disability, involve therapists, counsellors, vocational trainers, etc.
Family and Student Involvement: Ensure the student and their family are deeply involved in planning. Their insight and input are invaluable.

Collaboration: Encourage communication between school, family, and outside agencies or organisations that can provide support.

Goal Setting: Short-term and long-term objectives.

Short-Term Goals: These might be academic targets, skill development (like learning to use public transport), or personal growth objectives.

Long-Term Goals: Consider where the student wants to be in 5 or 10 years. This could relate to employment, living situation, education, or personal ambitions.

Action Steps: For every goal, clearly define the steps necessary to achieve it. This provides a roadmap and makes the process less overwhelming.

Prioritisation: It's essential to determine which goals are most critical and tackle them first.

Regular Evaluation: Monitoring progress and adjusting.

Frequent Check-ins: Regularly review the progress being made towards each goal. This could be through meetings, reports, or other feedback mechanisms.

Adjust Goals as Necessary: If something isn't working, or if circumstances change, be flexible and adjust the goals or action steps.

Celebrate Achievements: Recognise and celebrate when short-term or long-term goals are achieved. This boosts confidence and motivation.

Feedback Loop: Establish a system where teachers, therapists, family, and the student can provide feedback about what's working and what isn't.

Post-Transition Support:

Ongoing Support: Even after high school, continuous support might be required, whether that's in the form of counselling, job coaching, or other services.

Networking:

Connect with organisations, community groups, or services that can assist in the post-high school journey.

Lifelong Learning: Encourage the idea that growth and learning continue beyond formal schooling, ensuring the individual continues to thrive in their environment.

Remember, transition planning is a continuous process, and it should be revisited and refined based on the evolving needs and circumstances of the student. The goal is to ensure the individual is equipped with the tools, skills, and support they need to lead a fulfilling, independent life post-high school.

8# Skills training and vocational education.

The modern era, marked by rapid technological advancements and shifting market demands, has accentuated the importance of skills training and vocational education. While conventional academics focus on broad-based knowledge, vocational training centres on the development of specialised skills, ensuring that individuals are job ready. Let's delve deeper into the specific components you've mentioned.

Identifying Strengths: Focusing on what the individual can do best.

Personal Awareness: Recognising one's strengths is the first step towards choosing a career that aligns with an individual's talents and passions. This ensures a higher likelihood of job satisfaction and success.

Customised Training: When training programs are tailored based on an individual's strengths, the learning curve is often shorter, and the individual can achieve mastery faster.

Economic Benefits: Focusing on strengths and providing specialised training ensures that the individual is highly skilled in a particular area, making them more competitive in the job market and potentially commanding higher wages.

Vocational Schools: Importance of specialised training.

Job-ready Skills: Vocational schools provide hands-on training, ensuring that graduates possess the practical skills required in their respective industries.

Filling the Skills Gap: As technological advancements create new job sectors and render some obsolete, vocational schools play a crucial role in training workers to fill these new roles, ensuring that industries have the skilled personnel they need.

Cost-effective: Compared to traditional four-year college degrees, vocational programs are often shorter and less expensive, offering a quicker return on investment through immediate employment opportunities.

Flexibility: Many vocational schools offer part-time, evening, or online classes, allowing individuals to work while they study or transition from one career to another.

Internships: Gaining practical experience.

Real-world Application: Internships offer students the opportunity to apply what they've learned in a real-world setting. They get a sense of the daily responsibilities and challenges associated with a particular job.

Networking: Interning gives individuals a chance to meet professionals in their field, making connections that can be valuable when seeking full-time employment.

Feedback and Learning: Working in a professional environment allows interns to receive constructive feedback, helping them identify areas for improvement. It's a chance for them to learn from mistakes in a relatively low risk setting.

Transition to Full-time Roles: Many companies use internships as a recruitment tool. Demonstrating competence, work ethic, and cultural fit during an internship can often lead to offers for full-time positions.

In conclusion, in a world that's continually evolving, skills training and vocational education offer practical pathways for individuals to remain relevant and competitive. By identifying strengths, seeking specialised training, and gaining real-world experience through internships, individuals are well-equipped to navigate the complexities of the modern job market.

9# Communication: Breaking barriers and building bridges.
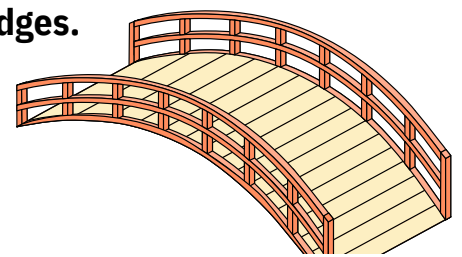
Introduction:

In the modern age, fostering inclusive communication is vital for creating an environment where everyone feels valued, understood, and empowered. Especially for disabled individuals, communication can be the gateway to inclusion, breaking barriers, and establishing connections that are essential for personal and professional growth. This chapter will delve into strategies for educating employers, understanding communication tools, and encouraging open dialogue.

Educate Employers: Making Them Aware of the Potential of Disabled Individuals

Awareness Campaigns: Conduct seminars and workshops to enlighten employers about the abilities, potential, and skills of disabled individuals. Sharing success stories can challenge stereotypes and biases.

Diversity Training: Employers should undergo training that helps them understand the nuances of disability and the value of a diverse workforce.

Hiring Policies: Encourage companies to adopt inclusive hiring policies. This not only brings in a diverse talent pool but also fosters innovation and different perspectives.

Collaborate with Disability Organisations: These organisations can provide insights, resources, and training to employers about the potential of disabled individuals and how to support them effectively.

Communication Tools: Assistive Devices, Sign Language, Etc.

Assistive Technology: Devices like screen readers, voice recognition software, or tactile keyboards can bridge the communication gap for those with visual, auditory, or physical disabilities.

Sign Language: Learning even the basics can make a significant difference in the workplace. Promote sign language courses among staff, especially for those interacting regularly with hearing-impaired colleagues.
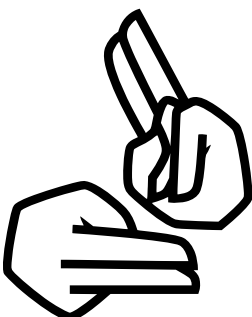
Captioning and Transcripts: Providing captions for videos or transcripts for audio content ensures accessibility for all.

Communication Boards: These are particularly helpful for those who are non-verbal. Symbols or pictures can be used to convey ideas, needs, or feelings.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Devices: These devices help individuals communicate using symbols, text, or even synthetic speech.

Open Dialogue: Encouraging Young Disabled People to Express Their Needs

Safe Spaces: Create environments where young disabled individuals feel comfortable sharing their experiences, concerns, and aspirations.

Active Listening: It's crucial to listen without interrupting or making assumptions. By truly hearing what they have to say, we can better understand their needs and challenges.

Peer Support Groups: These groups can offer a platform for disabled youth to share their experiences, learn from one another, and develop a sense of community.

Feedback Mechanisms: Establish methods, whether through surveys or direct conversations, where young disabled people can provide feedback about their needs in educational or professional settings.

Empowerment Programs: Programs that focus on building self-confidence, assertiveness, and self-expression skills can give young disabled individuals the tools they need to communicate their needs effectively.

Conclusion:

Breaking barriers in communication is more than just using the right tools or technologies. It's about reshaping our attitudes, fostering empathy, and embracing diversity. By educating employers, deploying effective communication tools, and promoting open dialogue, we can pave the way for a more inclusive and understanding society.

10# Workplace adjustments and accommodations.

Creating an inclusive workplace is not only about hiring a diverse group of employees but also about ensuring that the workplace environment is conducive and accessible for everyone. This will often involve making various adjustments and accommodations to meet the specific needs of employees. Here are some of the ways in which employers can make their workplace more accommodating:

Accessibility: Making the workplace conducive and inclusive.

Physical Accessibility: This involves ensuring that there are no physical barriers that would prevent employees with disabilities from accessing the workplace or any of its facilities. This might include installing ramps, accessible restrooms, and elevators.

Signage: Clear and easily readable signs with braille or large print can help visually impaired individuals navigate the workplace.

Emergency Procedures: Employers should ensure that there are procedures in place that cater to all employees, including those with disabilities, in case of an emergency.

Flexible Work Arrangements:

Remote Working: With the advent of technology, many jobs can now be done remotely. Offering the option of remote working can be a great way to accommodate employees who might have mobility issues or other conditions that make commuting challenging.

Flexible Hours: Some employees might have medical appointments or other needs that require them to have a non-traditional work schedule. Allowing for flexible start and end times can be a significant benefit for them.
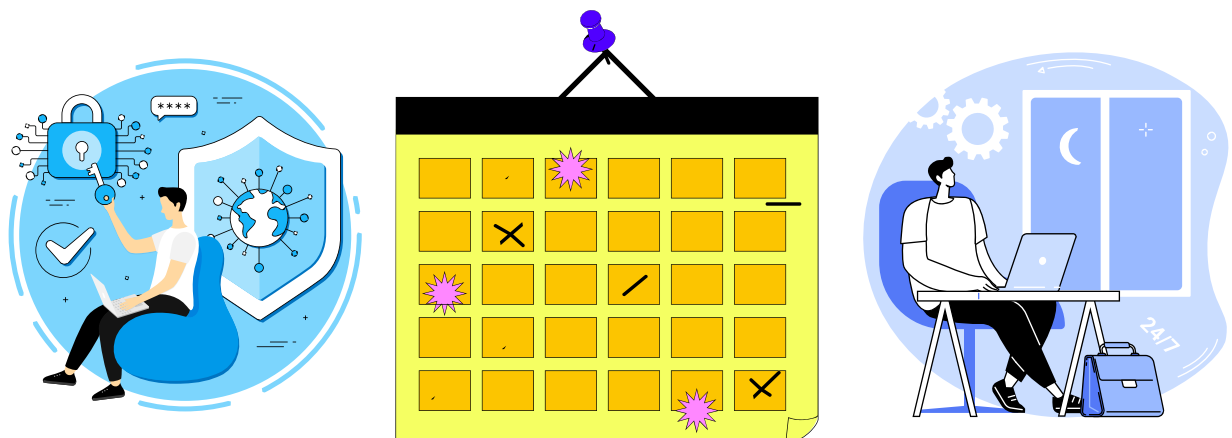
Part-time Positions: Not everyone can or wants to work a traditional 40-hour week. Offering part-time positions can be a way to accommodate those who have other responsibilities or health issues.

Assistive Technology:

Screen Readers: These are software programs that allow visually impaired individuals to read the text that is displayed on a computer screen with a speech synthesiser or braille display.

Speech Recognition Software: This allows individuals to control their computer with their voice, which can be beneficial for those with mobility issues.

Ergonomic Tools: These can include special chairs, keyboard/mouse setups, or other equipment designed to prevent strain and injury.

Magnification Software: Helps visually impaired individuals by enlarging content on the screen.

TTY/TDD Devices: These devices are used for communication by individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

In summary, workplace adjustments and accommodations are about understanding the specific needs of each employee and providing them with the tools and flexibility they need to perform their best. Employers should engage in regular discussions with their employees to understand their needs and be proactive in making the necessary adjustments.

11# Legal frameworks and rights.

Understanding the legal protections available for people with disabilities is crucial not only for those who live with disabilities but for society. It shapes the foundation for inclusion, equality, and justice for everyone.
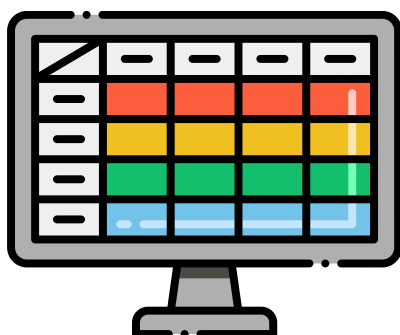
Rights of the Disabled: Understanding the legal protections

International Standards: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) sets out the global standards for the rights of disabled persons. It underscores the importance of full and effective participation and inclusion in society, respect for inherent dignity, and equal opportunity.

National Laws: Many countries New Zealand included have incorporated provisions of the CRPD into their national laws or have their own legislation that upholds the rights of the disabled. For example, in the U.S., the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination based on disability in employment, public services, public accommodations, and telecommunications.

Accessibility: Legal frameworks ensure that public spaces, transportation, and information systems are accessible to everyone, regardless of their physical or cognitive abilities.

Education and Employment: Laws often ensure that persons with disabilities have equal rights to education and employment opportunities, promoting their economic self-sufficiency.

Healthcare and Rehabilitation: Ensuring access to healthcare, including early identification and intervention as appropriate, and services designed to minimize and prevent further disabilities.

Advocacy: The importance of standing up for rights

Awareness and Education: Advocacy helps raise awareness about the challenges faced by the disabled community, as well as the rights and protections they are entitled to.

Systemic Change: Advocacy can drive policy changes and reforms at local, national, and global levels. By raising their voices, individuals and groups can influence legislation, ensuring it meets the needs of the disabled community.

Empowerment: Advocacy empowers individuals with disabilities by teaching them about their rights, giving them the tools to demand those rights, and building self-confidence.

Liaison with Disability Organisations: Partnering for support.

Shared Resources: Disability organisations often have resources, including expert knowledge, that individuals may not have access to on their own. By partnering with these organisations, individuals can tap into these resources and get the support they need.

Networking: Through these organisations, individuals can connect with others who have similar experiences, allowing for mutual support and the sharing of insights.

Unified Voice: There's strength in numbers. When individuals and disability organisations come together, they present a unified front, making their advocacy efforts more powerful.

Training and Development: Disability organisations often offer training sessions, workshops, and development programs to help individuals better understand their rights and how to advocate for them.

Research and Development: Partnering with disability organisations can lead to collaborative research efforts, aiming to improve the quality of life for the disabled community.

In conclusion, understanding the legal protections in place for persons with disabilities is a vital step towards ensuring a just and equitable society. Advocacy and partnering with disability organisations further this cause, ensuring that the rights of the disabled are upheld and celebrated.

12# Networking and finding opportunities for people with disabilities

Networking and finding employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities is vital for ensuring their inclusion, empowerment, and self-sufficiency. By leveraging various platforms
and strategies, employers can tap into a valuable workforce while individuals can secure suitable and fulfilling jobs. Here's a deeper dive into three significant avenues:

Disability Job Fairs

Objective: Disability job fairs aim to bridge the gap between employers looking to diversify their workforce and qualified candidates with disabilities. These fairs can be both in-person and virtual, with a primary goal of promoting inclusive hiring.

Benefits:

Direct Interaction: Job seekers can directly interact with potential employers, understand their needs, and showcase their abilities.

Tailored Opportunities: Companies at these fairs are specifically looking for candidates with disabilities, making it more likely for applicants to find a suitable position.

Workshop and Seminars: These fairs often include additional resources, such as workshops on resume building, interview techniques, and disability rights at the workplace.

Tips for Success:

Preparation: Before attending the fair, research participating companies, understand their requirements, and tailor your pitch or resume accordingly.

Follow Up: After the fair, reach out to potential employers with a thank-you note and express continued interest in their organisation.

Online Platforms for Disabled Individuals

Objective: These platforms provide a digital space where employers post job listings specifically tailored for individuals with disabilities.

Benefits:

Wide Reach: Such platforms often cater to a global audience, making it easier for job seekers to find opportunities beyond their immediate location.

Flexibility: Online job hunting allows candidates to apply at their own pace and comfort, especially if mobility is a concern.

Support Resources: Many of these websites offer supplementary resources, such as career counselling, resume writing services, and interview preparation.

Tips for Success:

Profile Optimisation: Ensure that your online profile is updated, complete, and highlights your skills effectively.

Regular Checks: New job listings are posted frequently; setting up alerts or notifications can help you stay updated.
Networking: Building a Support System

Objective: Networking is about building and maintaining relationships that can provide guidance, mentorship, and potential job leads.

Personal Recommendations: Having a strong network can result in personal endorsements, which can significantly boost a candidate's chances of landing a job.
Moral Support: Surrounding oneself with a support system can offer moral encouragement during the job-hunting process.
Access to Hidden Jobs: Often, job openings are filled through word-of-mouth even before they are publicly listed.
Join Support Groups: This can be disability-specific or professional industry groups that offer a platform for sharing experiences and opportunities.
Stay Active: Engage in community events, workshops, and seminars to continually meet and interact with new people.
Seek Mentorship: Finding a mentor, especially someone who has navigated similar challenges, can offer invaluable insights and guidance.

In conclusion, whether it's through job fairs, online platforms, or networking, the avenues to seek employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities are diverse and ever-growing. The key is to remain proactive, informed, and open to exploring all available options.

13# Emotional and psychological support.

Emotional and psychological support plays a critical role in one's overall well-being, especially during times of adversity, change, or personal growth. There are multiple avenues through which individuals can seek and receive such support. Here's a deeper dive into three primary support systems:

Counselling: Counselling serves as a professional avenue for individuals to process their emotions, cope with various life challenges, and work towards their personal and mental health goals.

Safe Environment: A trained therapist or counsellor offers a safe, non-judgmental environment where one can express feelings, fears, and aspirations without the worry of being criticised or misunderstood.

Therapeutic Techniques: These professionals employ various strategies and techniques to help individuals navigate their emotions, develop coping mechanisms, and provide insights into their behaviour patterns.

Confidentiality: The confidentiality of the counselling relationship ensures that what is shared in therapy remains private, further promoting a sense of security and trust.

Peer Support

Peer support refers to the assistance provided by someone who shares similar experiences, challenges, or identities.

Shared Understanding: Peers can offer a unique level of empathy and understanding, having undergone similar journeys, or faced similar challenges. This can foster a sense of belonging and reduce feelings of isolation.

Guidance and Coping: Peer support can provide practical advice based on firsthand experience. They can share coping mechanisms that worked for them and offer guidance on navigating similar challenges.

Community Building: Peer support groups or networks can become communities where individuals find long-term friendship, camaraderie, and shared purpose.

Family and Caregivers

The role of family and caregivers in providing emotional and psychological support cannot be underestimated.

Consistent Presence: Family members, by virtue of their close relationship, often have a longstanding presence in one's life. They can offer consistent and long-term support during both highs and lows.

Emotional Stability: Families, when functional and understanding, can provide a foundation of emotional stability. Knowing that there's a group of individuals who unconditionally care can be a significant emotional buffer against external challenges.

Caregiving Role: In situations where an individual might be dealing with chronic illness, disability, or age-related challenges, caregivers, whether they are family or professionals, play a pivotal role. They not only assist with physical needs but also provide psychological comfort and companionship.

In conclusion, emotional and psychological support is multi-faceted, with each avenue offering its unique benefits. While professional counselling provides expert guidance, peer support offers understanding from shared experiences, and family and caregivers give consistent, unconditional love and care. Recognising and utilising these resources effectively can significantly enhance an individual's mental and emotional resilience.

14# Advantages of hiring a person with disabilities

Hiring a person with disabilities brings several advantages to an organisation. Not only is it a

step towards creating a more inclusive and diverse workplace, but it can also yield tangible business benefits. Here are some of the main advantages:

Diverse Perspectives: People with disabilities bring unique perspectives and experiences that can foster creativity and innovation in problem-solving and decision-making.

Larger Talent Pool: By being open to hiring individuals with disabilities, employers can tap into a broader talent pool, which can be particularly valuable in times of talent shortages.

Enhanced Reputation: Organisations that are inclusive in their hiring practices often enjoy a positive public image, which can lead to greater customer loyalty and a competitive edge.

Reduced Turnover: Research has shown that employees with disabilities often have higher retention rates, leading to reduced costs associated with turnover.

Loyalty and Dedication: Many individuals with disabilities show high levels of commitment and loyalty to companies that give them a chance to prove their capabilities.

Tax Incentives: In many countries, hiring individuals with disabilities can qualify companies for tax credits or other financial incentives.

Improved Workplace Culture: An inclusive hiring practice promotes a culture of understanding, empathy, and respect among all employees.

Meeting Legal Obligations: In many jurisdictions, there are laws that promote or mandate the employment of persons with disabilities. By hiring individuals with disabilities, businesses can ensure they are compliant with these regulations.

Better Problem Solving: Having a diverse team, including people with disabilities, can lead to a wider range of solutions to problems due to varied life experiences and ways of thinking.

Access to New Markets: Companies that employ and engage with people with disabilities can better understand and serve the disability market, which is large and growing.

Higher Engagement: Inclusive workplaces can boost morale and engagement for all employees. When everyone feels valued and understood, they're more likely to be motivated and involved in their work.

Skill Sets: Some disabilities, such as autism, can sometimes be associated with unique skill sets or heightened abilities in certain areas, like attention to detail or pattern recognition.

Adaptability: Employees with disabilities often need to adapt to the world around them, making them potentially more flexible and resourceful in a dynamic work environment.

Enhancing Company Values: Demonstrating commitment to inclusivity can strengthen company values and internal culture.

In conclusion, hiring persons with disabilities is not only a moral and ethical responsibility but also makes good business sense. It enriches the workplace with diverse perspectives, skills, and experiences, and can significantly contribute to an organisation's success.

15# Advantages of remote working for people with disabilities

Remote working offers a plethora of benefits, especially for people with disabilities. Here are some of the advantages:

Personalised Environment: Individuals can tailor their workspace to their own needs. This is particularly beneficial for those who require specialised equipment or settings that might be difficult to set up in a traditional office.

Flexibility: Remote working can offer more flexible hours. For those who might have medical appointments or therapies, or simply have periods of the day when they function best, this flexibility can be invaluable.

Reduced Commute: The physical act of commuting can be strenuous, especially for people with mobility challenges. By working remotely, they can save time, energy, and resources.
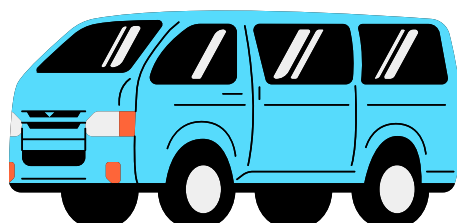
Comfort and Safety: At home, individuals can control their environment. For those with immune system challenges or heightened sensitivities, this can reduce exposure to illnesses or allergens.

Increased Employment Opportunities: Companies that allow remote work open doors for talent nationwide or even globally. This increases opportunities for everyone, especially those with disabilities who might have limited local job options.

Improved Mental Well-being: The autonomy and comfort that come with remote work can reduce work-related stress. This can be especially true for individuals who might feel self-conscious or face discrimination or microaggressions in physical workplaces.

Assistive Technologies: At home, individuals can set up and use specific assistive technologies that they're most comfortable with without needing approval from an employer or facing potential stigmas.

Enhanced Productivity: Many people, including those with disabilities, report that they're more productive at home due to fewer distractions and the ability to set up their ideal work environment.

Flexible Attire: For those with sensory sensitivities or physical challenges, being able to wear comfortable clothing without adhering to an office dress code can be a significant advantage.

Better Work-Life Balance: Being close to family, caregivers, or support systems can be reassuring for many individuals with disabilities.

Cost Savings: Commuting, work attire, and daily meals can be significant expenses. Working from home can lead to substantial savings, which might be particularly beneficial for those who have additional medical or care-related expenses.

Potential for Increased Inclusion: As more companies adopt remote work policies, there's a hope that workplaces will become more inclusive. When location is no longer a barrier, companies can access a wider talent pool, which includes many talented individuals with disabilities.

However, it's essential to note that remote work isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. What works for one individual might not work for another. The key is flexibility and understanding from employers to accommodate the unique needs of every employee, including those with disabilities.

16# Conclusion.

A Collaborative Effort: Schools, employers, families, and communities must work together.

Our society is a complex interweaving of systems, beliefs, and actions, all of which impact the educational and career trajectories of our young people. In our rapidly changing world, the traditional lines of responsibility have blurred, making it imperative for stakeholders across different sectors to collaborate in fostering a prosperous, educated, and skilled future generation.

Schools are the linchpin, offering foundational knowledge and skills. However, they cannot act alone. The curriculum needs to remain relevant, mirroring the demands of the evolving job market. By liaising closely with employers, schools can gain insights into what skills are most in demand, ensuring that students are not just academically prepared, but also job ready.

Employers too have a role to play beyond merely offering jobs. They can support educational initiatives, provide internships, or even mentor students, ensuring a smoother transition from the classroom to the workplace.

Families play a vital role in shaping the aspirations, attitudes, and values of their children. They are the first line of encouragement and support. By remaining engaged with schools and understanding the changing landscape, families can provide informed guidance and support to their young ones.

Lastly, communities offer the context. A community that values education, provides safe spaces for learning, and offers opportunities for extracurricular growth can dramatically influence positive outcomes for its youth.

The journey of education and career readiness is not a solitary one. It requires the shared vision, efforts, and resources of all these stakeholders. Only when these entities harmonise their efforts can we hope to unlock the full potential of every learner.

The Road Ahead: Celebrating successes and continuing to push for more opportunities.

As we move forward, it's essential to take a moment to acknowledge and celebrate the successes that have been achieved. Every student who has triumphed, every collaboration that has borne fruit, every innovation in teaching methodology, and every employment opportunity created, is a testament to the power of collaborative efforts.

However, resting on our laurels is not an option. The world is in perpetual motion, and so are its challenges and opportunities. To stay ahead and ensure that our next generation is prepared, agile, and resilient, we must continuously push boundaries, innovate, and seek more avenues for collaboration. Above all we must care.

The road ahead is long and winding, but with collective dedication and a unified vision, the journey can be one of empowerment, growth, and endless possibilities.

This guide serves as a holistic approach to transitioning young disabled people into the workforce, offering solutions based on understanding, empathy, and proactive measures. The collaborative involvement of all stakeholders will undoubtedly make the transition smoother and more effective.

KEEP MOVING FORWARD

Children with disability NZ

Children with Disability New Zealand is a petite organisation fueled by grand aspirations. At its helm stands our remarkable CEO, Glen McMillan, who once navigated the challenges of childhood disability. Glen's personal journey equips him with a unique insight into the trials faced by disabled children, their dedicated caregivers, and the broader community.

Our organisation was born from a fervent desire to make a difference, primarily through fundraising endeavours aimed at providing a wheelchair-accessible swing for a groundbreaking park development in Waipu, Northland. This endeavour was accomplished in collaboration with the Whangarei Council, resulting in a swing that is now enhancing the lives of those it was designed for.

Our charitable efforts are far from complete. Currently, we are passionately rallying support for the creation of a wheelchair-accessible seesaw at Raumanga Park in Whangarei, a project that holds great promise for further enriching the lives of disabled children.

At its core, our charity is a beacon of information sharing. It strives to bridge the knowledge gap surrounding the unique needs of disabled children, fostering improved understanding within society. Moreover, our mission is to cultivate awareness in a clear and easily digestible format, ensuring that the cause of disabled children resonates with hearts and minds across the nation.

Glen McMillan
CEO Children with Disability NZ
https://www.childrenwithdisability.co.nz/

Copyright 2023

Sponsored by Website Design Whangarei

An Effective Guide by Glen McMillan
2023

DISABILITY LEADERSHIP
Moving Forward

Authored by Glen McMillan
CEO Children with Disability NZ
https://www.childrenwithdisability.co.nz/

Copyright 2023

Sponsored by Website Design Whangarei