

Local Coordinator Implementation Guide

National Disability Mentoring Day™



**A National Program of the Canadian
Association for Supported Employment**

1



NATIONAL DISABILITY MENTORING DAY



DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL COORDINATORS

National Disability Mentoring Day™ “MentorAbility” is a national initiative of the Canadian Association for Supported Employment (CASE), which has been developed for the exclusive use of CASE members in promoting the employment of people with disabilities in their local communities.

Individuals and organizations who share an affinity towards this mission are welcome to join CASE (www.supportedemployment.ca) and then sign up to become a local coordinator for your community. Local coordinators are typically leaders within their place of businesses that have an interest towards effective disability community outreach – including private businesses (large and small), organizations of or for people with disabilities, employment services organizations, government agencies, labour organizations, educational institutions (including high schools, colleges and universities), service organizations (such as Rotary Clubs), and business associations (such as Chambers of Commerce).

2

Anyone who wants to assume a leadership role in helping to launch in their local community is welcome to join CASE and make it happen.

These guidelines are intended to provide a framework for developing and implementing a successful mentoring day. They contain ideas and suggestions to create an event that compliments the unique needs and circumstances of your local community – and hopefully provides the tools and confidence you need to get the job done right.

1. JOIN THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Membership with CASE is a pre-requisite to local coordinator designation and support. CASE membership is available to all individuals and organizations in every Canadian province and territory who share the CASE mission to promote employment and the full inclusion of all Canadians with disabilities.

CASE membership is very affordable. A one year membership is only \$100. Signing up is also very easy to do. Visit the CASE web site at: www.supportedemployment.ca and click on membership for details.

MentorAbility™ – Local Coordinator Implementation Guide

2. REGISTER TO BECOME A LOCAL COORDINATOR

Interested community leaders need to register to become local coordinator and receive CASE designation to be the official MentorAbility representative for your particular community. Once your local coordinator registration is received and CASE active membership status confirmed – then if another individual is already designated, CASE will provide you with their contact information so as to encourage your collaboration and perhaps participation on the local planning committee. Everyone should be welcomed to participate in helping to plan a successful event that is open to the public.

3. USE OF TRADEMARKED NAME

National Disability Mentoring Day™ is a trademark registered name which is owned by the Canadian Association for Supported Employment – and provides CASE members with exclusive utilization. Designated local coordinators are paid CASE members in good standing, and as such are entitled to use the program name and resources while a CASE member in good standing.

4. OBTAIN THE MENTORABILITY IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT

Once a local coordinator is designated, CASE will give you access to the Implementation Toolkit with information and resources to help plan a low-cost, high impact MentorAbility event. Sample materials are included which may be customized to meet local needs and provide turn-key solutions to maximize your ability to put together a great event quickly.

3

5. SOLICIT LOCAL PARTNERS – FORM A MENTORABILITY PLANNING COMMITTEE

The best way to ensure that National Disability Mentoring Day™, MentorAbility is successful is to invite collaboration from other interested citizens and organizations. Local coordinators should consider establishing a MentorAbility Planning Committee and inviting others to participate. Consider these benefits to forming a committee:

- facilitates new and better ways to get all the work done
- encourages others to share resources and contacts to minimize costs
- promotes MentorAbility program ownership as a community venture versus something that is being done by and for that ‘other agency’
- helps to facilitate more effective referrals of both mentors and protégés
- helps to spread the workload around to many vs just one or a few individuals
- demonstrates to employers that service agencies can work together

Forming a MentorAbility Planning Committee is simply put, a more professional way in which to get the job done. It helps maximize community input, broadens public participation and enhances continuity of the initiative so that MentorAbility is less dependent on just one individual to make things happen.

MentorAbility™ – Local Coordinator Implementation Guide

Consider a breakfast information meeting or a conference call for potential MentorAbility planning committee candidates. Invite lots and those most interested will come. Provide briefing information and resources so that folks have a better idea what you plan to accomplish in a broad sense. Lay out a draft work plan and solicit feedback and recommendations – and then incorporate these into a revised plan (send out to committee members after your meeting). Pass around a sign-up sheet or e-mail a database and ask folks to sign up only if interested in participating and coming to a couple or few meetings in lead up to event. Divide up the workload and encourage others to help out with specific tasks. One of the most important will be evaluating protégé applications and then finding good host sites/mentors for each – your employer representatives can be especially helpful with that most important of tasks.

Lastly – make sure to include representation of people with disabilities on your committee. This will assist with planning for better access and accommodations for all potential participants and demonstrate that your local NDMD initiative practices what it preaches.

6. FINDING A CHAMPION(S) TO PROMOTE YOUR LOCAL INITIATIVE

Getting a champion can help make your local MentorAbility event more successful.

Who can you get to help promote MentorAbility at the local level who has the public recognition and a strong self-interest in what we are trying to achieve? Potential MentorAbility champions might include your mayor (shows voters that they care), your local Chamber of Commerce President (workforce development is always a high priority to their members), a company CEO (positive message to employees, customers and shareholders) or even a sports celebrity.

4

A champion is someone who will share their name, office and connections to instantly demonstrate to others that your local MentorAbility initiative is important and valuable. They need to be assured in writing that MentorAbility will be delivered in a professional manner, that they and their organization will not be embarrassed, and that they will do little work and gain positive accolades for having endorsed this important effort.

How can a champion be used effectively? Examples include the following:

- Ask champion to provide a quote on your MentorAbility press release
- Attend first planning committee meeting to welcome members and thank them in advance for the work they will do (perhaps do that meeting at their office for convenience)
- Ask champion to volunteer to be a mentor themselves and host a protégé at their workplace
- If you decide to do a special event (such as reception) at the end of MentorAbility for mentors and protégés – consider doing that event at the champion's place of business and/or – have the champion at this event as your official MentorAbility host to thank and congratulate participants.

MentorAbility™ – Local Coordinator Implementation Guide

7. DETERMINE SCALE OF EVENT & PARTICIPATION TARGET NUMBERS

If you are doing a mentoring day for the first time, it may be best to have your planning committee set modest expectations and target numbers for participation. Smaller can sometimes be better the first time around in order to gain experience, keep things manageable and gain confidence for future replication and potential event expansion. What you can and cannot accommodate in terms of participation numbers depends on a range of factors – think carefully about this early on and don't bite off more than you can chew.

8. SEND OUT A PRESS RELEASE TO ANNOUNCE YOUR LOCAL EVENT

CASE provides you with a sample press release that you can use to publicly announce that National Disability Mentoring Day™, MentorAbility will be happening in your local community. Please customize and carefully edit this press release so that all the information is correct and specific to you and your community – and that spelling and grammar are correct.

Send your press release to public media outlets including local newspapers, radio and television. Consider sending your press release to your local Chamber of Commerce to include in their monthly newsletter and on their web site. Ask local human resources organizations and employment equity practitioner associations to also include in their newsletters/web sites. Send your press release to all disability organizations, non-profit organizations, rehabilitation agencies, government offices, advocacy groups, high schools/colleges/universities and other public/private organizations/associations which may be helpful in generating referrals of protégés and mentors.

Do your press release early rather than later on. This is an important tool for advertising your initiative and announcing to the world what is up and coming.

9. PROMOTIONS AND OUTREACH

Consider other low-cost, high impact ways to publicize your National Disability Mentoring Day™ MentorAbility initiative and generate interest, referrals, sponsorships etc. Consider presentations at your monthly Rotary or Chamber of Commerce, do interviews on local TV and radio, meet with the publisher of your local newspaper and provide them with a press kit, get planning committee members to assist with meetings and presentations, target your top 25 area employers and go visit their CEO's to solicit their support.

Guerilla marketing is about spending little and being very creative in getting public attention without being silly. One of the most effective ways to get people interested is this: whoever you meet with to discuss MentorAbility for the first time (regardless of who they might be), ask them this question to start your conversation: ***“everyone of us has had one or two people who have been instrumental to our individual professional success – who was that mentor for you and what did they specifically do that made all the difference during those early years?”*** It is amazing how this gets folks to think about why mentors are important from a personal perspective – and encourages them to support your local MentorAbility efforts.

10. MEDIA EFFORTS & PUBLIC EDUCATION

The primary objective of MentorAbility is to promote the employment of people with disabilities. Proteges and mentors both benefit from the experience but does that in and of itself define what we are trying to achieve? In other words – can you use your local MentorAbility initiative as a vehicle in which to tell your stories, improve public and employer attitudes, and encourage people to do more?

If you want to use MentorAbility as part of a public education campaign – then consider doing more to strategically go after and utilize various controlled and uncontrolled media sources to get your stories out. Uncontrolled medias are such things as TV, radio and newspapers – they decide what stories to feature and they do the story copies themselves. Controlled medias are such things as a newsletter or paid advertisement in which you yourself get to tell the story or message in your own words.

There are good examples of some disability organizations which have worked with local newspapers to produce one or more pages of special content that deal specifically with employment and disability related stories. These special feature inserts are typically paid for utilizing regular advertising revenues – thus at no cost to the organizer. Your MentorAbility committee may wish to consider putting together a special insert in conjunction with your local newspaper – to promote feature stories and best practices – to celebrate the leadership of MentorAbility participants and provide some recognition/media exposure for sponsors.

11. FINDING PROTEGES: PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Who can be a MentorAbility Protégé? Protégé participants are people with disabilities who are either students and/or job seekers who are genuinely interested in obtaining employment in their community. MentorAbility participants may be individuals who have any kind or level of disability, provided they have the capability to communicate effectively with their employer mentor. In those instances in which an accommodation to participate is required, it is incumbent on the protégé candidate and/or their referral source to identify/provide in their application.

As a national program MentorAbility welcomes public participation and does not discourage based on type or level of disability. Local coordinators will ensure that local programs maximize public participation and opportunities for people of all abilities.

How Can Protégé Candidates be Sourced? People with disabilities can apply to be part of the local MentorAbility program directly on their own, or through referrals from a variety of sources including:

- organizations of or for people with disabilities
- advocacy organizations
- non-profit employment agencies and rehabilitation programs

MentorAbility™ – Local Coordinator Implementation Guide

- government agencies such as family services and vocational rehabilitation
- educational institutions such as high schools, colleges and universities
- provincial and territorial workers compensation programs
- private insurance companies - LTD long term disability programs
- military veterans organizations
- organized labour organizations, etc

Local coordinators may send invitation letters and MentorAbility information flyers to the potential referral sources noted above, and meet with their representatives to discuss the program. Each referral source may also be requested to host an on-site MentorAbility information meeting for interested protégé candidates – so the Mentorability coordinator can present the program and solicit applications.

These same organizations noted above may be invited to include a representative on the MentorAbility planning committee – and those individuals then serving as protégé candidate referral representatives for individuals affiliated with their organization.

12. INVITE EMPLOYERS – GET MENTOR REFERRALS

Employers can be sourced for mentor candidate referrals through a variety of means. Protégé candidate referral organizations (noted above) can provide employer referrals from businesses with which they are already working, Chambers of Commerce and local service clubs such as Rotary can be used to send mentor invites to their members, and Human Resource and Employment Equity Associations can also send invites to their members.

It would be most favourable to have representatives on the MentorAbility planning committee from these same organizations, and then utilize those individuals to coordinate marketing to their members. Employer mentor candidate invitation samples are attached.

13. FACILITATING GOOD PROTÉGÉ & MENTOR MATCH-UPS

Start with the protégés first, identify what kind of mentors are needed to meet the needs of those individuals and then go from there. In one Canadian city previously – protégé applications were solicited by a deadline date, and then employers on the planning committee met to review each applicant profile and determine who they wanted to pick up on as protégés for their individual companies. The protégés that weren't selected then were sent on to planning committee members from employment service organizations to enable them to seek customized placements for the second round candidates.

The most important consideration with good protégé and mentor match-ups is career compatibility. For those protégé candidates which can identify a specific career interest area – that then makes mentor recruitment easier to facilitate. Find the mentor that is doing what the protégé wants to do.

14.EFFECTIVE WAYS TO PROVIDE ORIENTATION, PRE-EVENT TRAINING & PREP

The MentorAbility planning committee needs to have a conversation regarding whether and how to provide orientation to mentors and protégés BEFORE mentoring day takes place. The purpose of this is to ensure that both parties are properly prepared regarding their responsibilities before and during mentoring day, and that they are motivated and encouraged to minimize any anxiety/fear.

Pre-MentorAbility orientation may include a telephone call, individual or group meeting with protégé(s) and mentor(s) (do this separately and never together) – so that folks have what they need and know what to expect.

Orientation topics for protégés may include such things as:

- dress code, punctuality, professional conduct at the business location
- specifics on where to meet the mentor on mentoring day
- research to learn more about the mentor and business to be visited
- preparation of a resume to share with mentor
- suggestions on how to educate mentor on disability needs and accommodations
- sample questions to ask mentor to solicit good information on career development
- how to network and communicate effectively

Making sure to prepare protégés is very important prior to their placement. Efforts made to accommodate this priority will greatly improve the quality of the mentoring experience.

Lastly – the night before: consider logistics needed to ensure that each protégé is contacted the evening before MentorAbility to ensure that they are confirmed, that they understand where they need to go and at what time, and to thank them for participating and provide encouragement. You don't want mentors waiting at the reception area for 30-45 minutes for protégés that don't show up because they forgot or became intimidated.

15.MENTOR DAY ACTIVITIES & SUGGESTIONS FOR MENTORS/PROTEGES

Mentoring day can be an hour, a ½ or full day experience based on local MentorAbility planning committee choice. Specific activities need to be explained to mentors and protégés so that each has a better understanding of what can take place during the mentoring day itself. These activities may include such things as:

- 30-60 minute personal meeting time between mentor and protégé to start their mentoring experience. Mentor invites protégé to introduce themselves, share their resume and learn more about their work history, skill sets and career interests. The mentor then has opportunity to talk about their job, training that they received, education and work experience, summer jobs and internships and other areas important to their career development and enhancement. The context of discussion is this: here is what you need to do in order to get a career in this area – and the different kinds of jobs associated with this career.

MentorAbility™ – Local Coordinator Implementation Guide

- Work site tours: mentors are encouraged to give their protégé a tour of the workplace so that they have the opportunity to experience the physical/social workplace.
- Job Shadowing: the mentor can take the protégé along to demonstrate what they do themselves as part of their work duties – or they can hand protégés off to other colleagues so that they can experience some time with different people who are doing different but related jobs at that workplace. The protégé then gets insight towards a variety of different jobs at the worksite location (or even off-site when appropriate).
- HR meetings: mentors can connect their protégé with an HR recruiter so that they can have a mock interview, and informational meeting, or even an actual interview in order to experience a real-life interaction with a recruiter. The recruiter can provide recommendations on the protégé presentation and resume so that they have employer insight on how to best present themselves in the future. Possibly even receive consideration for potential employment opportunity.

Mentors and their colleagues typically appreciate the opportunity to show off where they work and what they do. This experience is the essence of MentorAbility for the protégé. The flip side of this is that in spending time face-to-face with their protégé, then the negative attitudes and stereotypes that employers have towards people with disabilities are minimized or disappear: the mentor typically gets excited about the protégé they meet and invested in sharing information and leads to help them succeed.

9

16.END OF DAY GATHERING

Mentoring day can end at the mentor's place of business – or the MentorAbility planning committee may choose to organize an end of day gathering (reception) for all participating mentors, protégés and planning committee members.

A MentorAbility reception can be an excellent way to thank all participants and supports at the same time. You can have your MentorAbility Champion (Mayor, Chamber President or CEO) stand up and say a few words of thanks and congratulations. Food and refreshments are always a good idea. Think about sign language interpreter if needed.

Location should be central to all with good parking and access to public transportation (for those protégés that use this to get home easily afterwards), and that physical accessibility of the reception area and restrooms is of the highest standard.

In terms of potential sites: you can use a public facility (meeting room at city hall or public library), a room for public gatherings at a corporate sponsor's head office, a hotel room or restaurant with a reception or dining area that affords privacy for your group only.

MentorAbility™ – Local Coordinator Implementation Guide

Make sure to have a wireless microphone on hand and a reception facilitator to piggy-back on your reception host welcoming remarks. It is especially important and useful that the MentorAbility planning committee utilize this gathering to solicit public remarks (using the microphone) from as many of the protégés and mentors as possible during the reception. Invite and encourage participants to take the mike and talk about what they did and what they learned. This sharing is incredibly powerful and a compelling way to end the day. It never fails to hear tremendous insights and appreciations from protégés and mentors who thank each other and explain the impact of what had happened in such a short but powerful period of time. If you don't make the opportunity for this gathering – it is opportunity lost and an anticlimactic void in an otherwise successful event. There is also a template for a thank-you card in your package.

The Canadian Association for Supported Employment requires all MentorAbility activities to take place only at non-segregated community locations.

17. CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS & EVENT FINANCING

Local Coordinators and planning committees are welcome and encouraged to solicit sponsorship opportunities that will generate revenues and in-kind contributions to offset MentorAbility production costs (and even generate a profit).

18. LIABILITY INSURANCE

The Canadian Association for Supported Employment does not provide any liability insurance for any individuals or organizations which may participate in CASE sponsored programs including MentorAbility. It is expected of local Coordinators to plan for and accommodate this liability insurance need through support provided by referring organizations and their local sponsors.

10

19. NETWORKING AND SHARING

2014 was the very first year in which CASE is delivering MentorAbility. We welcome and encourage all local Coordinators to network with our national affiliates and share information so that we can all learn and benefit from each other's experiences. Your feedback and recommendations to CASE are much appreciated and we thank you for your leadership and hard work in helping to make MentorAbility a success in 2014 and beyond. Please see www.supportedemployment.ca or www.employmentforall.ca for a look at the 2014 pilot project success!

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON NATIONAL DISABILITY MENTORING DAY, PLEASE CONTACT:

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A National Initiative of the Canadian Association for Supported Employment