

# DOWN SYNDROME AND EMPLOYMENT - GUIDELINES



This document serves as a guide to ensure a positive experience during the interview, orientation, practical strategies and some reasonable adjustments specifically tailored for employees with Down syndrome at a workplace.

## **1. Recruitment:**

- Use easy to read English for the job advertisement if you are looking to hire an individual with Down syndrome (Using simple keywords for the job role is important here).
- While creating a job ad, do include 'Equal Employment Opportunity Statement' mentioning "we accept candidates with Down syndrome" clearly.
- Create simple application form with necessary details only.
- Use large print and give an appropriate area for the applicant to write answers (if applicable). Many individuals with Down syndrome have eye and vision problems, this will be great to catering them.
- Use visual cues if appropriate (pictures of the job tasks).
- Make the job advertisement available to Karachi Down Syndrome Program (KDSP) through [info@kdsp.org.pk](mailto:info@kdsp.org.pk)
- Use clear, easy to understand language when writing the position description for the job. KDSP can help you in reviewing this.

·When writing the criteria, qualifications and skills required for the job, ensure that only the essential experience or qualifications are written down, not ones that are desired. For example, if you require a person to assist in managing warehouse, specify the skills required for the task.

## **2. Interviews:**

·Speak clearly using short sentences.

·If the interviewee is unsure about the question, rephrase the question.

·Avoid metaphors, acronyms and jargon that may be too complicated for the candidate.

·Allow longer for the interview than you would typically.

·Use a tick box questionnaire to assess skills and experience.

·Allow the interviewee to bring a support person with them who may assist with rewording some questions and comprehension.

·If a support person is present, address questions to the person with Down syndrome NOT the support person. Remember, the support person is there to assist the candidate.

### 3. Induction and Orientation:

- Allocate a buddy to the employee so he/she knows who to go to ask questions. Let that buddy orientate the employee so a relationship can be established and rapport can be built with the same person.
- Provide the employee with an orientation folder so that he/she can keep all the information together.
- Provide a photo of each co-employee with his/her name underneath, and what they do, and where to find them as a reference.
- Explain the 'unwritten rules' of the workplace, if any e.g. what coffee/tea mugs to use, social norms of the workplace.
- Provide a schedule of the day, including break time and lunch. Use a visual as well as a written schedule so the employee can keep it as a reference, include length of time if relevant e.g. 30 minutes for lunch.
- Break down the job tasks on the daily schedule into individual tasks and then show the employee how to do each task. You may also want to use photos or pictures in a 'First – Next – Then' or '1-2-3' sequence so they can refer to it later.
- Before moving on to the next task, examine if they have understood the first one. The 'See one, Do one, Teach one' technique can often assist the buddy to understand if the employee understands the task.

·You may need to use simple language, e.g. no abbreviations or complex words, explain a task a different way, similar to that used in the interview process. At this stage, you can combine two forms of learning (visual and learning by doing).

·You may need to extend the orientation period from the usual practice and add more accommodation (visual prompts etc).

#### **4. Training Tips and On-The-Job Support**

##### ·Communication:

oUse plain language and easily understood alternatives for words and concepts. For example, say 'put together', rather than 'compile'.

oSpeak clearly in small sentences and avoid using jargon.

oUse positive language, for example rather than saying, 'don't do that, do this' say, 'we do things this way'.

##### ·Accessible Information:

oMapping the workplace with photos of other employees and storage items can be a great way to aid an employee with Down syndrome with their new work place

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oMake information understandable and accessible using visual aids (For example, pictorial tasks list).

oTask Analysis to help them understand if it's a complex task.

oUse larger text and Easy Read for written instructions.

•Support to complete tasks:

oPeople with Down syndrome respond well to daily routines and tasks, and learn by doing. Repeat a few times until the person has understood and learnt. Once learnt, tasks will be done consistently and well, with occasional revisiting over time to make sure all is going well.

oBreak jobs down to manageable and simpler tasks or components to work through sequentially.

oDemonstrate how to do the task while explaining it to the person.

oExplain tasks in other ways if the person doesn't understand.

oAllow a reasonable timeframe to complete a job or tasks.

oRoutine or regular jobs are often achieved successfully and independently.

•Reasonable Adjustments:

While every person is different, some examples of reasonable adjustments for people with Down syndrome might include:

oModifying recruitment practices.

oOffering flexible working hours.

oApproving more frequent breaks.

oProviding information, such as the job description and responsibilities, to-do lists and task cards using visual images.

oProviding with specific computer systems they are trained in & using apps to help with doing tasks on time.

oHaving a buddy-program.

oAdjusting furniture or the height at which items are stored to enable a person with short stature to do their job independently.

oTo understand any other accommodation needs and equipment required, consult with someone who knows the employee at home or at KDSP.

oAssistive devices, which may include items such as an electronic stapler, and non-skid material, may help.

·Support from all co-workers:

oReward the employee appropriately (which can be verbal), for good work and effort.

oSet up an environment where the employee feels comfortable asking for assistance.

oEnsure training of all employees in the organization to be equipped with and understand needs of any Person with Disability and/or Individuals with Down syndrome.

oSocial inclusion is important for an employee and co-employees. This could be as simple as asking the employee with Down syndrome to join other staff at lunch time or a social outing that all staff are partaking in. If an employee feels happy and included in an environment, he/she will work more efficiently.

oAlteration to procedures when needed and appropriate – if a procedure is not essential and the employee is finding it challenging then it could be agreed to modify or alter it, for example, if using the current system to clock on and off is difficult to use, then the employee could sign on time in and time-out paper.

oAlteration to work hours may be necessary for a variety of reasons including tiredness and working memory issues which should be discussed with the employer, employee and KDSP.

oJob restructuring, such as a change in work schedule or a decrease in the number of job duties, may be necessary.

oOn a larger level, organizations should launch and run advocacy campaigns to employ people with Down syndrome.

oBuild and strengthen partnerships with organizations and not for profit sectors working for the inclusion of Individuals with Down syndrome while also providing assistance in advocating their mission and vision.



## 5. Practical Strategies to Support Learning in the Workplace

### •Attention

- oBreak the task down into smaller steps.
- oMinimize any distractions.
- oGive regular and specific feedback on their performance.

### •Memory

- oGive the person enough time to learn the new information and skills.
- oRegularly give the person opportunities to practice the new skills.
- oUse visual aids/supports.

### •Information Processing

- oGive short and clear instructions.
- oGive the person enough time to process the instructions.
- oUse visual aids/supports.
- oUse direct instructions, e.g. modelling and prompts.

### •Motivation

- oProvide information and instructions in a way that the person understands.
- oProvide immediate feedback and positive reinforcements.
- oTeach the skills in a way that fit the individual's learning style.
- oMotivate by interest – give the person opportunities to continually learn new skills.