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## Background and Introduction

In 2010 Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre (PQCHC) piloted a new program to help Internationally Trained Professionals (ITPs) break down barriers to finding employment in Canada by creating a volunteer vocational mentorship program within the organization. In this model, ITP mentees were recruited, screened and matched with staff mentors in the community health centre in a range of positions, including social services, primary care, accounting, research, human resources and IT, among others. Volunteer mentees had the opportunity to shadow and work alongside staff mentors, gaining concrete experience in their professional fields while also learning about Canadian workplace culture and expectations, and while building new contacts and professional networks. Although originally envisioned as a service to improve employability for job seekers new to Canada, the benefits to the organization turned out to be just as significant. By working with experienced, trained professionals from other countries, PQCHC staff who acted as mentors had the opportunity to both share knowledge with and learn from their mentees. Staff mentors also learned about many of the systemic barriers faced by ITPs in their job search process, and how organizations can inadvertently contribute to those barriers through their human resource policies and practices. This in turn led to organizational learnings and changes to those practices that evolved directly as a result of working with a more diverse pool of potential employees and volunteers.

Because of the success of the ITP Mentorship Program, PQCHC began partnering with other Ottawa Community Health and Resource Centres (CHRCs) to find placements for the growing number of ITPs looking to participate. As a result, ITP mentees have had access to a broader range of placements across the city and other CHRCs have had the opportunity to learn and benefit from having a professional mentorship experience within their organization.

In 2015 PQCHC embarked on an expanded Vocational Mentorship Program model with a focus on further building capacity within the network of Ottawa CHRCs to be more inclusive, accessible and diverse in their hiring and volunteer engagement practices. This new initiative built on learnings from the original ITP Mentorship Program with the goal of supporting PQCHC and other CHRCs to include placements for another group of job seekers that face barriers to employability – Trained Professionals with Disabilities (TPWDs). Through this process, PQCHC has provided support, coaching and training for organizations to support them to better understand the barriers faced by ITPs and TPWDs and to look for ways to address these barriers within their organization.

This guide is intended to share the lessons learned by PQCHC and other CHCs throughout this process and to provide other information, tips and resources that will help build the capacity for CHRCs and other organizations to become more diverse, inclusive and accessible.

## Building Capacity – Trained Professionals with Disabilities

### Making the Case

According to research compiled by the Conference Board of Canada, there is a strong business case for creating more inclusive and accessible work environments for trained professionals with disabilities:

“The full inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life and the workplace opens the door to their full participation in the economy as customers, entrepreneurs, and employees. There are many business reasons for creating an inclusive work environment for employees with disabilities. More employers are creating and promoting an inclusive workplace to:

- respond to impending talent and skills shortages by taking advantage of a relatively untapped pool of talent;
- reflect the markets they serve;
- benefit the community

In 2012, approximately 15.4 per cent of Ontarians had a disability. This proportion is expected to rise significantly over the next two decades as the population ages. However, people with disabilities are often under-represented in the workplace. In Ontario, 41 per cent of people between 16 and 64 years of age with disabilities were either unemployed or not in the labour force in 2010, which was almost three times the rate for Ontarians without disabilities (14 per cent). In 2011, the employment rate for Ontarians with disabilities (49.5 per cent) was significantly lower than the rate for people without disabilities (73.9 per cent).

This under-representation and underemployment of people with disabilities in Ontario’s workforce is a serious challenge to the future prosperity of the province and of Ontario businesses because as the population ages, the talent market shrinks, and skills shortages emerge. Employers must create work environments that are more accessible and inclusive to tap into this underutilized talent pool.”  
(Conference Board of Canada, 2015, p.18)

### What Organizations Should Know

Businesses and organizations must follow laws and standards to be accessible for people with disabilities. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) is a law that sets out a process for developing and enforcing accessibility standards. Accessibility standards are laws that government, businesses, non-profits and public sector organizations must follow to become more accessible. They help organizations identify and remove barriers to improve accessibility for people with disabilities in 5 areas of daily life:

1. Customer service standard - To help remove barriers for people with disabilities so they can access goods, services or facilities.
2. Information and communications standard - To help organizations make their information accessible to people with disabilities
3. Transportation standard - To make it easier for everyone to travel in the province.
4. Employment standard - To help make hiring and employee support practices more accessible.
5. Design of public spaces standard - To help organizations make new and redeveloped outdoor public areas accessible.

Organizations are also required to train their employees on the Integrated Accessibility Standard (IASR) as it related to their job duties and on the Ontario Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities.

“It is up to the organization to determine which type of training each employee will need. For example, a manager may require different, and perhaps more detailed, training on the Employment Standard than an entry-level employee. All public sector and large private sector organizations are also required to keep a record of when and who completed this training.” (Conference Board of Canada, 2015).

### Understanding the Barriers

It is important to remember that barriers to accessibility can be both visible and invisible. Often it is those invisible barriers that can be the hardest to recognize and address.

A barrier is anything that keeps someone with a disability from participating in the social or economic life of our communities.

- Architectural or structural barriers may result from the design of a building such as stairs, doorways, the width of hallways and even room layout.
- Information and communications barriers can make it difficult for people to receive or convey information. Things like small print size, low colour contrast between text and background, confusing design of printed materials and the use of language that is not clear or plain can all cause difficulty.
- Technology, or lack of it, can prevent people from accessing information. Everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids can all present barriers. For example, many screen readers for people with visual impairments do not work well with documents save in pdf formats.
- Systemic barriers can occur through policies and procedures. These are any practices or rules that restrict people with disabilities from full participation in their community – for example, denying a person with a service animal access to services.
- Attitude is perhaps the most difficult barrier to overcome. Some people don't know how to communicate with those who have visible or non-visible disabilities.

Or they simply discriminate against them by accepting stereotypes of people with disabilities as truth. They may feel that they could offend the individual with a disability by offering to help so instead they ignore or avoid people with disabilities altogether to avoid making mistakes. (Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2008, p.16)

## Myths and Misconceptions about Hiring People with Disabilities

**Myth:** Candidates with disabilities don't have the skills, training or education required.

**Fact:** People with disabilities are well-educated. According to a 2012 Statistics Canada report, 31 per cent of Canadians without a disability have a trades certificate or college diploma; compared with 29.6 per cent of Canadians with a mild disability and 33.3 per cent of Canadians with a severe disability. University degrees are held by 27 per cent of Canadians without a disability; compared with 17.6 per cent of Canadians with a mild disability and 8.8 per cent of Canadians with a severe disability. (Conference Board of Canada, 2015)

**Myth:** Employees with disabilities have lower productivity levels.

**Fact:** A study by DuPont indicated that performance was average or higher in 90 per cent of employees with disabilities. (Conference Board of Canada, 2015)

**Myth:** Accommodating workers with a disability is expensive.

**Fact:** The majority of accommodations that employers implement require little to no expense. When a cost is involved, it is generally a one-time expense of approximately \$500 or less. (Conference Board of Canada, 2015)

**Myth:** Employees with disabilities have a high absentee rate.

**Fact:** Studies have shown that employees with disabilities do not miss work anymore than their colleagues without disabilities. Rather, it has been found that employees with disabilities tend to have a better attendance record than their non-disabled co-workers. (EARN, n.d.)

**Myth:** Worker's compensation rates will increase if persons with disabilities are hired.

**Fact:** An employer's insurance rates are based exclusively on the comparative risks associated with the organization's accident history, as opposed to whether or not some of their staff members have a disability. (EARN, n.d.)

## Tips for Organizations

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*"In an inclusive workplace, all employees are encouraged, and given the tools and supports needed, to develop and advance in their careers. When employees with disabilities face barriers to their career advancement, the organization takes specific actions to remove these barriers."*

*(Conference Board of Canada, 2015)*

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### *Tips for creating more inclusive and accessible workplaces*

- **Shift our thinking:** It is essential to move away from thinking of people with disabilities as only clients or service users and instead to see them as service providers - volunteers, employees and managers of social service organizations. Many organizations have ensured that common areas are accessible for clients with disabilities but have not ensured the accessibility of areas where staff and volunteers work.
- **Move beyond legal requirements:** To be truly inclusive, workplaces should go beyond legal requirements/codes and consider best practices. Often codes like the AODA are the bare minimum standard and do not facilitate a large increase in accessibility. For example, in a hotel in Ottawa, the women's washroom has an automatic door opener, which means they are compliant with code. However, there is another door leading to the washroom door that does not have an automatic door opener, and so even though technically code has been followed, this washroom is not truly accessible to customers or staff. For these reasons, it is important that organizations do not ignore any accessibility issues just because they are not covered by legal requirements or codes.
- **Assess the inclusivity and accessibility of your organization and make a plan to improve:** We recommend organizations do a self-assessment to learn more about their strengths and identify any areas for improvement in moving toward accessibility and inclusion. Sample checklist and self-assessment tools are included in the "Resources" section of this guide.
- **Follow the principles of Universal Design:** Universal Design is the "design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. An environment (or any building, product, or service in that environment) should be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to use it. This is not a special requirement, for the benefit of only a minority of the population." (National Disability Authority, n.d.)

- **Consult with the disability community when considering any accessibility related changes:** Convene a focus group of clients, staff, volunteers or other community members to provide practical advice and suggestions for improving accessibility. Having vocational mentees placed within your organization can really help with this.
- **Ensure your policies, protocols and procedures include factors affecting employees with disabilities:** For example, develop specific evacuation procedures for employees and/or volunteers with disabilities. Develop procedures for escorting visually impaired people to their meetings and ensure team members are oriented to this.
- **Ensure placement environments are inclusive beyond physical accessibility:** Consider the other barriers outlined above, including barriers related to attitudes, technology and communication. For example, have documents, including business cards and job postings, available in alternative formats.
- **Just ask:** If you are unsure about how to properly support an employee with a disability, ask questions! Your employee is the best expert on their own needs. Understand your duty to accommodate as well as your rights as an employer but try to be open and flexible. Use the resources provided in this guide to help.

*Tips for Working Alongside People With Disabilities*

From Erica Carson-Sami, Coordinator of the Vocational Mentoring Program at PQCHC, 2018

Consider the following when interacting with staff, volunteers or clients with disabilities:

- Disability is not a bad word! By using the word disability, you are not saying someone is “unable” or “incapable”.
- Assuming that you will be developing a working relationship with this person, I would suggest asking the individual what they prefer to identify as with respect to their disability, and then continue to use that terminology in reference to them. For example:
- disabled person vs. person with a disability (the AODA says to always use person-first language, but this is not always people’s preference. I prefer to identify as a disabled person as a prideful expression of who I am. However, for some, there is a long history of advocating to be seen as a person first and foremost, so being referred to as a person with a disability is important to them.
- deaf, Deaf or hard of hearing (some individuals identify as Deaf with a capital ‘D’ which is a significant cultural identifier with a rich political history)

- blind, visually impaired or partially sighted
  - person with dwarfism or Little Person (do not refer to a person as a midget)
  - they may have an alternative
- If someone's disability is not visible, and in fact many disabilities are invisible, never act surprised if someone discloses their disability or mental health issues to you. Be conscious of your words! For example:
    - "But you don't look disabled," "You always seem so happy and put together," or "wow, you handle it so well," "I never would have guessed!" and other surprised reactions are NOT compliments.
    - Additionally, telling someone with a disability that you "never think of them as having a disability" implies that having a disability is a negative thing.
  - Always ask someone if they need help before acting and ask them about the best way to assist them. Not only does this allow people the agency to decide for themselves, but it allows the person to tell you how to help them in a safe and effective manner. Sometimes, although it is well intended, your particular way of helping may cause additional harm. For example:
    - Many people's muscles react and/or work differently so, if someone falls, make sure to ask them how you can best help them. They may have a specific way of getting up and if you try to pull them to their feet, it could actually be more difficult or even painful for the individual.
  - Similarly, ask for permission before touching someone's assistive/mobility devices.
    - Wheelchair users often see their wheelchair as an extension of their body, similar to legs, for example. It would not be appropriate to go around touching people's biological or artificial legs without their consent, nor would it be appropriate to touch someone's wheelchair without consent.
    - People are often surprised by how fast a mobility device can move or are unaware of the function of particular buttons. Without proper instruction, touching someone's mobility device can result in someone getting hurt. In addition, sometimes people do not realize they are touching something that engages the device in a way that is unsafe for the user.
  - Do not make assumptions about what people can or cannot do.
    - People with disabilities are highly adaptable individuals. When you live in world that is often designed without you in mind, you learn to adapt quickly. As a result, people with disabilities often have innovative solutions to bring forward.

- Language is powerful - it can empower people, but it can also marginalize them. The following terms are no longer appropriate when referring to people or disability-related topics:
  - Retarded
  - Handicap: handicap button, handicap parking, handicap stall (instead try: automatic button or accessible parking or accessible stall)
  - Challenged
  - Wheelchair-bound, confined to a wheelchair (instead try: uses a wheelchair or wheelchair user)
  - Defect or deformed
  - Midget (instead try: Little Person)
  - Suffers from \_\_\_\_\_ (insert disability or symptoms)
  - Special needs (though still often used, it is not appreciated by many people with disabilities)
- If an individual with a disability has someone assisting them, like an attendant or a support worker, be sure to speak to the individual directly and not the person accompanying them.

Do not tell an individual that they are brave or inspirational for doing things that non-disabled people do all the time. For example:

- It is not inspiring for a disabled person to be well educated. Do not get me wrong, it is certainly a wonderful accomplishment to be well educated and one should be proud of it. However, it should not inspire someone to feel like they should be able to acquire the same level of education just because a person with a disability was capable of doing it too.
- If all else fails and you forget these tips, just make sure that you treat a person with a disability with the same respect, courtesy, and dignity that you would a non-disabled individual!

## Tools and Resources

- The Conference Board of Canada has developed an excellent guide for organizations called the [Employers' Toolkit: Making Ontario Workplaces Accessible to People With Disabilities, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition](#).
- Find more information about AODA [here](#).
- [Access Forward](#) provides free training materials on all the accessibility standards.
- [Checklist for Accessibility and Universal Design](#), Edmonton Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- University of Washington has developed these [tips for making documents accessible](#)
- [Employment Accessibility Resource Network](#) (EARN) is made up of prominent employers and knowledgeable service providers, all focused on eliminating barriers to employment.
- [The Ontario Disability Employment Network](#) (ODEN) works with stakeholders in employment to strengthen connections between potential employers and the service providers of candidates with disabilities. On a larger scale, ODEN also offers a range of customized training to both employers and service providers.
- [The Enabling Accessibility Fund](#) (EAF) is a federal government program that provides funding for eligible capital projects that increase accessibility and create more opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in community activities, programs and services, or access employment opportunities.
- [Ontario Trillium Foundation](#) has a Capital Grants Investment Stream to fund projects that broaden access and improve community space to achieve one of their priority outcomes.
- [Abilities Connect Fund](#) provides subsidies for wages, training and assistive devices for organizations that hire students or recent graduates with disabilities.

## Building Capacity - Internationally Trained Professionals

### Making the Case

Immigrants to Canada represent another underutilized population in most Canadian workplaces, resulting in overall economic loss. On their website, Hire Immigrants Ottawa makes a compelling case based on the research they have compiled:

- Recent immigrants to Ottawa who held a university degree had an unemployment rate of 14.8%, more than three times higher than their Canadian-born counterparts.
- If the employment rate and average earnings of Ottawa's immigrants matched that of Ottawa's Canadian-born population, in 2010, the aggregate earnings of immigrants would have increased by \$1.1 billion — equivalent to 2.3% of Ottawa-Gatineau's GDP in 2010.
- 95% of employers who have hired a skilled immigrant in the past say that hiring skilled immigrants has been beneficial to the company.
- (Hire Immigrants Ottawa, n.d.)

Statistics Canada has also reported that between 1991 and 2006 the proportion of immigrants with a university degree in jobs with low educational requirements (such as clerks, truck drivers, salespersons, cashiers, and taxi drivers) increased. Even after being in Canada for fifteen years, immigrants with a university degree are still more likely than the native-born to be in low-skilled jobs. (Galarneau and Morissette, 2008)

### What Organizations Should Know

Ontario Human Rights Commission has developed a policy on removing the "Canadian experience" barrier to employment for newcomers to Canada.

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*"The Ontario Human Rights Commission's position is that a strict requirement for "Canadian experience" is prima facie discrimination (discrimination on its face) and can only be used in very limited circumstances. The onus will be on employers and regulatory bodies to show that a requirement for prior work experience in Canada is a bona fide requirement, based on the legal test this policy sets out."*  
(OHRC, 2013)

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According to the OHRC, employers, representatives of employers and regulatory bodies should not:

- Require applicants to have prior work experience in Canada to be eligible for a particular job
- Assume that an applicant will not succeed in a particular job because he or she lacks Canadian experience.

- Discount an applicant's foreign work experience or assign it less weight than their Canadian work experience.
- Rely on subjective notions of "fit" when considering an applicant's ability to succeed in the workplace.
- Include a requirement for prior Canadian work experience in the job posting or ad, or a requirement for qualifications that could only be obtained by working in Canada.
- Require applicants to disclose their country of origin or the location of their work experience on the job application form.
- Ask applicants questions that may directly or indirectly reveal where their work experience was obtained.
- Ask for local references only.

### Understanding the Barriers

The following are among the employment barriers consistently reported by new Canadians:

- Employers not recognizing foreign credentials and experience
- Accessing information regarding accreditation regulations
- Developing knowledge of Canadian workplace culture and expectations
- Lack of social and professional networks
- The need to develop workplace language skills
- Accessing information regarding training and upgrading opportunities
- Lack of Canadian work experience and references

In addition, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2013) also cites the following barriers face by immigrants seeking employment in Canada:

- Employers not helping them integrate into the workplace and not providing job-related learning opportunities
- Being rejected for positions because they are thought to be "overqualified"
- Arbitrary requirements for "Canadian experience"
- Outright discrimination

## Tips for Organizations

*Three Ways to Promote Organization-wide Ownership of Diversity and Inclusion (Hire Immigrants Ottawa, 2015)*

### **1) Find Diversity and Inclusion Champions**

- Find champions at both the Senior and Working levels and have a strong communications strategy for both groups
- Strong executive-level champions encourage participation from senior level colleagues, demonstrate leadership, and promote Diversity and Inclusion throughout the organization
- Getting “buy-in” from the executive level requires the support of a strong and clearly stated business case
- Start a pool of champions and make it grow. Use Recognition and Awards programs to support champions throughout the organization

### **2) Build the case, Make the plan, Communicate**

- Build a business case, explain the need and the benefit of a diverse and inclusive workplace, be clear on the business imperative and how it is going to contribute to the bottom line
- Embed Diversity and Inclusion into your organization’s strategic plan. Include everyone in the organization in the Diversity and Inclusion strategy. Everyone has something to gain and not just a few identifiable groups
- Create accountability: link Diversity and Inclusion to performance management systems
- Keep employees informed about progress on diversity and inclusion initiatives

### **3) Enhance Diversity and Inclusion Skills**

- Raise awareness of Unconscious Bias in the workplace; make training a priority for all managers
- Offer cross-cultural competencies training as professional development for all staff – start by attracting champions
- Encourage and support staff participation in programs that connect staff with immigrant job seekers and new hires (e.g. mentoring); create a critical mass of participants and keep the momentum going
- Educate hiring managers on competency-based evaluation in hiring practices

*Tips for Embracing Diversity in the Workplace (HR Council, n.d.)*

- Learn about the cultural backgrounds, lives and interests of employees outside of the workplace. Building relationships through increased understanding and trust helps to foster inclusion
- Include opportunities for staff to interact in settings outside of work so that employees feel more comfortable. Be creative, flexible and look for new ways of doing things

- Ensure all employees have the opportunity to take part in decision-making and planning for social activities
- Organize collective meals where employees can learn about one another's cultures by sharing food
- Be aware of, and provide time off for, culturally significant events and holy days. Consider offering a float day for employees to use at their discretion to observe such events or days
- Recognize and acknowledge special days and events such as International Day of Persons with Disabilities (Dec 3), International Day to End Racism, Gay Pride celebrations, etc.
- Create Intranet-based multicultural calendars to avoid scheduling important meetings on major cultural holidays
- Permit flexible schedules so that employees who observe religious practices can arrange their schedules around their beliefs
- Acknowledge all faiths present in your workplace

*Tips for Cross-Cultural Communication (Hire Immigrants Ottawa and Ontario Chamber of Commerce, n.d., p.15)*

- Work towards awareness and articulation of your own culture's attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. Identify your own learned generalizations, stereotypes and filters.
- Clarify your comprehension of cultural messages or use "cultural informants" when needed Listen, observe and describe rather than evaluate.
- Recognize that initial perceptions are often inaccurate and allow for additional interpretations of a situation to arise.
- Work towards developing empathy. Try to see a situation from your own and your employee's cultural perspective.
- Check assumptions. Don't assume another culture is similar to yours.

## Tools and Resources

- The Ontario Human Rights Commission has more information about the [Policy on Removing “Canadian Experience” Barrier](#).
- HIRE Immigrants Ottawa and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce have developed [an Employer’s Guide](#) with many practical resources and tips for creating more diverse and inclusive organization.
- The former [HR Council website](#) has many useful resources for the not-for-profit sector relate to labour force issues.
- York University has published a [self-assessment tool](#) for organizations related to inclusivity and diversity.

## How Vocational Mentorship Programs Can Build Capacity for Accessibility and Inclusion

Mentoring in the workplace typically involves partnering experienced individuals who have an understanding of their profession with highly motivated people new to the profession or who are looking to reenter the workforce. In the case of PQCHC's mentoring programs, the focus has been on providing mentoring opportunities to people who have professional training and/or experience outside of Canada and trained professionals who have disabilities. The mentoring relationship allows for the transferring of knowledge and experience between mentors and mentees.

A Vocational Mentorship Program can help any organization or employer build their capacity to achieve accessibility and inclusion-related outcomes at three levels:

1. To support ITP and TPWD clients and community members who face barriers to employment to increase their employability by providing them with the opportunity to:
  - Build on their professional knowledge, skills and confidence
  - Improve language skills and professional terminology for ITPs
  - Gain practical experience in a real work setting
  - Expand their professional contacts and networks, including mentors who can provide guidance, advice and references
  - Provide and receive peer support
  - Learn about relevant employment opportunities in Ottawa
2. To support the professional development and growth of staff mentors by providing them the opportunity to:
  - Share their knowledge, skills, expertise and experience with a mentee trained in a similar profession
  - Build on their skills and knowledge by working with professionally-trained mentees from diverse backgrounds
  - Learn more about the experiences and barriers faced by Internationally Trained Professionals and Trained Professionals with a Disability
  - Contribute to identifying and addressing barriers to accessibility and inclusion within their organization
3. To implement more inclusive and diverse hiring and volunteer engagement practices by:
  - Learning from and partnering with ITP and TPWD mentees and staff mentors/champions to identify and address any organizational barriers to accessibility and inclusion

- Learning about the legal responsibilities related to accommodation for employers and the resources that are available to support them
- Sharing best practices within the broader non-profit sector

Community Health and Resource Centres have long been seen as leaders in serving clients from diverse populations, many of whom face numerous barriers to accessing health and social services. The sector's capacity to do this will only be further strengthened by expanding this focus to include more intentionally inclusive hiring and volunteer engagement practices and continuing to build a workforce that reflects the diverse communities they serve. Implementing a Vocational Mentorship Program can be one effective and practical way to accomplish this.

## Overview of the PQCHC Vocational Mentorship Program Model

### How Placements Work

- The placement is 12 hours a week for the duration of 3 months.
- Potential participants apply to the program, attend an interview, and if accepted are placed with a mentor in a placement that will be beneficial to both the participant and the mentor. Potential participants will be required to provide a recent police record check for vulnerable sector as well as references.
- Mentors are recruited within the PQCHC as well as other community organizations. The program facilitator matches the mentor with a mentee based on the skills, experience and interests of the mentee and the needs or requirements of the project identified by the mentor.
- Mentors and mentees have the opportunity to meet prior to the beginning of the placement, at this time the schedule and tasks can be discussed and the terms of the mentoring agreement can be reviewed.
- The placement hours are also flexible for appointments, child care, etc. as well as for job interviews as the mentees are encouraged to continue job search throughout the placement.\*\*
- The mentor and the mentee begin developing a positive professional/working relationship.
- The mentee completes a work plan outlining their goals for the placement and the mentor is encouraged to provide input during the goal setting process.
- The mentee attends all placement hours as well as the peer support meetings that occur every 2nd week and check ins with the program facilitator.
- The mentee and the mentor participate in recognition events to celebrate the accomplishments of mentor and participants. \*
- The mentor and the mentee both complete an exit evaluation upon completion of the placement.

### Roles and Responsibilities

#### *The Role of the Program Facilitator*

- The Program Facilitator links participants to the program and coordinates the program from initiation to evaluation. The PF matches mentees with a mentor, provides orientation, and supports all mentors and mentees throughout the placement. The facilitator also organizes recognition events and peer support meetings for mentees. In addition, the facilitator works on partnering with other CHCs to promote the hiring of Internationally Trained Professionals (ITPs) and Trained Professionals with Disabilities (TPWD) as well as to educate and raise awareness on how to properly support them in their role.

#### *The Role of the Mentor*

- A mentor is an experienced professional working in Ottawa who has been paired with a mentee according to their field of expertise. The mentor supervises the mentee's work, offering support and feedback.

### *The Role of the Mentee*

- A mentee is a trained professional with a disability (TPWD) or internationally trained professional (ITP) who has been accepted into the program through an interview process and has been paired with a staff member at a workplace that meets the mentee's placement goals.

### Peer support Meetings, Workshops and Trainings

- The peer support meetings, workshops and training are a vital component to the overall mentoring experience and they are mandatory. The meetings facilitate the reflection of mentees' skills and experiences, connects mentees with the rest of the group, and to the program staff. Failing to attend the peer support meetings, workshops and training severely limits the program experience and could result in an incomplete placement.

### Developing a Mentoring Plan

- The mentoring plan is a worksheet used to frame and structure the mentoring placement. The plan outlines broad long term goals and objectives of the placement, short term steps needed to achieve long term goals, and follows the SMART goal outline, so includes the following items: specific, measurable, action plan, realistic, and time. The plan is expected to be developed within the first 2-3 weeks of the placement. (See Tool Kit for Mentorship Action Plan Template)

### Program Completion

- When the placement is complete there is an exit evaluation that allows the mentee to provide feedback about their experience with the program and placement. A certificate of completion will be presented and there will be a celebration for all mentors and mentees within the cohort.
- A certificate of completion from the program is granted when one of the following occurs:
  - The participant has completed 144 hours of placement and has attended the mandatory peer support meetings and workshops.
  - The participant has found paid employment (at any time during the placement).
  - The participant has been accepted in an academic program to pursue studies related to their professional and career development.

### How to Become a Mentee or a Mentor

Interested individuals complete an application which can be sent to them by email, picked up in person or completed online at <http://www.pqchc.com/volunteers-students/vocational-mentorship-application-process/> . Individuals are then invited in for an interview which allows the program facilitator to determine if the individual is a good match for the program and allows the individual to determine if they are in fact interested in participating in the program. Each participant goes through a screening

process that consists of an interview, personal references check and police records check. They also sign all the documentation related with privacy and confidentiality required by PQCHC.

## Vocational Mentorship Program Toolkit

The following documents and tools have been compiled, adapted and/or developed by the PQCHC Vocational Mentorship Programs for ITPs and TPWDs:

### Resources about the PQCHC Vocational Mentorship Program

- [ITP Mentorship Program Website](#)
- [Mentoring Handbook \(ITP Program\)](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions \(TPWD Program\)](#)

### Resources for Working with Mentors

- [Mentor Handbook \(TPWD Program\)](#)
- [Mentor Exit Interview Questionnaire](#)
- [A Good Mentor is...](#)

### Resources for Working with Mentees

- [Mentee Handbook \(TPWD Program\)](#)
- [Mentee Interview Questions](#)
- [Guidelines for Obtaining a Police Record Check](#)
- [Mentorship Action Plan](#)
- [Mentee Mid-Placement Evaluation](#)
- [Mentee Exit Interview Questionnaire](#)
- [Job Fair Preparation Package](#)
- [Participant Work Readiness Evaluation](#)
- [Tips for Answering Interview Questions](#)
- [Disclosure Chart for Workplace Settings](#)
- [Tips for Job Retention](#)

### Resources for Peer Orientation Workshops

- [Communication](#)
- [Goal Setting and Getting Things Done](#)
- [Critical Thinking](#)
- [Networking and Making Connections](#)
- [Problem Solving and Decision Making](#)
- [Stress Management](#)

## Conclusion

PQCHC's experience has been that vocational mentoring is a promising and practical model for CHRCs and other organizations to more fully develop their organizational capacity for inclusion and accessibility. This guide provides an introduction to the many reasons for organizations to continue to build this capacity and includes the information, tips and tools PQCHC has found useful so far in our journey. We see this guide as a living document and welcome any feedback, tips or tools that other organizations have found valuable. Our hope is that other organizations can learn from our experience to date and that as a sector we can continue to learn and grow together.

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