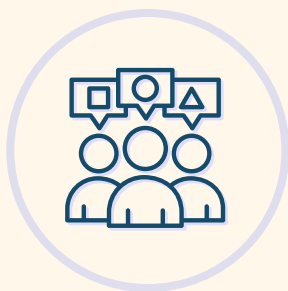


Employment Issues for deaf people

Deaf people who are employed often face barriers and discrimination in the workplace, experiencing limited job prospects and advancement opportunities, and enduring miscommunication practices. They often feel there are not many choices for career pathways and tend to limit to what they could go into that requires less advocacy or efforts on both them and the employers.

By implementing fair employment practices, such as offering reasonable accommodations, fostering inclusive work environments, and supplying opportunities for professional development, barriers to employment for those deaf employees.



Accessible



Fair



Supportive

Importance of inclusive policies and practices in the workplace

Inclusive policies and practices play a pivotal role in ensuring a fair, accessible, and supportive work environment for people with disabilities, however for deaf individuals it is much more complex than some simple inclusive predominantly hearing-based practices. When the AIDE framework and principles here are being followed, employers and businesses will be able to cater for their deaf employees the best they can. By adopting Deaf Australia's AIDE model, employers not only follow legal requirements but also prove a commitment to accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Employers and businesses are asked to promote inclusive employment practices. They are encouraged to advocate for equal opportunities, reasonable accommodations, and accessible communication in the workplace. Also, the engagement with Deaf community to encourage deaf people to consider applying and working for them when they receive the signs that employers are valuing their diverse perspectives and skills.

Considerations need to be taken when advertising and hiring for workers and deaf people applying for the positions. Ensure there is provisions in place to have accommodations readily available when asked, such as Auslan interpreters.

Things to consider

1. Equal Employment Opportunity

Employers and businesses need to ensure that hiring, promotion, and advancement decisions are based on merit, qualifications, and abilities, rather than disability status. There is a risk of tokenism; a means to put a tick to progress at the workplace when being challenged to provide a placement for person with disability and going with the deaf (usually hard of hearing) with the least accommodations needed.

2. Communication Accessibility

Businesses and employers are bound to oversee the provision of accessible communication methods. This includes sign language interpreters, captioning, and/or assistive technology, to help effective interaction for deaf employees without any restrictions. They know there are means for supports for this to happen, such as the Employment Assistance Fund (EAF) under Job Access (<https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/employment-assistance-fund-eaf>).

3. Reasonable Accommodations

Employers must supply necessary accommodations to enable deaf individuals to perform their job duties, including communication support, assistive technology, and workplace modifications, and readily support when they are struggling or facing discrimination in their workplace.

4. Flexible Work Arrangements

A workplace needs to allow for customised work schedules or remote work options to accommodate the unique needs and preferences of deaf employees, ensuring they can work comfortably, safely, and efficiently. Some deaf employees find the workplace to be disruptive, especially the open-space floor for hard of hearing people, and the issue with navigating through the building if it's being renovated.



Employers and businesses are also encouraged to implement Deaf/Auslan awareness and sensitivity training as it is a critical step in creating an inclusive workplace for the deaf employees and the rest of the team. This type of training:

- Raises awareness about the challenges faced by deaf individuals and promotes empathy, understanding, and acceptance among colleagues.
- Educates employees about the various communication methods used by deaf individuals, such as sign language, and how to effectively interact with them.
- Helps to dispel myths and misconceptions surrounding deafness, fostering a more inclusive and respectful work environment.
- Being aware of the microaggressions and encourage the increase of micro validations.
- Equips employees and management with the skills to find and implement reasonable accommodations, ensuring a level playing field for all.

Here are some examples for both communications and workplace adjustments, however the best practice is to ask the deaf employee themselves directly to obtain the best accommodations for them.

1. Ensure that meetings, presentations, and discussions are accessible by supplying qualified Auslan and other requested sign language interpreters to ease communication between deaf employees and their colleagues.
2. Utilise captioning for videos, webinars, and presentations, making audio content accessible to deaf individuals who rely on written text. Alternatively, supply transcripts that can be adapted for deafblind employees.
3. Offer devices that amplify sound or supply clarity in noisy environments, enabling deaf employees to take part fully in group discussions and meetings.
4. Emphasise the use of written materials, visual aids, and presentations to complement verbal communication, ensuring information is accessible to all employees.

5. Install visual alert systems for notifications, alarms, and emergency situations, ensuring that deaf employees are alerted to important events in the workplace.
6. Ensure that workstations are configured to accommodate the needs of deaf employees, with considerations for lighting, spacing, and ergonomic adjustments.
7. Provide access to specialised technology, such as telecommunication devices, video conferencing platforms with real-time captioning, and other assistive tools that enhance communication.
8. Appoint quiet spaces where employees can engage in focused work or hold private conversations, providing a conducive environment for effective communication with hard of hearing individuals, and when using Auslan interpreters.
9. Consider the culture in the workplace, especially the socialisation of all employees, and the impacts and attitudes of others around the deaf employees, and types of interactions and adjustments that could be encouraged and implemented positively.
10. Explore the options of retraining, promotions, and specific responsibilities with the deaf employees and consider the extra times and supports they would need to achieve this. The deaf employees themselves would have ideas, approaches, and procedures that would help the whole workplace – approach them early and give them time to respond.

By implementing these reasonable adjustments and ensuring physical accessibility, employers can create a workplace that values and supports the contributions of deaf individuals. This not only helps the employees themselves but also enriches the overall workplace environment, leading to a more inclusive and productive workforce.

Consider doing the checklist to ensure your workplace is meeting the requirements under the AIDE framework and share your success stories with Deaf Australia.