

Ready to Work Program

Youth with disabilities are capable and want to work

Overview: Employer & *Ready to Work* team collaboration process

Our goal is to provide the support that you and the student want and need to have a successful and rewarding experience. Our processes are therefore flexible so the information in this guide is an example of how things can work, rather than an outline of requirements.

Introduction

We can connect by phone or have a meeting to discuss how best to work together.

At any step along the way, we can provide written information or give brief presentations to introduce *Ready to Work* to senior leaders, Human Resources leaders, managers, etc.

Job matching

Generally this process starts in one of two ways. Employers:

1. Have specific roles available and ask us to propose any student(s) who could be a match, and/or
2. Ask us to profile potential candidates and then look for opportunities that may match
 - Our profiles include brief information about students' accessibility and/or accommodation needs

When you have a specific job description or a potential work opportunity (team or function), we support our student(s) to prepare application materials (resume, cover letter, other materials required by your organization).

You determine which student(s) you would like to meet and how you would like to get to know them. This can include:

- Formal interview (some **Interview tips** are included below)
- Informal meet & greet, tour, etc.
- Work trials
- A combination of options

A member of the *Ready to Work* team is available to be part of these activities (see **Role of the job coach at an interview** below)

We support students to prepare and share information about what enables them to do their best work. This may include:

- Personal strategies (e.g., how they organize themselves / their work) and/or
- Physical or environmental accommodations (e.g., desk height)

We discuss together whether *Ready to Work* should plan for a job coach to assist the team and student at start-up. (see **Role of the job coach on the job** below)

Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

150 Kilgour Road, Toronto ON Canada M4G 1R8
T 416 425 6220 T 800 363 2440 F 416 425 6591 www.hollandbloorview.ca

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Decision-making & offer

Please include us in communications as part of your typical offer process whether by phone or email. We assist students with following through on the logistics for accepting an offer.

We can support you in communications with candidates who will not receive an offer, if you wish. We appreciate any feedback you can provide the candidate or the *Ready to Work* program.

Pre-start

(If not already done at an earlier stage) We recommend that the hiring manager and team prepare:

- Job description
- List of some specific tasks/projects that will be assigned initially and can be added as the student develops competency in the role
- Orientation plan including required training, when/how/by whom work tasks will be introduced, plans for meeting co-workers and getting comfortable socially, etc.
- Schedule for at least week 1

We also recommend that the team determines one team member who will be the student's primary day-to-day link ("supervisor"). This should be someone who is able to spend up to 30-60 minutes a day with the student in the initial weeks of work.

Some teams like to also designate a mentor on the team who may act as a back-up with questions about tasks when the supervisor is not available and/or may play more of a role in facilitating social connections. (Once the student starts natural connections emerge, which is fantastic, but sometimes planning ahead for the initial weeks gets things off to a good start.)

During this timeframe, *Ready to Work* staff can consult with the primary supervisor and team by email or in a meeting.

We provide the name and contact information of the *Ready to Work* staff member(s) who will be the primary link for you and the student. We decide if that person should be present on day 1 or check in during week 1.

If a student needs physical/environmental accommodations including any special equipment, the student and an occupational therapist can visit to work out details with your staff. We can assist with sourcing equipment if needed. (Note – this is rarely needed.)

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Start-up

Your *Ready to Work* contact will provide support or check in as agreed in advance. You or the student can contact us at any time.

In many cases, at this stage we are not needed at all.

Sometimes we support start-up with job coaching. This type of support is most often helpful for students whose disabilities affect how they learn, interact or communicate. One of the *Ready to Work* occupational therapists would work with you and the student on the job to see what coaching would be helpful. Then we make plans together for the job coach (the occupational therapist may provide coaching or another *Ready to Work* staff may take over as the job coach).

Role of the job coach on the job

A **job coach** may provide on-the-job support for a student with a disability or special needs and his/her employer.

The job coach's primary role is to support the student and employer as the student learns to perform the job tasks and gets used to the workplace culture and expectations. When the student performing the job as expected, and student and team are comfortable, the job coach plans a gradual "fading" of support. The coach remains available to consult if needed.

Examples of ways a job coach may help:

- Participate with student in job task training and organizational orientation. Incorporate learning strategies suited to individual student and tasks to promote job performance. Examples:
 - Detailed daily schedule
 - Task breakdown and checklists of steps
 - Explanations of workplace expectations
- Assist student to apply self-management strategies on the job, for example:
 - How the student will manage his/her 'to do' list
 - Knowing when is the right time for questions, etc.
- Support student and team to identify workaround solutions and/or accommodations if needed
- Model training and feedback techniques that are tailored to the individual's learning style

Contact us:

Carolyn McDougall

Occupational Therapist
cmcdougall@hollandbloorview.ca
416.425.6220 x3328

Danielle D'Alessandro

Occupational Therapist
ddalessandro@hollandbloorview.ca
416.425.6220 x7051

Laura Howson-Strong

Occupational Therapist
lhowsonstrong@hollandbloorview.ca
416.425.6220 x3287

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Tips for interviewers

1. We love the employer interview tips on the DiscoverAbility Network website <https://discoverability.network/roadmap-step-1-atp-ask-the-person/>
2. Please start your interview by describing the function of your team and the job tasks.
3. Please ask prompting questions if the candidate gives you a short answer. This can be as simple as “Tell me more” or “Please give me an example.” We find that many young job seekers give very short answers.
4. If possible, please give the candidate a printed listed of the questions you are asking in the interview. Many candidates like to refer to the printed information (as well as your verbal question).

Here are some examples of questions we ask youth to prepare for:

- Why are you interested in this position / this organization?
- Please describe some of the experiences on your resume for me? Tell me about your education and interests. (Worded a bit more specifically than the standard “Tell me about yourself.”)
- Please give an example of a time you made a mistake. How did you handle the situation? What did you learn?
- Tell me about a project you worked on that you are really proud of? (school, work or volunteer experience)
- Please give an example of a time you were part of a team and needed to work through a problem or challenge.
- What are your career goals? How can this summer position help you?
- What questions do you have for us?

We have worked with the candidates about using the STAR-R format to answer interview questions. You can ask prompting questions to bring out some additional information if you want.



STAR-R method for answering interview questions:

- Situation**- Describe a situation that you were involved in
- Task**- Describe the tasks or steps that you completed
- Action**- Be specific. Describe what actions you took
- Results - Relate** - What **results** followed due to your actions and how it **relates** to the job you are interviewing for

5. We encourage youth to give you information about how they will do the job. Sometimes these are personal strategies or they may be simple accommodation requests. Usually we ask them to bring a handout “*What helps me do my best work*” to the interview. You can ask the candidate “Please tell me how you might perform...(a key job function)?” The Ready to Work job coach will support this discussion. (see next page)

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Role of the job coach at an interview

A *Ready to Work* staff member will accompany the candidate to the interview and may act as a job coach if needed. Our role at the interview can vary according to your preferences and our recommendations for giving the candidate the best opportunity to showcase their strengths.

Two options are:

- **Coach is present for the full interview.** We listen and may provide occasional prompts or cues to the candidate (for example to rephrase a question or prompt to share additional information or an example to respond to your question.)
- You interview the candidate and **coach joins near the end** to support discussion about accommodations (if any are needed) and/or next steps in the recruitment process (logistics).

If you decided to organize work trials, the role of the job coach can be discussed ahead of time or demonstrated.