



Citizens With Disabilities – Ontario

www.cwdo.org

“Together We Are Stronger”

#601-2 Market Street, Toronto, ON M5E 1Y9
807-473-0909 (voice) or cwdo@tbaytel.net

Together We Are Stronger

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Prepared for:

The Council of Canadians with Disabilities

Prepared by:

Alexis Buettgen, Senior Research Consultant

Citizens With Disabilities – Ontario

Executive Summary

This is the second report to the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD) from Citizens With Disabilities - Ontario (CWDO). This report builds on the findings from our first report (found at www.cwdo.org) to continue to develop a cumulative and comprehensive list of existing employment policies, programs and services for people with disabilities in Ontario. The descriptive information in this report comes from a review of relevant employment programs and services in Ontario, a literature and document review, an online survey and virtual forum with CWDO members, and observations from provincial meetings about disability and employment policies, programs and services.

Findings

The report includes a descriptive overview of several targeted initiatives, programs and services to promote employment of people with disabilities. These include the initiatives listed below with hyperlinks to more information online:

- [Ontario's Employment Strategy](#) is under development at the Ministry of Economic Development and Growth to improve service experiences for individuals with disabilities and engage employers in breaking down barriers to employment.
- [AODA Employment Standard](#) requires organizations to establish processes that provide for accessibility across the employment cycle. As of January 1, 2017, all Ontario employers with at least one employee in Ontario are required to comply with this standard.
- [Ontario Disability Support Program – Employment Supports](#) is the primary employment program for people with disabilities in Ontario with more than 100 community service providers operating across the province.
- [Workplace Safety and Insurance Board](#) provides disability benefits, monitors the quality of healthcare for injured/ill workers, and assists in return to work processes for injured/ill workers. Injured workers can access up to five different community service providers depending on their needs, interests and geographic location.
- [Employment services for people with psychosocial disabilities](#) specialize in supports for persons with this type of impairment. There are 52 different programs offering employment or vocational services to people with psychosocial disabilities across Ontario.

The report also includes a descriptive overview of universal initiatives, programs and services to promote employment of all Ontarians. These include Ontario Works - Employment Assistance, and Employment Ontario.

Our findings indicate there are also at least nine formal employment networks of service providers and employers who promote employment of Ontarians with disabilities at the provincial or regional level.

There are also several social enterprises that provide education and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. These enterprises are typically run by and for people with disabilities and include several in Ontario that specifically support people with psychosocial disabilities. Other resources are briefly described in this report, including two advocacy initiatives run by people with disabilities to address the challenges in the Ontario disability employment policy, program and service system.

Our initial observations of the array of employment policies, services and resources for Ontarians with disabilities point to a few potential challenges and gaps in support. CWDO has previously recommended the need for support for job accommodations, barrier-free workplaces, hiring targets, reduced reliance on medical validation, accessibility training for employers, and adequate income.

CWDO activities and development

CWDO has been engaged in the present project and several other activities from January to April 2017. Specifically, CWDO has focused efforts on responding to the federal government consultations on national accessibility laws. CWDO has gathered feedback and priorities from their members in a submission to the federal government that reflect these perspectives. Also from January to April 2017, members have been actively working with Talking Communities to enhance technological capacity in the organization. In addition, the CWDO Hackathon project began in March 2017. The project will involve collecting information about the needs of organizations that require accessibility user testing and matching these needs to end users with disabilities with the skills to conduct appropriate testing.

Going forward

This descriptive report provides an overview of the disability-employment service landscape in Ontario and points to a few potential challenges and considerations for further research. As such, our next report will focus on the consumer experience of employment services and supports in Ontario. We will be seeking input on what is working well and what is not working well for people with disabilities engaged in the various employment policies, programs and services outlined in Reports #1 and #2. As this project continues to focus on employment for Ontarians with disabilities, CWDO has focused other activities related to access and inclusion legislation, and technology. These areas represent current opportunities for development and advocacy. We will continue to report on these and other relevant activities coming up between May and August 2017.

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Introduction

This is the second report to the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD) from Citizens With Disabilities - Ontario (CWDO). This report builds on the findings from our first report (found at www.cwdo.org) to continue to develop a cumulative and comprehensive list of existing Ontario policies, programs and services for people with disabilities in the province. The purpose of this project is to understand how the Ontario government and other stakeholders are creating, or limiting, employment opportunities for participation and inclusion of Ontarians with disabilities.

Report #1 laid the foundation of our research by presenting information on the Ontario context for people with disabilities, our overarching methodological framework, and preliminary findings of our research and other CWDO activities from September to December 2016. Report #1 included a preliminary description of most provincial and federal disability employment policies and programs available to Ontario residents. These policies and programs vary in overall size and significance. Where possible, we included brief notes or comments about each program or policy.

With our context established in Report #1, this report provides a more in-depth focus on employment, providing more information about government and non-governmental programs and services that impact the labour market attachment of Ontarians with disabilities. This report also includes a description of other CWDO activities taking place from January 1 to April 30, 2017.

About CWDO

CWDO is a non-profit organization committed to the rights of all persons to participate fully in the civil, cultural, economic, political and social life of their communities.

CWDO is a volunteer-run organization with no paid staff. Currently, there are 14 board members located across the province and over 2,000 members in almost every electoral district in Ontario. The organization actively promotes the rights, freedoms and responsibilities of persons with disabilities through community development, social action, member support and referral. Primary activities include public education and awareness about the social and physical barriers that prevent the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in Ontario.

About this project

Over the course of the project, from September 2016 to March 2018, CWDO has committed to provide CCD with:

1. A list of Ontario programs and services, currently in existence and those that are missing which will improve or limit the labour market attachment of persons with disabilities in the province.
2. A list of provincial activities related to the areas of CCD formal sub-committees including: Human Rights, Transportation, Social Policy, Access and Inclusion Legislation, Technology, International, and Ending of Life Ethics.
3. A description of activities related to the development of CWDO's organizational capacity in terms of finances and/or increased partnerships with other community organizations and sectors.

To meet this commitment, CWDO has hired an independent contractor, Alexis Buettgen, to support the investigation, research and report writing tasks. The contractor is working in collaboration with CWDO board members, who provide feedback and contribute to the development of all final reports to CCD. All documents submitted to CCD are created with accessibility best practices, as outlined in the Accessible Digital Office Documents project website at adod.idrc.ocad.ca.

Methodology

The information presented in this report derives from the following sources:

- A review of relevant disability employment programs in Ontario
- A literature and document review
- An online survey and virtual forum with CWDO members
- Observations from provincial meetings about disability and employment policies, programs and services

Following the methodological framework outlined in Report #1, we are conducting a scoping review of Ontario programs and services, currently in existence and those that are missing which will improve or limit the labour market attachment of persons with disabilities in the province. This scoping review provides a preliminary assessment of the nature and scope of existing programs and services in the province. Our ongoing research attempts to be methodical, transparent and replicable and can help us decide whether and what further research is needed.

For this review, we searched national and provincial government websites to identify employment programs, benefits and services that are available to Ontarians with disabilities. We identified these websites from the employment policies and programs listed in Report #1. Some of the websites linked us to programs offered in various departments and programs offered at non-governmental organizations.

In addition, our research included reports, tools, guides and other resources produced by government agencies, research centres, non-profit and community organizations, business and industry networks. This includes information from CWDO reports, submissions and other documents. We have also searched websites of relevant organizations (e.g., non-profit organizations that provide services to people with disabilities), internet search engines (e.g., Google), and resources of information on government and community based services (e.g., 211.ca).

Qualitative data has been compiled from several sources. These sources include an online survey and virtual forum with CWDO members regarding the proposed federal accessibility legislation; observations from a meeting of the Ontario Disability Employment Network; and observations from a meeting with the ODSP Action Coalition – Earnings and Employment Supports Working Committee. During these events, we documented observations and took note of provincial activities, as well as participated in collective discussion.

Findings

The following sections present our second round of findings in response to each of the project's three areas of focus. We begin this section with a descriptive overview of disability employment initiatives in Ontario, followed by a description of other employment services that are accessible to Ontarians with disabilities in their communities. We then present a preliminary summary of the apparent challenges and gaps in employment policies, programs and services. After this, we highlight activities led by CWDO from January 1 to April 30, 2017 in relation to CCD's formal sub-committees. Over the past four months, CWDO activities have focused on access and inclusion legislation, technology, and support for the current project's focus on employment.

Ontario's Employment Strategy

Promoting employment of Ontarians, including Ontarians with disabilities, is an expressed priority for the Government of Ontario. The 2016 Ontario budget outlines a plan to develop a provincial employment strategy for people with disabilities. This initiative is being led by the Employment Strategy Division at the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario which is governed by the Ministry of Economic Development and Growth.

According to the 2016 Ontario budget (p. 137), the strategy will:

- Establish a cohesive made-in-Ontario vision with goals, priorities and desired outcomes to ensure Ontarians have access to a continuum of employment and training services;
- Provide a better service experience through streamlined access to employment and training services that recognize the varied needs and employment goals of individual clients; and
- Engage employers as active partners in breaking down employment barriers for people with disabilities and promoting inclusive workplaces.

The 2016 Ontario budget notes that the employment strategy also includes the creation of a Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities, to work with and encourage employers in hiring people with disabilities. This strategy is expressly linked to the Province's objective of an accessible Ontario by 2025, and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). We will report further on this strategy in the coming months, once details of the strategy are officially announced.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Employment Standard:

The purpose of the AODA is to ensure that all Ontarians have fair and equitable access to programs and services, and to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities. The AODA is made up of five standards:

1. Customer Service Standard
2. Information and Communication Standard
3. Employment Standard
4. Transportation Standard
5. Design of Public Spaces Standard

The AODA standards are part of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). The AODA Employment Standard requires organizations to establish processes that provide for accessibility across the employment life cycle. As of January 1, 2017, all Ontario employers with at least one employee in Ontario are required to comply with this standard.

Under this standard, all employers are required to notify job applicants of accommodations available during the hiring process and the employer's accommodation policies. There must be a process for responding to an employee's accommodation request, including a written accommodation plan. In addition, every employer in Ontario is required to provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees with disabilities.

The standard requires that performance management, career development and redeployment processes take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities and their individual accommodation plans. If an employee with a disability needs to take time off work for treatment, recovery, or other reasons, the standard requires employers to develop a process that supports employees who have been absent due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations when they return to work. Small private or non-profit organizations that provide goods, services or facilities to the public or to other organizations and have one to 49 employees in Ontario are exempted from this return to work requirement.

With these broad measures and legislation in place, there is an array of employment services and supports available to Ontarians with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment. Next, we describe these services, starting with a general overview and followed by more detailed descriptions of each program and its related services.

Employment services

There are more than 400 disability employment programs and services in Ontario. Most of these programs and services are funded by the Ontario government and delivered by community non-profit and for-profit organizations. An individual's connection to an employment program or service is often linked to the income security program for which they would qualify. Provincial income security programs include the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and Ontario Works (OW) funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Ontarians with psychosocial disabilities may access services through community organizations funded by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. In addition, employment services are available through Employment Ontario (EO) programs funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development.

Our review indicates that most programs include services to employers and job seekers with disabilities using a job-matching model. Job matching connects the employer's requirements for a job with the skills, needs and interests of individual job seekers with disabilities. In this way, many service providers are supporting individuals with disabilities to connect with employers who are seeking candidates to meet their employment needs. Some employment service providers may also provide skill training or educational opportunities to enhance the skills and abilities of job seekers with disabilities. In other words, many providers appear to focus on job seekers' abilities, rather than their *disabilities*.

However, it appears that program/service eligibility is often based on job seekers' needs and impairments. To receive service, many job seekers must demonstrate they have barriers to employment. Eligibility criteria for disability specific employment services such as ODSP and WSIB require documented medical proof of disability/impairment to qualify for services.

Overall, the disability employment system in Ontario is complex, much like the rest of Canada. Many employment service providers receive funding from multiple sources or government ministries and offer multiple programs for people from different social locations. Some organizations may provide service to people with various disabilities or focus on supports for people with specific impairments (e.g., psychosocial, developmental). This means that individuals may find the employment service system difficult to navigate and find the most appropriate services and supports.

To bring some coherence to this complex system of services, we begin our overview with disability-specific employment services (i.e., ODSP Employment Supports and WSIB) with details about the services offered, eligibility criteria, and how to access these services. We also highlight employment services specifically for people with psychosocial disabilities. Following this, we describe non-specific employment services that may be accessed by Ontarians with disabilities (i.e., OW and EO), and other resources that are intended to promote the employment of people with disabilities.

ODSP Employment Supports (ES)

The ODSP ES program is the primary employment program for people with disabilities in Ontario with more than 100 service providers operating across the province. Services are administered by approved community service providers. As we described in Report #1, the ODSP ES program is available to Ontarians with disabilities, 16 years of age or older, who can and want to work in the competitive labour market. Competitive employment is broadly defined in the ODSP ES policy directives as:

Remunerative employment that can reasonably be expected to contribute to a person's economic well-being. It can mean conventional employment where there is a typical employee/employer relationship and the employee is earning minimum wage or more. It can include full-time, part-time, contract, or seasonal employment to recognize the diverse nature of people's disabilities and how their disabilities may impact their employment. Competitive employment can also include self-employment or ownership or membership participation in a business enterprise where the objective is to earn at least the equivalent of minimum wage.

The ODSP ES directives note that competitive employment, as defined above, may not be possible or achievable as an immediate goal for some people with disabilities. As such, the directives note that "information regarding other sources of appropriate support and assistance will be provided to applicants/clients as available in local communities."

ODSP ES and ODSP income support are separate but intertwined programs. A person does not have to be in receipt of ODSP income support to be eligible for ODSP ES. Individuals receiving income support can earn up to \$200 a month without having their income support reduced. If they earn more than \$200 a month, half (50%) of their earnings above \$200 are deducted from their income support payment. This means that half of their earnings above \$200 do not affect their eligibility or the amount of money

they get for income support. Individuals can claim some child care and disability-related work costs as deductions from their earnings before they reduce their income support. Earnings are completely exempt from income support reductions if an individual is enrolled full time in high school or approved post-secondary institution.

ODSP promotes employment recipients by offering the following benefits to support recipients:

- *Employment and Training Start Up Benefit*, worth up to \$500 to help with the costs of starting a job or an employment related activity (for example, a job search).
- *Coverage for up-front child care costs*, worth the full cost of child care from a licensed provider and up to \$600 per child in a 12-month period from an unlicensed provider.
- *Work-Related Benefit*, worth \$100 to help with the costs of employment while working such as transportation or clothing.
- *Employment Transition Benefit*, worth \$500 to be used in any way to help with the transition from income support to employment when leaving ODSP for paid work. Paid work can be a full-time or part-time job, a paid training program or running your own business. This benefit is available once in a 12-month period.
- *Transitional Health Benefits* include ongoing health coverage if able to leave ODSP income support for paid work that does not have comparable health coverage. These benefits cover prescription drugs, dental care and vision care until an employer can offer comparable coverage.
- *Extended Health Benefits* include health coverage for individuals who are no longer financially eligible for income support because their income is too high and have high health costs. Depending on an individual's health care needs, these benefits may help with the cost of prescription drugs, dental care, vision care, medical supplies such as diabetic and incontinence supplies, transportation to and from medical appointments, and assistive devices including hearing aids.

In addition to these financial benefits offered through income supports, ODSP facilitates employment search and maintenance services.

Services offered:

ODSP ES services include a range of supports to job seekers with disabilities and employers. These services are noted below as they are listed on the Ministry of Community and Social Services website. Eligible ODSP ES applicants work with an approved community service provider to determine what supports they need to get and keep a job or start their own business.

- *Job Matching* - compares the requirements listed in a job description with the skills of available job seekers with disabilities. Once matches have been determined, the employer receives a list of potential candidates for the job.
- *Job Development* - helps the employer identify their staffing requirements, the skills needed to perform the work, and any bona fide occupational requirements. It also helps them remove language from job postings that could exclude eligible candidates with disabilities.
- *Job Trials* - Job trials are short-term (usually unpaid) work testing opportunities that let the employer “try out” a candidate and let the job seeker “try out” the job.
- *Job Coaching* - helps employees with disabilities adapt to the duties of a new job with use of a job coach. The job coach can help resolve issues and make sure that any accommodations provided to the employee allow them to perform the required job tasks.
- *On-the-Job Training* - structured training that takes place in the work environment after a new employee is hired. The training helps the employee learn their new job duties.
- *Job Accommodation Assistance* - analyzes and modifies the work environment to allow an employee with a disability to work more efficiently. It can provide employers with information and advice on the various types of workplace tools, supports, and resources available to help accommodate an employee with a disability.
- *Disability Awareness Training* - helps create an inclusive work environment for employees with disabilities through in-person workshops and/or other types of training for employers and staff. It can provide information on a range of disabilities or on a specific type of disability that might be new to the organization.

- *Workplace Accessibility Assessments* - evaluate a general worksite to identify common barriers that should be addressed by an employer in order to improve overall accessibility (e.g., the removal of a door or lowering of a printer table).
- *Accessible Technology Training* - teaches employers and employees how to use special computer software, hardware or technological devices that help an employee with a disability perform job duties.

The ministry website notes that “Core services such as job matching are provided at no cost, more extensive services such as accessible technology training may involve a fee [for employers], depending on the individual service provider.” Employment supports such as job coaching, on-the-job training, software and mobility devices, and transportation assistance may be provided to remove barriers to a job seeker’s access to competitive employment and assist the person in attaining his or her competitive employment goal.

Eligibility

An applicant for ODSP ES must provide:

- ✓ Medical documentation that they have a physical or mental disability/impairment that is continuous or recurrent and expected to last one year or more, and that the disability/impairment results in substantial barriers to employment that is verified by a prescribed professional;
- ✓ Proof that they are 16 years of age or more;
- ✓ Proof that they are a resident of Ontario (not including tourists, visitors or temporary residents); and
- ✓ Proof that they are legally entitled to work in Canada (by presenting their Social Insurance Number, work permit, record of landing or permanent resident card, Canadian birth certificate or passport).

According to the ODSP ES policy directives, “The determination of whether a person's disability presents a substantial barrier to competitive employment is made by considering its impact on the applicant’s ability to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment.” Applicants must submit a Verification of Disability/Impairment Form completed by a prescribed health or medical professional such as doctor, nurse, audiologist or a speech language pathologist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, etc. The professional must describe the disability/impairment and explain how it impacts an individual’s ability to find and keep work.

Employed applicants who are in a "job crisis" and require supports to maintain their current employment can apply for ODSP ES. Applicants who

have firm job offer but require services to accept the job and start work may also be eligible.

The policy directives emphasize that service providers must ensure there is no duplication of services for individuals receiving ES and participating in other employment service programs. Students with disabilities are permitted to apply for ODSP ES if they satisfy eligibility criteria. However, students with disabilities who are seeking summer employment are to be redirected to the summer jobs programs offered through other employment service such as Employment Ontario (EO)'s services for youth.

How and where to access services

Individuals must submit their applications for ES to their local ODSP office. They can also receive support from an approved ODSP ES community service provider to complete and submit these forms. Applicants are directed to contact their local ODSP office for more information about specific services where they live. Currently there are no waiting lists to access ES services through ODSP. Community service providers may have waiting lists for services through their organization, depending on their capacity and local demand.

ODSP ES funding is provided to community service providers based on the number of people with disabilities they support to obtain or retain employment. Funding contracts are based on outcomes achieved for competitive job placement and retention targets. Job placement targets are established annually for each regional ODSP office. These offices negotiate targets with individual community service providers based on outcomes achieved the previous year and to meet the overall regional target. Funding is earned when the service provider is successful in meeting their agreed upon targets. In addition, service providers can access ODSP Employment Project funding to enhance delivery of ODSP ES services in a manner that is not funded through the placement and retention payments. This may include specialized training or initiatives that promote sector specific employment opportunities.

Below, we have listed the number of community service providers by geographic location across the province. Some of these providers serve more than one city or region. Thus, the total number of providers below duplicates organizations who may serve more than one location.

Ontario's total population includes approximately 14 million people, including approximately 2 million people with disabilities. The province is often conceptually divided into northern and southern Ontario. Most of the population is located in the south. The geographically larger northern part is

more sparsely populated. The following table indicates that there are more service providers available in locations with a higher population. For example, in southern Ontario there are 42 service providers in the Greater Toronto Area (including Toronto, Oakville, Mississauga and Markham) which has a total population of approximately 2.6 million people and approximately 371,000 people with disabilities. In comparison, in northern Ontario there are 4 service providers in Thunder Bay which has a total population of approximately 108,000 people and 15,000 people with disabilities.

Table with 2 columns and 30 rows. Column 1 heading is Location and Column 2 heading is Number of ODSP ES service providers indicated with the lowercase letter n.

Table 1: ODSP ES service providers across Ontario

Location	n
Barrie	5
Belleville	3
Brantford	4
Chatham-Kent	3
Cobourg	3
Dryden	2
Fort Frances	1
Guelph	4
Hamilton	7
Kingston	7
London	10
Markham	6
Mississauga	9
Niagara	11
North Bay	3
Oakville	6
Oshawa	5
Ottawa	13
Owen Sound	3
Parry Sound	2
Peterborough	6
Sarnia	1
Sault Ste. Marie	4
Sudbury	4
Thunder Bay	4
Timmins	2
Toronto	21
Waterloo	7
Windsor	7

WSIB

Ontario's WSIB plays a key role in the province's occupational health and safety system. The WSIB administers no-fault workplace insurance for employers and their workers, and is focused on the prevention of workplace injuries, illnesses and fatalities. The WSIB provides disability benefits, monitors the quality of healthcare for injured/ill workers, and assists in early and safe return to work for workers who are injured on the job or contract an occupational disease.

Services offered

The WSIB supports injured workers to access the services and support they are entitled to under the Ontario workplace safety and insurance system. These supports include:

- *Benefits for*
 - Loss of earnings
 - Non-economic loss
 - Loss of retirement income
 - Future economic loss
 - Health care
 - Seriously injured workers
 - Spouses of deceased workers

- *Work Reintegration* - supports activities that help people return to work following a period of disability. Work Reintegration includes collaboration and co-operation between the disabled employee, their employer, as well as treating health professionals, union representatives, authorized representatives for the employee and/or their employer and the WSIB. It focuses on active recovery in the workplace whenever possible, and goal-oriented work transition plans when needed.

- *Vocational and functional assessment, and job coaching* – available on an as-requested basis to provide vocational and functional assessment, and job coaching services for injured/ill workers to help in their return-to-work planning.

- *Employment Placement and Retention Services* – available on an as-requested basis to provide job search training, job placement, training on the job, and employment retention services for injured/ill workers who have transferable or newly acquired skills, and need assistance in finding employment.

- *Injured Worker Outreach* - provides peer support, free information, advice and education to injured workers and their families through a network of offices across the province. Each IWOS office works independently and is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors.
- *Other resources for employers and workers* – available on the WSIB website to support return to work and recovery outcomes following a worker’s injury or illness at the workplace.

Eligibility

People who have experienced work-related injury or illness and work in specific sectors covered by the WSIB are eligible for services. The WSIB does not apply to persons whose employment by an employer is of a casual nature and who are employed otherwise than for the purposes of the employer’s industry. Some sectors such as banking and insurance and some new sectors, such as high-tech industries that have emerged subsequent to the adoption of the provincial regulations are also not covered. Executive officers of a corporation are not eligible.

How and where to access services

Injured or ill workers are required to follow a series of 9 steps to access WSIB services and supports. These steps are noted as follows:

1. Get proper medical treatment immediately following a work-related injury or illness and follow the recommendations of a health professional.
2. Report their injury or illness to their employer as soon as possible.
3. Contact their employer as soon as possible after seeking initial health-care treatment to begin discussing potential return to work.
4. Stay in contact with their employer throughout their recovery and provide them with information on their progress and status. Where possible, establish a schedule of regular contact and, for their own benefit, keep a record of these contact dates.
5. Work with their employer to identify suitable work opportunities. This is work that is safe, productive, within their functional abilities and restores pre-injury earnings as closely as possible.
6. Provide the WSIB with any relevant information requested concerning their return to work.
7. Report any significant changes in their medical condition or income that may affect their benefits. Individuals must report any material change in their status within 10 days of the change occurring.
8. Notify the WSIB of any disputes or disagreements concerning their return to work.
9. Co-operate in the Work Reintegration process.

If a worker refuses to co-operate in fulfilling these responsibilities, the WSIB could make a finding of non-co-operation, which could result in reduced, suspended or discontinued benefits.

According to the WSIB website, injured workers can access up to four different community service providers for vocational and functional assessments and job coaching services, depending on their geographic location. These service providers include Agilec, AGS Rehab Solutions Inc., March of Dimes Canada and Rehabilitation Network Canada Inc.

The following table lists the number of service providers available in various regions across the province.

Table with 2 columns and 21 rows. Column 1 heading is Location and Column 2 heading is Number of vocational and functional assessments and job coaching service providers indicated with the lowercase letter n.

Table 2: WSIB approved vocational and functional assessment and job coaching service providers across Ontario

Location	n
Barrie / Orillia	2
Belleville	1
Durham	2
Guelph/Kitchener/Waterloo	3
Halton/Peel	4
Hamilton	4
Kingston	1
London	2
North Bay	1
Ottawa	3
Owen Sound	1
Peterborough	1
Sault Ste. Marie	1
St. Catharines	2
Sudbury	1
Thunder Bay/Dryden/Kenora	1
Timmins	1
Toronto	4
Windsor	2
York	3

According to the WSIB website, injured workers can access up to five different community service providers for employment placement and retention services, depending on their geographic location. These service providers include Agilec, Insight Advantage, March of Dimes Canada, The Centres for Employment & Learning, and VPI Inc.

Table with 2 columns and 21 rows. Column 1 heading is Location and Column 2 heading is Number of employment placement and retention service providers indicated with the lowercase letter n.

Table 3: WSIB approved employment placement and retention service providers across Ontario

Location	n
Barrie / Orillia	2
Belleville	1
Durham	2
Guelph/Kitchener/Waterloo	2
Halton/Peel	2
Hamilton	3
Kingston	1
London	3
North Bay	1
Ottawa	2
Owen Sound	2
Peterborough	1
Sault Ste. Marie	1
St. Catharines	1
Sudbury	1
Thunder Bay/Dryden/Kenora	1
Timmins	1
Toronto	2
Windsor	2
York	2

In addition to these service providers, Injured Worker Outreach Services offices are located across Ontario in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area, Durham Region, Victoria County, Peterborough, Kingston, Ottawa, Waterloo Region, London, Essex/Kent (Windsor), Kirkland Lake, Sault Ste. Marie, Dryden, and Ear Falls.

Employment services for people with psychosocial disabilities

Our research indicates that people with psychosocial disabilities may access employment services that specialize in supports for persons with this type of impairment. Some of these services are provided by ODSP ES providers or WSIB. Services are also offered by organizations that specifically support people with psychosocial disabilities such as the Canadian Mental Health Associations (CMHA), community health clinics and social enterprises.

According to mentalhealthhelpline.ca there are 52 different programs offering employment or vocational services to people with psychosocial disabilities in Ontario. Many of these programs are offered by CMHA which is funded by Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) governed by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.

Ontario Works (OW) Employment Assistance

OW is intended to help people who are in financial need including, in some cases, people with disabilities. OW offers financial assistance, including income support to help with the costs of basic needs, like food, clothing, shelter and health benefits. Employment assistance is intended to help individuals find, prepare for and keep a job. This assistance may include, workshops on resume writing and interviewing; job counselling; job-specific training and access to basic education. In most cases, individuals must agree to participate in employment assistance activities in order to receive financial assistance.

Services offered

If an individual qualifies for OW, they may have access to a range of employment activities including:

- *Education Programs* to help finish high school, improve language skills, and/or upgrade reading, writing or math skills, as well as Job-Specific Skills Training as needed and requested
- *Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP)* is intended for young parents between the ages of 16 and 25, to help them finish high school, improve their parenting skills, and prepare for and find work.
- *Employment Placements* connect individuals with employers who are hiring, as well as help individuals prepare for the interview and access training for the job, if required.
- *Community Placements* support individuals to practice their skills, improve confidence and get up-to-date job references and contacts.

Eligibility

To be eligible for OW, an individual must:

- ✓ Live in Ontario
- ✓ Need money right away to help pay for food and shelter, and
- ✓ Be willing to take part in activities that will help find a job.

OW staff will assess an individual's financial situation and willingness to take part in activities to find a job. Individuals are required to share information about their:

- family size
- income
- assets, and
- housing costs.

OW staff work with individuals to develop a plan to find work and/or improve their skills. These activities are written up in a Participation Agreement. Individuals must sign an Application for Financial Assistance and a Participation Agreement to be eligible for service and assistance.

How and where to access services

To access services, individuals must contact their local OW or First Nations office. Offices are located across Ontario. OW clients may also access EO programs to get training, skills and experience.

Employment Ontario (EO)

EO combines employment and training services in one service delivery system. According to the service provider guidelines, EO services are intended to support "vulnerable populations and those under-represented in the labour market" (Ontario 2014, p. 5). Services are available to all job seekers, newcomers, apprentices, students, and employers. The service provider guidelines note, "Some Employment Service providers are fully accessible, and can provide a range of necessary supports and assistance to persons with disabilities. Others may need to work with organizations that specialize in services to persons with disabilities in the community, and make arrangements to provide Employment Services at those other locations" (p. 8). Employment services are delivered by a network of third-party service providers. Services are tailored to meet individual needs and can be provided one-on-one or in a group format.

Services offered

The EO program provides assisted and unassisted services to Ontarians with disabilities with specific programs to support students and youth, apprenticeships, second career, training and upgrading. The core components of EO services are:

- *Client Service Planning and Coordination* - Service providers explore the career, employment and training goals of individuals to direct them to the services considered most appropriate to achieve successful outcomes. Coordination also includes follow-up and monitoring of individual progress in the employment service.
- *Resource and Information (unassisted services)* - available to all individuals who are employed, under-employed, job seekers, students, laid off workers, apprentices, internationally trained and employers. This service provides information on local training and employment opportunities, community service supports, occupational and training requirements (including trades and apprenticeship), and resources to support independent or “unassisted” job search. EO providers will assist employers to attract and recruit employees by posting positions, and participating in job fairs or other community events.
- *Assisted services*
 - *Job Search* support to assist with career clarification and goal setting, skills and interest assessment, and interview and employment preparation.
 - *Job Matching* for job seekers to connect their skills, capabilities, interests and experience with the requirements of employers. Job seekers can also receive placement into employment and/or on-the-job training opportunities.
 - *Incentives* for employers are intended to provide on-the-job training, work experience, or skill level assessments to support an individual’s employment goals as consistent with the needs of the labour market. Incentives are linked to employer’s commitments and vary based on training required. Incentives are up to a maximum of \$8,000/individual including up to \$6,000 for training and \$2,000 for Apprenticeship Employer Signing Bonus, if applicable.
 - *Job/Training and Retention* supports longer-term attachment to or advancement in the labour market or completion of training, and is in addition to regular placement monitoring, support and follow-up. Service providers must, at a minimum develop mentoring opportunities to support participants.

Services through EO also include access to:

- *Youth Employment Fund* - to support youth between the ages of 15 and 29 to enter long-term employment.
- *Second Career* – financial support for skill development and training for individuals who have been laid off.
- *Employment and training supports* - available to address temporary financial barriers to participation in EO services. Supports are up to \$500 per client participating in any component of assisted Employment Service. They are only available to clients that have a family income that falls within the Low Income “Market Basket Measure Thresholds by MBM Region.” This threshold information is maintained by the federal government, at www.statcan.gc.ca.
- *Apprentice scholarship* – provides \$1,000 to support individuals who require upgrading to meet the academic eligibility requirements for apprenticeship training in their chosen trade.

Eligibility

EO services are available to all Ontarians. There are no eligibility requirements for access to Client Service Planning and Coordination and unassisted services. To access assisted services, individuals must be unemployed (i.e., working less than an average of 20 hours per week) and not participating in full-time training or education. Individuals must demonstrate sufficiently low incomes to qualify for employment and training financial supports (as noted above). To qualify for an apprenticeship scholarship, individuals must demonstrate an interest in the skilled trades/apprenticeship and able to meet the academic eligibility requirement for the trade in which they wish to register as an apprentice.

How and where to access services

EO offices are located across the province. Individuals can access services on a walk-in basis or may be referred to a service provider by another community or government agency. According to the EO website, there are 53 EO service providers that assist people with disabilities across Ontario.

Employment networks

Some service providers and employers in Ontario have created networks for support of the employment of people with disabilities. These networks promote collaboration between employment service providers and employers to share resources, job opportunities and job seeker referrals. There are at least nine formal networks in Ontario. These networks include:

Ontario Disability Employment Network

The Ontario Disability Employment Network is a professional body of employment service providers united to increase employment opportunities for people who have a disability by:

- Addressing issues related to removing barriers that limit employment opportunities for people who have a disability.
- Creating a provincial voice that can speak to government about issues that affect service delivery and support models and the ability of employment service providers to help people who have a disability achieve their employment goals.
- Developing marketing initiatives and providing education for the business and corporate sector about the merits of including people who have a disability in the workforce.
- Improving the skills and competency of employment service providers through networking, information sharing, training and the promotion of best practice in the sector.
- Creating strategies that provide professional recognition of organizations and those employees who provide employment supports for people who have a disability.

Ableworks.ca

ableworks.ca was established in 2009. This network is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services and managed by 16 employment service providing agencies in Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand, Norfolk and Brant counties. The network was formed to facilitate collaboration between service providers and employers to meet the staffing needs of employers in Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand, Norfolk and Brant. The network also aims to increase awareness of ODSP to promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Durham Region Employment Network

The Durham Region Employment Network is a non-profit umbrella network, established in 1993 and incorporated in 2001. The key function of the network is to support the employment services sector, including employers and service providers, with the goal of improving employment outcomes for job seekers with barriers, including people with and without disabilities. The network includes 21 employment service providers in Durham Region.

Ontario Job Opportunity Information Network

The Ontario Job Opportunity Information Network for Persons with Disabilities (JOIN) is a network of 26 community agencies in Toronto. The network is based in Toronto but explores disability and employment issues and opportunities across Ontario. JOIN includes a Business Leadership Network with approximately 75 employers who employ and promote increased employment of people with disabilities. The business leadership network is driven by businesses who take leadership to ensure ongoing hiring of persons with disabilities and all issues related to accommodation, accessibility and inclusion for all.

Northeast Employment Network

The Northeast Employment Network was established through a grant from the Employment and Modernization Fund from the Ministry of Community and Social Services – Developmental Services division. The network includes 6 Community Living agencies in northeastern Ontario.

Employment Accessibility Resource Network

Employment Accessibility Resource Network (EARN) is a community initiative, led by United Way Ottawa, that brings together approximately 75 employers, 23 service providers and other stakeholders in partnership. Their goal is to increase meaningful employment opportunities for people with disabilities and promote inclusive and accessible workplaces in Ottawa and surrounding area.

Ability First

The Ability First Coalition is a community initiative comprising volunteers from across the London and area business community. A group of volunteers from various sectors of business raise awareness of disability issues in the London and area workforce. This business-to-business partnership aims to bring employers together to share best practices related to hiring and retaining people with disabilities.

Employment Sector Council London-Middlesex

The Employment Sector Council London-Middlesex is a network of over 45 organizations serving individuals in the employment and training sector in the City of London and Middlesex County Ontario. Members include non-profit and public employment service delivery agencies, employers, trainers, educators and representatives from all three levels of government. Members include organizations supporting people with and without disabilities. The council maintains a sectoral perspective, advocating on behalf of its network of organizations and clients rather than for specific programs or agencies. The council includes a Job Developers Network to provide a forum for job developers from 16 non-profit employment agencies in the London area. Network members share job postings, professional development and networking opportunities, host collaborative activities and conduct relevant research and analysis.

Windsor Essex Employment Group

The Windsor Essex Employment Group include local employment service organizations that assist people with disabilities. The group recruits and engages community partners in the co-ordination of local employment services and act as a resource to service providers who work with people with disabilities. The group will also co-ordinate employment services for persons with disabilities to identify and make recommendations regarding gaps in service. The group shares information with persons with disabilities to raise awareness of community resources available to them.

Social enterprises

Social enterprises can fall outside the realm of mainstream employment services for people with disabilities. Social enterprises are businesses that provide education and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. These enterprises are typically run by and for people with disabilities and include several in Ontario that specifically support people with psychosocial disabilities. These businesses aim to provide meaningful employment opportunities, pay competitive wages or one that is based on a wage structure that reflects the industry (such as couriers). Social enterprises also offer employees the chance to acquire new skills, and extend their interests and capacities. Social enterprises may include people with various disabilities or other groups of people who are marginalized from the labour market. These enterprises are appearing across the province and vary in their size, scope and nature of work.

For example, Working for Change (www.workingforchange.ca) is a non-profit organization established in 1994 to respond to the need for employment opportunities for people with psychosocial disabilities. Their first catering company, the Raging Spoon, was created in 1997. Since that time, Working for Change has developed five additional social enterprises that provide employment to people with mental health issues. These enterprises include two more cafes, a community based research and peer research consulting business, and a gardening company. All of these enterprises are in the Greater Toronto Area.

Other social enterprises appear to be run by other community employment service providing organizations. Some of these enterprises are operated as part of an organization's employment service program to provide training and work experience for people with disabilities. These enterprises appear to pay workers minimum wage or better, while others resemble the structure of sheltered workshops. For example, one ODSP ES service provider notes on their website that their social enterprise "generates revenue through competitive, packaging and assembly contracts while creating transitional employment opportunities, skills development and social integration for people who face barriers to employment such as disability or social disadvantage." Coupled with these descriptions are images of workers with disabilities in a warehouse setting. As such, the social enterprise model may be implemented differently across the province and raises questions about the nature of this work. For example, is the social enterprise model being used to escape minimum wage requirements for competitive employment and support segregated employment? We believe this is an area for potential further research.

Other employment resources

There are a few other resources in Ontario that are designed to support the employment of Ontarians with disabilities. In no particular order, these resources are listed and described below.

Ministry of Community and Social Services - Employment and Modernization Fund

This fund is governed by the Ministry of Community and Social Services – Developmental services. The Employment and Modernization Fund is part of the Ontario government's \$810 million investment strategy for community and developmental services. According to the Ministry's website, this fund offers financial support to projects that promote greater inclusion and independence for Ontarians with developmental disabilities.

There are two funding-application streams:

- *Employment*: Projects that facilitate the shift towards competitive employment for individuals with developmental disabilities through a coordinated system that addresses a broad range of employment support needs. This stream supports collaborative initiatives that enable individuals to pursue real work for real pay in mainstream workplaces in the community.
- *Modernization*: Projects that promote innovation and collaboration within the developmental services sector and build linkages with other sectors in order to make services and supports more person-centred and responsive to the needs of individuals and families.

Ministry-funded transfer payment agencies that serve adults with developmental disabilities must be the lead applicant. However, the Ministry strongly encourages regional and cross-sectoral partnerships.

Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians - Inclusive Employment Advocacy Project

The Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC) Toronto Chapter has launched an Employment Advocacy Project to build the skills of persons with disabilities to make sure employment services and programs include persons with disabilities. This peer engagement and poverty reduction project aims to equip people with disabilities, especially blind and partially sighted, to advocate for equal access to employment services, programs and opportunities. Project activities include advocacy resource gathering/development, education, and training and mentoring. Project outcomes include the presentation of a case for inclusion and systemic change in the employment service sector.

Magnet

Magnet is an online network that connects job seekers with employers based upon skills, preferences and talent needs. The network is also a source of real-time labour market information for decision makers and community planners. Magnet's goal is to address unemployment and underemployment specifically as it relates to youth, new immigrants, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and other individuals facing barriers to employment. This not-for-profit initiative was founded by Ryerson University in Toronto, in partnership with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. Magnet is a collaborative hub of post-secondary institutions, not-for-profits, government, labour, and industry partners working on one common platform to address

unemployment and under-employment of Canadians. Magnet allows job seekers to privately and securely self-identify as a member of any employment equity group, promoting diversity and supporting bias free recruitment strategies. To date, Magnet's network includes over 90,000 job seekers, 9,000 employers, 30 universities and colleges and 190 community partners.

ODSP Action Coalition – Earnings & Employment Support Working Committee

The Coalition's Earnings & Employment Support Committee lobbies and monitors provincial income and employment support for ODSP recipients. The committee consists of co-chairs (one ODSP recipient and one service provider), legal clinic staff, ODSP ES service providers, community agency representatives and ODSP recipients from across the province. The committee usually meets every second month via conference call. In general, they discuss all issues related to ODSP and work, pushing for recipients to be treated fairly within the guidelines of the Ministry of Community and Social Services and advocating for improvements. The committee has focused on the 50% claw back of earnings, and developed principles to guide reforms to employment supports. The co-chairs report to the regular ODSP Coalition meeting on the committee's work. Occasionally the ODSP Coalition has the opportunity to meet with Ministry of Community and Social Services officials and political leaders, and committee representatives are invited for their input.

Gaps in services and supports

Our initial observations of employment policies, services and resources for Ontarians with disabilities point to a few potential challenges and gaps in support. For example, there appears to be a limited number of service providers that explicitly promote decent work and address precarious employment. Decent work is free, equitable, secure and dignified work (ILO, 2015) similar to the criteria found in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). According to the ILO, decent work provides a mechanism for inclusive economic growth. The decent work agenda has been examined in relation to employment in the Ontario non-profit sector (Van Ymerman & Lalande, 2015) and could be extended to an analysis of employment supports for Ontarians with disabilities.

The Law Commission of Ontario (2012) found that people with disabilities are more likely to precariously employed, including lower than average salaries, even after taking into account fewer hours worked in temporary or part-time jobs. The low income available in employment can be a

disincentive to enter the workforce, particularly where it does not address issues of poverty and well-being. On the other hand, "Persons with disabilities may [also] 'choose' non-standard employment only because appropriate accommodation of their disability is not available to them in a permanent, full-time position" (Law Commission of Ontario, 2012, p. 26). Further, Crawford describes,

The low employment of people with disabilities plays out differently across the fault lines of gender, age, visible minority status, Aboriginal person status, the state of the economy, geographic location, level of education, and whether people have participated in work-related training. Disability-specific factors also affect the chances of employment and include among others: type and severity of disability, its cause and age at onset...and the need, met or unmet, for general "disability supports." (Crawford, 2016, p. 16)

Thus, it is unclear at this stage of our research whether and how Ontario's employment services and supports are addressing precarious and decent work.

In general, it appears that non-profit organizations (many of which are operated by people without disabilities) are acting as intermediaries between employers and job seekers with disabilities. This intermediary status raises questions about benefits and potential barriers for employment of people with disabilities. The target-based funding mechanism with ODSP ES also raises questions about the capacities of community service organizations to support people with disabilities who are further removed from the labour market. For example, people with severe and visible disabilities may experience greater challenges obtaining employment which could delay the flow of funding for community organizations. Moreover, decent work may be difficult to obtain in our precarious labour market and could influence service providers to seek opportunities that are more readily available (i.e., low-waged, high turnover, entry level jobs).

There may be unique circumstances for job seekers in various geographic areas of the province. For example, we have observed challenges for employment in northern Ontario due, in part, to limited transportation and geographic spread of the population. The north also has limited access to high speed internet which is a main conduit for information on job opportunities and job searching resources. These challenges are highlighted in remote northern fly-in communities and pose considerations for the access to supports for persons with disabilities.

These apparent gaps and challenges will be examined in our next reports. For now, we will provide our own comments and reflections on employment for Ontarians with disabilities. These comments are based on insights shared by CWDO members.

CWDO comments and reflections on employment for Ontarians with disabilities

CWDO recently submitted feedback and recommendations to the federal government on the proposed national accessibility legislation. This submission focused on several aspects of the proposed legislation, including employment. The submission noted that *“Despite former efforts at affirmative action, people with disabilities remain the largest group of unemployed and underemployed people in the labour market. This has been the highest-ranked issue by our members for the past few years”* (CWDO submission on national accessibility legislation, 2017, p.20). The submission also noted that high rates of unemployment for people with disabilities could be reduced with a dedicated approach to education and training, recruitment and hiring.

CWDO found that Ontarians with disabilities want targets and timetables to help people get their foot in the door for employment and demonstrate their value to employers. This is especially true for people with visible or obvious disabilities who do not have a choice about disclosing their disability in an interview situation. Ontarians with disabilities believe that people with visible or obvious disabilities are more likely to be discriminated against in a hiring situation due to society’s general misperceptions about the abilities and skills of people with disabilities.

Based on feedback from members, CWDO recommends the creation of a centralized employment accommodation fund. This fund could preempt concerns from employers about the perceived expense of hiring someone with a disability. This fund could be used to support employers to invest in workplace accommodations that meet the needs and interests of employees with disabilities. In turn, employees with disabilities will be provided with the capacity to be fully productive in their jobs. CWDO notes,

Of course, throughout the recruitment and hiring process, accommodation needs to be front and centre. Jobs need to be promoted through organizations which focus on employment of persons with disabilities; accommodation must be available during the recruitment and hiring processes; and the impact of accommodation (or lack of it) must be considered separately from performance reviews

to ensure employees who have disabilities are evaluated fairly and have equitable opportunities for career advancement.
(CWDO submission on national accessibility legislation, 2017, p.20)

In addition to this recommendation, CWDO also provides the following recommendations to promote accessibility in employment.

Provide Accommodation

- Require organizations under federal jurisdiction to provide for the cost of accommodation of employees.
- Require organizations under federal jurisdiction to establish a centralized accommodation fund to address the needs of persons with disabilities in their organizations.
- Require that a person's need or perceived need for accommodation would not be permitted to adversely impact decisions related to hiring, retention, promotion or transfer within the organization.
- Require a process for addressing accommodation needs in a timely manner.
- Establish a clear and understandable complaint process if accommodation is denied.

Barrier-Free Premises

- Require organizations under federal jurisdiction to provide for accessible workplaces, including accessibility of common workspaces such as cafeterias, kitchens, boardrooms, libraries and washrooms.
- Require vertical bar style automatic door openers which allow for greater variation in use (i.e., by hand, elbow, knee or foot).

Hiring Targets

- Set targets and timetables for increasing the number of people with disabilities employed in organizations under federal jurisdiction.
- Focus on hiring and accommodating persons with severe and very severe disabilities as defined by Statistics Canada and report employment statistics by severity and type of disability.

Reduce Reliance on Medical Validation

- Require that employers consult with the person with a disability regarding their accommodation needs, to lessen reliance on the medical system to validate appropriate accommodations.

Training

- Require mandatory training for staff and managers on accessibility.
- Provide mandatory training to managers on the accommodation rights of persons with disabilities in the workplace, including how to manage employees with disabilities e.g., supervision, performance evaluations, workplace injury and return to work processes.
- Provide managers with training on how to communicate with employees with disabilities, e.g., what they should and should not say to an employee with a disability (to avoid discriminatory treatment).
- Provide training on "attitudinal barriers" for all staff and managers.

Adequate Income

- Provide for income security and benefit programs to be ample enough to ensure that people with disabilities who are not able to work, or are retired, do not live below the poverty line.

These recommendations point to a need for a comprehensive and holistic employment strategy that effectively promotes the well-being of individuals with disabilities. These recommendations also point to the need for support for workplaces to be more inclusive, as well as the recognition that employment is not the sole solution to poverty and other challenges experienced by Ontarians with disabilities.

To support the variety of opportunities, needs and interests of Ontarians with disabilities, CWDO has been engaged in several activities from January to April 2017. These activities are described next.

CWDO Activities

From January to April 2017, CWDO has focused their activities on access and inclusion legislation, and technological development.

Access and inclusion legislation

In January and February 2017, CWDO has focused efforts on responding to the federal government consultations on national accessibility laws. CWDO has gathered feedback and priorities from Ontarians with disabilities in a submission to the federal government that reflects these perspectives. The submission was forwarded to the government on February 24, 2017.

On January 2017, CWDO facilitated a community forum for members to share their views on what should be included in the federal government legislation to address accessibility. The forum was held in the accessible, online conferencing system. Information gathered at this forum was compiled with an online survey for CWDO members to respond to the federal government's consultation on national accessibility laws. The survey included a link to the federal government's consultation website if members want to respond personally. Building on the principles outlined by Barrier-Free Canada, the survey asked questions about what should be included in federal legislation to ensure accessible customer service, transportation (i.e., airports, airplanes, trains, train stations), communications (i.e., radio, telecommunications, internet and copyrights), employment, as well as anything else that should be covered under the national accessibility law to address barriers. Some examples of general requirements were provided such as the affirmation of Canada's commitment to the CRPD; information and knowledge sharing about accessibility laws, policies, programs and services; media campaigns that promote the dignity and value of people with disabilities.

In February 2017, CWDO members participated in a federal government consultation on accessibility legislation that was held in Toronto. Observations from this consultation were published in a report that was shared with CWDO members and on the CWDO website.

This 26-page submission to the federal government on national accessibility legislation proposes principles and specific areas CWDO believes should be addressed in federal legislation. It was developed in consultation with members who attended an online, virtual forum on January 10, those who responded to CWDO's survey December 2016 to February 2017, and informed by CWDO's participation in the federal government's consultation on national accessibility legislation. The submission supports Barrier-Free

Canada's principles for accessibility. The submission outlines general requirements for a clear and broad definition of disability, a 10-year timeline for realization, no erosion of existing rights, sufficiently broad applicability and strict enforcement measures. The submission outlines CWDO's recommendations for accessible customer service, airline and train travel, communications, employment, as well as the ways in which these recommendations can counter ableism.

In addition to participating in the federal government consultation process, in January 2017, CWDO reached out via newsletter to invite members to report evidence of employers following the new accessibility standards. CWDO invited this reporting as one way to document more people with disabilities being becoming employed over time because of this legislation.

Technology

Technology is a priority area of development at CWDO. It is through this technology that CWDO can inform and communicate with members, share information and encourage collaboration. With the ability to connect participants using a broad array of devices from PCs to androids and telephone. The system is intended to virtually support cooperation, collaboration and participation of CWDO members, partners and allies. It will also strengthen CWDO's capacity by engaging more Ontarians with disabilities in our projects and issues resolution.

From January to April 2017, CWDO therefore has been actively working with Talking Communities to enhance technological capacity in the organization. For example, Talking Communities has been working with CWDO to troubleshoot and improve the online conferencing system. On February 3, CWDO invited Talking Communities to test members' operating systems on Windows, Mac, Android, and iOS devices in the CWDO conference Room. Talking Communities was also available by phone to test various systems. This event was part of an initiative to develop the capacity, consistency and sustainability of CWDO's online conferencing system.

In March 2017, the CWDO Hackathon project began. The purpose of this project is to connect people with disabilities with organizations that require accessibility user testing. The project will involve collecting information about the needs of organizations that require accessibility user testing and matching these needs to end users with disabilities with the skills to conduct appropriate testing. The project will assess users' abilities to conduct various accessibility tests to effectively match their skill sets with the needs of organizations.

The project is proposed in four phases. Phase one will involve building a proof of concept for testing and a basic workflow to support funding applications for further development. A prototype will be developed to allow testers to register, organizations to find testers and testers to upload videos of their tests. With external funding support, phase two will scale up the prototype to include a payment system, bilingual accessibility and provide access to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines experts to register in a directory. The proposed third phase focuses on sustainability of the model that incorporates lessons learned from phase two, and expands testing environments. This phase may include extra features such as coordinating organizations with testers who are willing/able to work onsite, and permit testers to upload videos of their tests in mobile and computer environments.

CWDO Capacity Building

From January to April 2017, CWDO has focused on enhancing technological capacity to support partnership development, member engagement and potential funding proposals.

Partnerships and Alliances

Through the course of information gathering for the current project, CWDO has reached out to the ODSP Action Coalition and met with members from its Earnings and Employment Supports Working Committee. CWDO has also made new connections with members of the Ontario Disability Employment Network including service providers, regional employment networks and advocacy organizations. CWDO's research process is working to foster knowledge and resource sharing with the Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians, and the Ontario Centre for Workforce Innovation who are conducting related projects on the employment of Ontarians with disabilities. These organizations expressed interest in CWDO's research findings and reports. Some individuals from these organizations want to become members and contribute to the work of CWDO.

These outreach activities contribute to CWDO's goal to enhance the organization's reputation, as noted in the current strategic plan. As described in Report #1, CWDO aims to be a well-known non-partisan organization with an Ontario, cross-disability focus. By enhancing CWDOs reputation, members' expertise will increasingly be sought out by government, researchers, and Ontarians with disabilities. CWDO continues to welcome other organizations to seek out alliances and work together on issues of common importance.

Financial Development and Sustainability

CWDO continues to seek out appropriate funding opportunities. For example, the CWDO Hackathon project is developing a proof of concept that can be leveraged for relevant funding applications to support the development of this initiative and CWDO's technological capacity. With supportive funding, this initiative can support members to connect with organizations on a fee for service basis to enhance web accessibility. By developing the platform, this initiative will sustain itself through payments from organizations who require accessibility testing.

As CWDO continues to reach to other organizations, we are looking to identify potential funders and grants that reflect CWDO's values and mission. These opportunities may build on existing efforts and/or the present project. Financial development and sustainability remains an area of need for CWDO.

Conclusion

This report provides a descriptive overview of employment programs and services in Ontario. We describe the nature of employment services offered across the province with greater detail on disability-specific programs (i.e., ODSP ES and WSIB). This descriptive report provides an overview of the disability-employment service landscape in Ontario and points to a few potential challenges and considerations for further research. As such, our next report will focus on the consumer experience of employment services and supports in Ontario from perspective of persons with disabilities across the province. We will be seeking input on what is working well and what is not working well for people with disabilities engaged in the various employment policies, programs and services outlined in Reports #1 and #2.

As this project continues to focus on employment for Ontarians with disabilities, CWDO has focused on other activities related to access and inclusion legislation, and technology. These areas represent current opportunities for development and advocacy. We will continue to report on these and other relevant activities coming up between May and August 2017.

Below, we leave you with a list of references cited in this report. We also include a list of online resources to provide some guidance for those seeking more information on policies, programs and reports mentioned above. For even more information, please contact us by email at cwdoproject@tbaytel.net, or cwdo@tbaytel.net. You may also reach us by phone at 807-473-0909.

References and Online Resources

Barrier-Free Canada: <http://barrierfreecanada.org/principles/>

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Employment services for people with psychosocial disabilities

Mental Health Helpline -

<http://mentalhealthhelpline.ca/Search/AdvancedSearch>

This is a 3-step process. Step 1: Select location; Step 2: Select 'Vocational/Employment' from the dropdown menu under 'Type of Service'. You can also select other specific information as needed in this section; Step 3: Select individual profile characteristics as appropriate.

EO Resources for people with disabilities

Employment Ontario – Find employment and training services at:

<http://feats.findhelp.ca/eng/search.html>

This is a 3-step process under 'What services are available near me?'. Step 1: Select Ontario Employment Assistance Services from the dropdown menu under 'Looking for Work'. You can also select other specific information as needed in this section; Step 2: Select location; Step 3: Select "Persons with Disabilities" from the dropdown menu.

ODSP Resources

ODSP – Employment Supports Policy Directives:

<http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/en/mcscs/programs/social/directives/index.aspx#es>

ODSP – General information:

<http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/en/mcscs/programs/social/odsp/index.aspx>

ODSP – To find a local ODSP office go to the Ontario Social Assistance Office Finder at:

<http://www.officelocator.mcscs.gov.on.ca/Index.aspx?lang=en>

ODSP – To find a list of local ODSP ES community service providers go to:

<http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/en/talent/employer/hiring/index.aspx>. This is a 3-step process. Step 1: Select location; Step 2: Select the employment services required; Step 3: Select from the list of individual service providers for more detailed information about their services. *Note: Our search revealed that some organizations listed are no longer in existence, changed names or merged with other organizations.*

OW Employment Assistance

OW Employment Assistance – General information:

http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/en/mcscs/programs/social/ow/help/employment_assistance.aspx

OW – Online application for social assistance:

http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/en/mcscs/programs/social/apply_online.aspx

OW – To find a local office go to:

<http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/en/mcscs/programs/social/ow/contacts/index.aspx>

WSIB Resources

WSIB – General information for workers:

http://www.wsib.on.ca/WSIBPortal/faces/WSIBStreamPage?fGUID=835502100635000219&_afLoop=825415671154000&_afWindowMode=0&_afWindowId=15ov5h9ig1_26#%40%3F_afWindowId%3D15ov5h9ig1_26%26_afLoop%3D825415671154000%26_afWindowMode%3D0%26fGUID%3D835502100635000219%26_adf.ctrl-state%3D15ov5h9ig1_54

WSIB – To find a list of work reintegration service providers go to:

http://www.wsib.on.ca/WSIBPortal/faces/WSIBArticlePage?fGUID=835502100635000245&_afLoop=825446949463000&_afWindowMode=0&_afWindowId=15ov5h9ig1_51#%40%3F_afWindowId%3D15ov5h9ig1_51%26_afLoop%3D825446949463000%26_afWindowMode%3D0%26fGUID%3D835502100635000245%26_adf.ctrl-state%3D15ov5h9ig1_75