AWARENESS 4CHANGE

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How to welcome diversity in the workplace

A short guide

Contents

Tools and strategies to fight discrimination in work context (C) 3

What is disability discrimination? 3

Types of disability discrimination 3

Failure to make reasonable adjustments 4

Discrimination arising from disability 4

Harassment 4

Victimisation 4

Tools and strategies to fight against discrimination 5

Awareness against disability discrimination 5

Collaborate with community groups 5

Eliminate hiring biases 5

Review training and policies 6

Tools and strategies for job retention (D) 9

Make the workplace accessible 9

Develop on-going trainings 9

Conduct regular reviews 10

Put in place long-term benefits 10

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Tools and strategies to fight discrimination in work context (C)

What is disability discrimination?

When a person is treated unfairly or less well because of their disability, this is known as disability discrimination.

Types of disability discrimination

There are six main types of disability discrimination:

- direct discrimination
- indirect discrimination
- failure to make reasonable adjustments
- discrimination arising from disability
- harassment
- victimisation

Direct discrimination happens when someone treats a person worse than another person in a similar situation because of their disability. For example: during an interview, a job applicant discloses his impairment to the potential employer. Even though he is the best candidate they have interviewed, the employer decides not to hire him because they believe he will need a lot of sick leave.

Indirect discrimination takes place when an organisation's policy or manner of working has a negative impact on disabled persons in comparison to non-disabled people. Indirect discrimination is illegal unless the organisation or employer can demonstrate that the policy is justified and proportionate.

Objective justification is the term for this. For instance: all applicants must have a valid driver's licence, according to a job advertisement. This puts certain disabled persons at a disadvantage because, for example, they may not hold a driver's licence due to epilepsy. The requirement will

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be justified if the employment is for a bus driver. It will be increasingly difficult to justify for a teacher to work in two schools.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments

Organisations have a responsibility to make sure that disabled people can access jobs, education, and services as easily as non-disabled people. If an employer or organisation fails to make a reasonable accommodation, disabled people may face discrimination. Failure to make acceptable modifications is referred to as this.

For instance: a parking space near the office is required for a disabled employee. Her employer, on the other hand, exclusively assigns parking spaces to top executives and refuses to assign one to her. What is reasonable is determined by several variables, including the resources available to the organization implementing the change. If a company already has several parking places, it would be reasonable to dedicate one for the employee close to the entrance.

Discrimination arising from disability

If a person is treated badly because of a consequence arising from a disability it means, it's a case of discrimination arising from disability. This is different that direct discrimination because of something connected to the disability not because of the disability itself.

Harassment

Harassment takes place when someone is treated in a way that makes them feel humiliated offended or degraded. For example: a visually impaired woman is regularly sworn at and called names by colleagues at work because of her disability

Victimisation

This happens when someone is treated badly because they have made a complaint of discrimination under their rights. For example, an employee has filed a disability discrimination complaint. Unless they withdraw the complaint, the employer threatens to fire them.

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Tools and strategies to fight against discrimination

Awareness against disability discrimination

The fundamental measure that businesses should take to prevent handicap discrimination is to meet the law's requirements. This can include reasonable modifications or accommodations.

Even if a policy isn't required, it's still a good idea to have one in place to promote a welcoming workplace. The policy should describe discriminatory behavior, outline a process for filing, investigating, and documenting discrimination complaints, and specify what actions should be taken in the event of an incidence.

You should also find out if there are any requirements for implementing employee accommodations. These obligations could include making your workplace accessible to employees with disabilities or injuries, as well as adapting timetables, uniforms, and menus to accommodate employees of other religions.

Collaborate with community groups

You can partner with community groups to expand your hiring among specific populations and get advice on improving diversity.

Eliminate hiring biases

To eliminate discrimination, review your employment procedure.

Blind recruitment—the removal of names and other identifying information from résumés—could be one option. It may also be beneficial to delegate hiring to a group rather than a single person.

Non-traditional résumés and international qualifications should be understood by employees in charge of hiring. It's also crucial to assess candidates based on the new skills they can offer to your company.

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Review training and policies

Adapt your training to meet the demands of various employees. Supervisors and human resources employees, for example, may benefit from diversity training. To ensure compliance, evaluate your policies on a regular basis and monitor staff interactions.

Educate all employees about discrimination

It's critical that all employees are aware of potential workplace discrimination issues, understand your policies and processes, and know how to report an allegation. Separate training for supervisors and managers is required because they are your first line of defence in combating workplace discrimination. You should also make an effort to inform employees about the potential consequences of discrimination, such as lawsuits. Face-to-face training, internal communications, or even deploying visual aids in common locations to promote anti-discriminatory practices are all options for keeping everyone informed and up to know about the issue.

Set up processes to resolve discrimination issues

Any employee who believes they have been discriminated against or treated unfairly should report it to Human Resources, their immediate supervisor, manager, or director, and they should feel safe doing so. Even if your organization is not in legal trouble, all companies must be consistent in handling issues through a fair and reasonable investigation. This will demonstrate your company's standards for all employees to be treated equally and fairly. The quick resolution of workplace discrimination issues should be a priority, since otherwise, trust and credibility may be lost.

Consider different communication channels.

Providing effective and transparent communication channels is an important part of the complaint process. Have multiple options for employees to report prejudice, so that a supervisor cannot hide problems from HR and top management. Formal communication channels, such as an Intranet, emails, letters, or face-to-face encounters, are critical for employees to be able to

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submit a complaint, and some even allow anonymous reports to be filed in order to begin an investigation. You can also keep a more informal style of contact, such as lunchtime talks and constant collaboration among team members, to discover any discriminatory practices that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Organise team-building exercises.

Hold team-building exercises and events in addition to training in a meeting setting to assist your staff communicate and understand one other better. This is an excellent time to promote diversity and inclusion because there are numerous events that can accomplish this, such as a potluck when everyone brings a food from their ethnic background.

Provide soft skills training to managers and supervisors.

When we think about discrimination, we often think of incidents where a person was refused a job or a promotion for unfair reasons or treated unequally by their direct supervisor or manager; nevertheless, we must remember that employees can be discriminated against by their coworkers. Bullying and harassment are common examples of this. Instead of involving HR right away, your management team should be completely prepared to deal with these issues quickly and effectively. Continuous soft skills training can improve their interactions with subordinates and prevent problems like this from becoming a discrimination complaint.

To summarize, you can avoid discrimination by:

- All of your employees should be educated and trained on what constitutes discrimination.
- Supervisors and managers should be trained on how to respond appropriately to workplace prejudice.
- Handle any discrimination allegations with care and confidentiality.
- Establish a stringent workplace policy that prohibits discrimination.
- Ascertain that the workplace policy is correctly written and implemented.
- Regularly review your company's rules.

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Tools and strategies for job retention (D)

Creating and maintaining an inclusive workplace that promotes and supports diversity is very important in retaining employees who acquire a disability (McAnaney and Wynne, 2016).

A great part of the existing employee programs, such as orientation, career development, and mentoring programs, can be adapted to increase retention rates of employees with disabilities.

Supporting people to remain in employment when there is a risk that they will leave because of an acquired disability has lots of positives. For example, it has the potential to enhance the quality of life of the individuals and also to reduce payments made through the disability and pensions system (McAnaney and Wynne, 2016).

Make the workplace accessible

Reasonable accommodation can be one intervention to keep a person employed. Reasonable accommodation means that the employer puts in place appropriate measures that meet the needs of the employee with a disability to do their job.

Access to the workplace entails more than ensuring that persons who use canes or wheelchairs can navigate stairwells and doorways. Inclusive design means that people with disabilities can also use websites and digital tools.

Nonetheless, reasonable accommodations will vary by the disability, the job

and the individual.

Develop on-going trainings

Workplace mentoring programs, employee resource groups and courses are additional tools that companies can use to increase recruitment and retention rates, improve corporate culture, and provide guidance to employees and managers on disability issues.

All online professional development classes and materials, as well as workplace events, should be fully accessible, and a portion of employee training expenditures should be set aside to provide disability-related accommodations for training opportunities.

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Conduct regular reviews

- Use profiling to reduce inflow into the systems by establishing claimants' employment status and work capacity at around 12 weeks based on the potential for job retention, redeployment or early retirement
- Have regular discussions with employees with disabilities to audit the current situation and develop necessary changes.

Put in place long-term benefits

- Introduce employment assessment into procedures for qualifying for income support and a systematic referral to employment services to increase the activation options.
- Provide vocational and occupational guidance as part of the qualification procedure for income support

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Resources

Disability discrimination

Retaining people with a disability in the workforce

Recruiting and retaining people with disabilities

Thomas, Faith and Morgan, Robert L. 'Evidence-based Job Retention Interventions for People with Disabilities: A Narrative Literature Review'. 1 Jan. 2021 : 89 – 101.

Wong, J., Kallish, N., Crown, D. *et al.* Job Accommodations, Return to Work and Job Retention of People with Physical Disabilities: A Systematic Review. *J Occup Rehabil* **31**, 474–490 (2021). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10926-020-09954-3

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