

# Helping Everyone Belong

## How Mentorship Makes a Difference

### Learning together at work

People living with severe disabilities have a much harder time finding work. In 2023, Statistics Canada reported that the employment rate for people with severe disabilities was 40 per cent lower than for people without disabilities.

When we use the talents and passions of people who live with disabilities, our work communities can become stronger. One way to help people with disabilities is through mentorship. Mentorship is important because people with disabilities often face challenges getting and keeping jobs.

Mentorship occurs when a more experienced person helps someone who is new to a job or skill. A mentor can share advice, answer questions, and help the person feel supported.

Mentorship works best when the mentor and mentee work and plan together. The mentee can choose their goals and what they want to learn. The mentor can help them build skills, solve problems, and grow with confidence.

Signal49 Research looked at how mentorship supports adults with disabilities. We surveyed 1,000 people who identified as having a disability. We also spoke with 30 mentors and mentees to learn about their experiences.

We found that mentorship helps people with disabilities succeed at work. It gives them the support they need as they build their skills and confidence.



### Support that builds confidence, connection, and community

Our survey found that most people with disabilities have not been part of a mentoring relationship. Only 30 per cent have been a mentor and only 34 per cent have been a mentee.

For the people who *did* have a mentor, the most helpful things the mentor did for them were

- Teaching them new skills
- Helping them to feel more confident
- Giving them advice and guidance

Mentorship can make a big difference for people with disabilities. It helps them grow and feel supported. It can also build strong relationships at work. Other benefits we heard included that the mentees

- Built long-lasting supportive friendships between themselves and their mentors
- Made better decisions, thanks to advice and support they received from their mentors
- Used the skills they learned, during their mentorship, both at work and in daily life
- This made mentees want to give back. Many later became mentors themselves.

## Mentors make it easier to speak up

Mentors can help people with disabilities understand their rights and how to speak up at work. We heard that having the right match is important. Many people with disabilities prefer mentors who have similar lived experiences. This helps people feel safe asking for support and getting the help they need to do their best work.

Mentors are more experienced. This helps them feel more comfortable asking for help at work. Younger workers may find it hard to speak up. The same often goes for workers who are new to a job or people who are newly living with a disability. Mentors help mentees overcome this fear.

Mentors guide mentees through problems at work and share tips from their own experience. For example, a mentor may guide a mentee through a difficult conversation about asking their boss for extra help. This support can make the workplace easier, safer, and more helpful for everyone.

## Mentorship supports growth and belonging

Mentorship can help make workplaces more inclusive. It can also give people with disabilities better chances to grow and succeed. The people we spoke with said mentorship works best when there is a basic plan to guide the relationship. Flexible approaches are also important.

We heard that most mentorships were informal. This sometimes meant mentees wanted more check ins and support. This left mentors feeling overwhelmed. A formal mentoring program can set guidelines to help people get the most from mentoring. It can also help avoid common mistakes that can get in the way of a good mentorship experience.

To learn more about how mentoring can provide guidance, support, and real life experience to make workplaces more inclusive, please read the full report: [\*Fostering Inclusion Through Mentorship: A Call to Action From People With Disabilities\*](#)

## Want to help make your job more inclusive? Read our research to get started.

[\*Supporting Employees With Disabilities: Key Insights on Disclosure and Accommodations\*](#)

[\*From Compliance to Culture: Accessibility Beyond Disclosure\*](#)

[\*Build Diverse Workforces: Strategies and Tools for Inclusive Mentorship\*](#)

[\*Opportunity for All: Improving Workplace Experiences and Career Outcomes for Canadians With Disabilities\*](#)

[\*Building Workplaces Where Neurodiverse Workers Thrive\*](#)



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