

Getting Ready for Employment



Volunteer at a Fundraising Event

Finding and getting the perfect job takes time and careful planning. It starts the first time you help someone outside of the home. Whether it is helping your grandmother with her shopping, helping at the church picnic or helping a small child with buttons and zips. These are the experiences that are going to build your pre-employment skills:

- Good work habits to start and complete a job.
- Social skills to help or work with other people.
- Knowledge about how to do the job.
- Personal satisfaction for making a positive contribution.

As you get older you will start to realize what kinds of tasks you like and what skills you have to offer. Your love of children could lead to a job as a babysitter or your love of the outdoors could result in a job cutting lawns for the neighbours. Gradually you will start to feel ready to apply for a job and make some money. Your experiences with part time and summer jobs, as well as volunteering, will help you to understand your strengths and interests and start you on a path to your dream job.

Teens and young adults with physical disabilities often have challenges that prevent them from having the same experiences

and opportunities as their peers. As a result individuals with disabilities typically have less social capital. Social capital stands for “the ability of individuals to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures”. Most of us found our first job through family and friends. The couple next door needed a babysitter, the older lady across the street needed help with yard work. Uncle Jim’s place of employment hired students in the summers, or the neighbour knew the owner of the variety store at the corner. This is social capital that is built up through relationships and opportunities in the community.

A student with a disability is less likely to socialize outside of school, or belong to community teams, groups and organizations. With less social capital, a student with a disability has fewer connections to hear about a job opportunity or to have people that can provide references. In addition, some of the teen peers will go on to management positions where they are hiring and knowing the person as a friend or teammate with abilities can make a difference in employment decisions.

An effective strategy to build social capital is to encourage students with disabilities create social connections by joining clubs and team activities and volunteering.

There are less of these opportunities available for the teen in a wheelchair, or who has limited fine motor skills. It may take longer but families can help teens using the same strategies and networks to find volunteer and paid experiences.

- The accessible church, where you attend services, may have children’s programs or study groups where a teen in a wheelchair can help.
- The local mall or department store may provide an accessible space where there are opportunities for part time work.

- The library or community center may be looking for a volunteer to help children or seniors.
- The summer camp your child has attended may have opportunities for “Leaders in Training”, young people who volunteer to help at camp with the younger children, and who may eventually be hired as camp staff.

Families can also connect with government or community organizations.

Service Ontario – [Get help finding a youth or student job](#)

There are specific programs to help youth and young adults with disabilities find employment. If you’re a young person or student looking for a job, you can get help through these programs.

March of Dimes – [Employment Services](#)

Every year, March of Dimes Employment Services helps hundreds of people with disabilities achieve greater independence by providing job training and finding them employment.

Community Agencies

The agencies in your community that supports people with disabilities, such as Community Living organizations, may have programs to develop employment skills or provide work experience.

Ontario Disability Support Program – [Employment Supports](#)

Individuals, over the age of 18, who are eligible for the Ontario Disability Support Program may also be able to access employment supports to help with job preparation, searching and coaching.