

**Things about
intellectual
disability that you
may not have known**

FOR EMPLOYERS



5 things about intellectual disability that you may not have known and that can make your workplace more inclusive.

People with intellectual disability can (and do!) work in the open employment:

Open employment is for all people. It refers to a job market where people with intellectual disability works alongside their peers without disabilities. They are paid a fair wage and are supported appropriately to fulfill their job requirements. Open employment is a human right and laws in Australia state that people with intellectual disability cannot be treated differently to other workers. Research tells us, that people with intellectual disability who work in the open job market, have better life outcomes than those who work in the closed job market such as Australian Disability Enterprise. Many people with intellectual disability work successfully in the open job market with appropriate supports in place.

People with intellectual disability are lifelong learners:

There is a misconception that people with intellectual disability aren't capable of learning new things. This is not true and people with intellectual disability learn things throughout their lives. In your workplace you should expect that your colleague with an intellectual disability can expand their work duties. These tasks should be taught in small steps that are built upon over time. Remember, that while people with intellectual disability may take a bit longer to learn a new task, with time and appropriate supports, they will achieve it and be ready to take on a new challenge.

Visual's are fantastic for people with intellectual disability:

Visual supports are fantastic for people with intellectual disability who may find it tricky to remember multistep processes or struggle with literacy. Having a visual representation of a task, not only allows them to be more independent, but also means that they can refer to it if they forget a step or where they are up to in a task. Visual supports can be used to step out work schedules, step out tasks, emergency procedures or work expectations. Having visual supports will also benefit everyone in your workplace as they can prompt people to remember important expectations, like cleaning your own dishes after lunch!

People with intellectual disability often have better receptive language than expressive language:

There are two types of language, expressive language and receptive language. People with intellectual disability will often have better receptive language than expressive language which means that while they understand and comprehend things quite well, they may not be able to express themselves as well. You may have experienced this yourself if you speak another language which you can understand very well but then can't quite find the words when speaking. It is important to remember this when speaking with or training a person with intellectual disability in your workplace. Be mindful of the tone you use when speaking with them, treat them like an adult, allow time for processing information and give space to use another form of communication if that is the person's preference.

A person with intellectual disability can make their own decisions and should be supported to do so:

It is a human right that people should be able to make decisions about their own lives. This is no different for people with intellectual disabilities. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states that people with disabilities should be provided with support for making their own decisions (Supported Decision Making) rather than have decisions made for them (Substitute Decision Making). It is also important that their decisions are respected once made. Good Supported Decision Making is a learned skill. There are many frameworks available online to help your workplace hone this skill.

If you need any support with employing a person with intellectual disability in your workplace, please feel free to contact Down Syndrome Queensland for support.