

Home > Culture and inclusion > Disability employment > Disability and inclusive workplaces > People with disability at work

People with disability at work

On this page

Attitudinal barriers

Systemic barriers

Structural barriers

People with disability work across a wide range of jobs in the NSW public sector. It is important we work to remove the barriers at work for people with disability to ensure they are able to participate in their workplace and feel included. The public sector workforce should reflect the diversity of the communities we work with.

There are three types of barriers most commonly faced by people with disability:

- **Attitudinal barriers:** lack of knowledge and understanding, lack of confidence of recruiters and hiring managers, low expectations, fear of making a mistake.
- **Systemic barriers:** job descriptions, application processes, built environment barriers, lack of time and resources, lack of 'straight-through' processes, complexity of employment service programs and providers.
- **Structural disadvantage:** education, work experience and discrimination.

Attitudinal barriers

Typical attitudinal barriers in the workplace include:

- negative attitudes towards or assumptions about people with disability
- lack of knowledge about how to recruit/retain people with disability
- workplace culture.

There are key things you can do to address attitudinal barriers in your workplace:

- **Build disability confidence and awareness** at all levels of your agency, including for management, team leaders, supervisors, and peers.

- Check yourself – avoid making assumptions about the skills, capabilities or working preferences of people with disability.
- Learn about how to run a more **inclusive recruitment process**.
- Become accredited as a **Disability Confident Recruiter**.
- Educate yourself about disability and **think about the language that you use**.
- Treat everyone with respect and lead by example.
- Share your knowledge with others – especially hiring managers and those in workforce planning.
- For more advice **visit the Includeability Resources for Employers pages**.

Systemic barriers

Typical systemic barriers include:

- workforce planning targets not including people with disability
- inaccessible websites, role descriptions and buildings
- role descriptions which do not clearly state essential or inherent requirements
- inflexible interview requirements
- lack of adjustments throughout the application and assessment process
- health declarations or assessments where it is not made clear what is required to ‘pass’ or which assess attributes other than those directly linked to inherent requirements
- the format of job offers.

There are key things you can do to address system barriers in your workplace:

- Embed workforce equity and diversity considerations into your **strategic workforce planning processes**.
- **Ensure websites are accessible** and allow for all candidates to proceed through the application process and upload documents. If there are known accessibility issues, make sure you have a contact person who can support a person with disability to complete and submit their application.
- Refer to the **essential requirements factsheet** to ensure your role descriptions aren’t discriminatory.
- Consider how assessments can be as inclusive as possible. For example, talk to all applicants about their needs for interviews and other assessments. Be flexible and make adjustments to support individual needs.
- Use **best practice interviewing techniques**.
- Make any necessary **workplace adjustments**.
- Explain why screening checks such as health assessments are being done. Health assessments of this kind should be carried out only to assess the person’s capacity to carry out the inherent requirements

and demands of the role.

- **Ensure you are meeting anti-discrimination requirements.**

Structural barriers

Structural disadvantage compounds over time. You may not have any direct role in overcoming the structural disadvantage, but knowledge of it helps you to contextualise the multilayered barriers that people with disability can face.

Examples include:

- experiences of institutional ableism and discrimination
- socio economic disadvantage; higher unemployment rates
- inequality in education
- inequitable access to health services
- social exclusion and marginalisation.

There are key things you can do to address structural barriers in your workplace:

- Be informed about people with disability and **work, attitudinal, system and structural barriers.**
- Inform others by providing **information that counters myths and misconceptions about people with disability in the workforce.**
- Recognise barriers in your organisation, call them out, build barrier free systems and take steps towards **making your workplace inclusive.**
- Embed **inclusive recruitment practices**, take a critical view of your own agency's recruitment process and try to identify barriers, and develop methods to eliminate them.
- Provide meaningful employment to people with disability.