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INSIGHTS FOR
INCLUSIVE
WORKPLACES

Summertime and Sunshine!

Depending on your sector, the summer can be a time to recharge and plan for the fall or, the busiest time of your year! Regardless of where you are, this edition has practical learning and content you can apply now, or when you get some time to breathe.

In this edition, we celebrate Disability Pride Month, with a focus on employee mental health in the workplace, a spotlight on an OCTC engaged business and a history of Disability Pride month and why it's important. As always, you'll find featured resources and key events to help build your disability awareness and confidence.

Promising Practices: Creating Mentally Healthy Workplaces

Mental health is often an invisible disability and can be overlooked or ignored, especially in the workplace. According to CAMH, a leading mental health hospital and research centre, only 32% of Canadian employees “feel that their organization’s leadership is taking action to address workplace mental health”. ([source](#))

- **Create a mental health strategy:** Your strategy should align with, and support, your business strategy. For example, when there may be times in your business cycle that are busier or more stressful, planning for and acknowledging those periods can go a long way towards reducing the impact to employees mental health.
- **Build mental health knowledge in your leadership:** Leaders and managers can have the most impact on employee's mental health. Equipping them with knowledge and promoting mental health awareness, empowers them to be champions for mental health in the workplace.

A proactive approach to creating a mentally healthy workplace can increase productivity and decrease absenteeism. CAMH offers a "[Mental Health Playbook for Business Leaders](#)" that offers more tips and insight.

OCTC Member Highlights

Spotlight: Ally First Aid

Ally First Aid was built to provide First Aid training that is more engaging, with a goal to empower individuals with the confidence they need to take action when it matters most. Their training was already designed to be inclusive, but they wanted to build on their own internal skills to better prepare for recruiting and hiring people who have a disability. By expanding their knowledge and actively recruiting people who have a disability, they felt that they could better reflect the diversity of the businesses they serve.



Now in their second year with OCTC, they have taken advantage of OCTC's learning and skills development to build on their inclusive business credentials!

Kirk Raybould, owner Ally First Aid, provides some insight on his experience with OCTC and hiring that better reflects his community and customers:



Why did you engage with Ontario Corporate Training Centre (OCTC) project?

We engaged with OCTC to strengthen our commitment to building an inclusive workplace. As a growing business, we recognized the importance of creating opportunities for individuals of all abilities and wanted to ensure we had the knowledge, resources, and confidence to recruit, support, and retain employees who have disabilities.

How has OCTC enabled hiring a person who has a disability?

OCTC has provided valuable education, practical resources, and ongoing support that helped us better understand inclusive hiring practices and workplace accommodations. The guidance we received increased our confidence and allowed us to approach recruitment with a more informed and inclusive mindset. We now feel better equipped to create an environment where employees can succeed and contribute meaningfully.

What benefit do you think diversity and inclusion has for your business?

Diversity and inclusion bring different perspectives, experiences, and strengths to our team, allowing us to better reach the diverse communities we work with every day. Creating an inclusive workplace aligns with our mission of empowering and supporting others, and it helps us build a stronger, more compassionate organization.

To celebrate their two-year anniversary with OCTC, Ally First Aid would like to offer OCTC newsletter readers 20% off first aid training. Simply use the code OCTC20 when registering for any First Aid/CPR courses at www.allyfirstaid.com.

Welcome Our New Collaborators!



July is Disability Pride Month

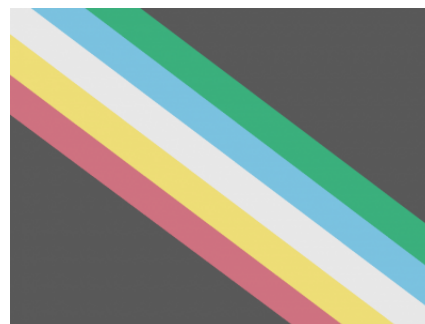
Disability Pride Month started in 1990 to celebrate the passing of the *American's with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. The ADA was a groundbreaking law recognizing that people who have a disability experience discrimination and providing much broader protections than previous laws.

More importantly for us in Ontario, it laid the foundation for the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* in 2008. In many regards, the AODA is now the gold standard, provincially, for protections for people who have a disability. While there is still a lot to be done to be truly inclusive, the AODA remains a significant marker of progress.

In 2023, the *Disability Pride Month Act* shared that disability is not only an identity, but also a community with a diverse culture all their own to be proud of and celebrated. Disability culture is about visibility and self-value. Disability Pride Month is a time for recognizing these facts and learning from people who have a disability. (source)

Disability Pride is represented by the disability pride flag. Its design is a powerful representation of the community, and the experiences of people who have a disability.

- All six flag colors: Disability spans borders between nations
- Black background: Mourning for people harmed by ableist violence and abuse
- Diagonal Band: Cutting across the barriers that separate people who have a disability from society
- The colours represent different types of disabilities:
 - Red Stripe: Physical disabilities
 - Gold Stripe: Cognitive and intellectual disabilities
 - White Stripe: Invisible or undiagnosed disabilities
 - Blue Stripe: Mental health disabilities
 - Green Stipe: Sensory disabilities



Featured Resources!

In recognition of June being National Indigenous History Month and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Pride Month, we're featuring tools and resources that empower organizations to create more inclusive workplaces for workplaces for employees who are Indigenous and 2SLGBTQQIA+:

National Indigenous History Month: Last year, the ODEN podcast "*You can't Spell Inclusion Without a "D"*", featured an episode on the intersection between disability and First Nations and Inuit communities. Access [Episode 29: Intersectionality Part 2 — Disability in the First Nations and Inuit Communities](#) to learn more about the intersection between Indigeneity and disability. You can also access more resources focused on the Indigenous community on [our website](#).

Pride Month: June was also Pride month, when we celebrated the 2SLGBTQQIA+ Community. OCTC has resources for employers searching to learn more about the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community. [Access those resources](#). The same "You Can't Spell Inclusion Without a "D" podcast series featured an episode about disability in the LGBTQ2S+ community; [Ep. 28: Intersectionality Part 1 — Disability in the LGBTQ2S+ Community](#).

OCTC features resources for many equity deserving groups under the "Workplaces Resources" heading on our [website](#).

Upcoming Events

Reimagining Workplaces: Succeeding through Disability Inclusion

Join us on June 29th for a one-hour virtual session exploring ways to expand your recruiting strategies. Inclusive hiring practices mean you can target a larger number of skilled prospects and gain more exposure to skilled workers.

Date: Wednesday July 29th, 2026

Time: 1:00 – 2:00PM EST

Location: Virtual

[Register Now!](#)

ODEN Business Lunch & Learn: Connecting Talent and Opportunity – An Introduction to the Sapphire Program

This event will help you discover how you can connect with job seekers who have a disability and create a more disability inclusive workforce.

Date: Tuesday September 8th, 2026

Time: 12:00 – 1:00 EST

Location: Virtual

[Register](#)

The celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month culminates with a national celebration “Light It Up!”. Since 2020 businesses and organizations have come together to light up their building in blue or purple to help shine a light on the skills, talents, and contributions of people who have a disability.

Over 900 locations participated in 2020, to learn about how you can participate [check out the recording](#) of the introductory webinar for 2026.

You can also register your sites participation for 2026 and access more info on the [campaign site](#).

Date: Thursday October 15th, 2026

Location: National Day of Celebration

Stream

We are proud to collaborate with ODEN again this year on their annual Rethinking Disability Conference. The conference runs over three days with a special track and focus for business leaders and HR professionals on November 3rd. This year's theme is "Collaborate to Innovate".

The business stream will help you build greater confidence and knowledge in disability inclusion. The session is led by ODEN's Disability Employment Inclusion Specialists, and this year will feature a presentation from Mark Wafer. Mark is a former Tim Horton's franchise owner, and business leader, with over 25 years of experience in inclusive hiring. His insight and experience will provide real world experience of the benefits and value of inclusion in the workplace.

Participants will also earn 3.75 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) hours accredited by the Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA).

Date: Tuesday November 3, 2026

Location: National Day of Celebration

Register Today - Space is Limited

If you're looking to start or continue your disability inclusion journey in your business, please e-mail us at

info@ontariotrainingcentre.com



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