

## WEBINAR FAQ: SUPPORTING NEURODIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

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### 1. What does “neurodiversity” mean in a workplace context?

Neurodiversity refers to the idea that **peoples’ brains process information, learn, communicate, and respond to the environment in different ways**, and that these differences are a natural part of human diversity.

In the workplace, this can include workers with autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, Tourette’s syndrome, developmental processing disorder, sensory processing differences, or acquired brain injuries.

What matters for employers is to recognize that **workplaces are often designed around default ways of working**, and that small adjustments in communication, scheduling, training, or environment can help a wider range of the workforce succeed.

In tourism and hospitality environments, this might mean adjusting the work environment so there’s clearer task expectations, predictable scheduling where possible, direct communication during busy shifts, and structured onboarding or visual job aids. These practices benefit **everyone on the team**, not just neurodivergent workers.

### 2. Is neurodiversity the same as a disability?

Not necessarily. Neurodiversity is a **broad concept describing natural differences in how brains function**. It may be considered a disability when it leads to functional limitations or environmental barriers that interfere with a worker’s ability to fully participate in their daily professional responsibilities.

### 3. How common is neurodivergence in the workforce?

Research suggests 15–20% of the population is neurodivergent, meaning most workplaces already include neurodivergent workers, whether or not individuals disclose this.

In tourism and hospitality, the likelihood may be even higher because the industry employs many young and international workers, individuals entering the workforce for the first time, workers transitioning between careers, and others from a wide range of cultural, educational, and employment backgrounds, as the sector often provides accessible entry points to employment.

The key takeaway for employers is that neurodiversity is already present in most teams. Creating inclusive systems is about designing workplaces that support a broad range of working styles.

### 4. What should a manager or supervisor do if a worker discloses they are neurodivergent?

#### Listen and ask questions:

- “Is there anything about the job that’s currently challenging?”
- “Are there adjustments that would help you do your work more easily?”
- “How can I support you better with this part of the job?”
- “What’s working well for you right now, and what could be improved?”
- “Are there any adjustments that would make this easier or more manageable for you?”
- “How do you prefer to receive instructions or feedback?”
- “When things get busy, what tends to help you stay on track?”
- “Is there anything about the environment or work that makes your job more challenging?”
- “What would set you up for success in this role?”

**Focus on job-related needs including** clearer written instructions, predictable scheduling, quieter break spaces, and step-by-step training materials.

**Maintain privacy:** Respect the worker’s privacy by focusing conversations on **workplace needs rather than personal or medical details. Note that workers are not required by law to disclose their specific diagnosis** and instead need to provide information regarding their limitations and restrictions.

If information does need to be shared to arrange a formal accommodation, it should be **limited to what is necessary and only shared with appropriate personnel (such as HR or management) with the worker’s knowledge and consent**. A tool that can help facilitate this process among employers and workers is the [Functional Abilities Assessment – Mental health Template](#). Managers and supervisors should avoid discussing a worker’s situation with coworkers or others who are not directly involved in implementing the accommodation.

**Document agreed adjustments:** Generally, the most effective supports are simple adjustments to communication, expectations, or job design. If formal accommodation is needed, involve your HR department or reach out to [safety@go2HR.ca](mailto:safety@go2HR.ca) for support and follow workplace accommodation procedures consistent with the **BC Human Rights Code**.

#### 5. **What if a worker does not want to disclose that they are neurodivergent but is struggling at work?**

Workers are **not required to disclose medical information** unless they are requesting formal accommodation which requires them to provide information regarding their functional limitations and restrictions. **If someone appears to be struggling, managers and supervisors should focus on performance and workplace conditions including behaviours and tasks.**

For instance, instead of asking “Are you neurodivergent?”, try asking “I’ve noticed this task seems frustrating. What’s getting in the way?” or “What support or clarification would help here?”

Many challenges improve with workplace adjustments that benefit the entire workforce, such as clearer instructions, written shift priorities, more structured onboarding, and consistent feedback.

#### 6. **How can we make job postings more accessible to neurodivergent candidates? Should interview questions be shared in advance?**

Accessible hiring practices help employers attract a broader talent pool. Some adjustments to consider in the hiring process include **clear job descriptions** that clearly highlight core responsibilities, typical shift expectations, and physical or sensory conditions (noise, crowds, pace). Avoid using acronyms or vague language such as “must thrive under pressure” or “be a team player”.

In preparation for the interview, provide the candidate with the following details:

- map of the interview location and where to find parking
- the interview length
- who candidates will meet (will the interview be conducted by one person or a panel?)
- will the interview involve preparation beforehand? (short work sample, review of a case study, etc.)
- what the interview will involve (questions, presentation, etc.).

Many employers now **share question themes or examples in advance**. This does not give candidates an unfair advantage and instead, allows them to demonstrate their actual skills rather than their ability to respond under pressure.

#### 7. **How can onboarding be made more accessible for different learning styles?**

Training in the tourism and hospitality sector is often informal and fast-paced, which can create barriers. More accessible onboarding may include:

- written or visual training guides
- step-by-step task instructions
- shadowing experienced workers
- checklists for key tasks
- clear timelines for training milestones

Providing information in **multiple formats (verbal, written, visual)** helps workers absorb information more effectively. Clarity early on reduces mistakes, improves confidence, and increases retention.

## **8. How do we train managers and supervisors who may not feel comfortable having neurodiversity-related conversations?**

### **Shift the mindset:**

Managers and supervisors are not expected to be experts in neurodivergence. Their role is to support workers in doing their job well by focusing on work-related factors including drawing upon tasks, behaviours, and what supports or hinders performance.

Managers and supervisors should focus on *work-related needs* rather than personal or medical details, while creating opportunities for workers to share what they're comfortable with. This might include asking open questions (*What helps you do your best work during a busy shift like this one?*, *What might be getting in the way of you completing this task comfortably or efficiently?* or *How can I support you better with this part of the job?*), normalizing seeking support, and welcoming workers to identify workplace-related challenges they're experiencing so leaders can better support them.

### **Provide simple language and scripts:**

Give leaders clear, practical ways to start conversations. Reinforce that it is the operational need that should be focused on, which will help reduce uncertainty and allow for the conversation to feel more natural:

*"Is there anything about this task that's unclear or making it harder than it needs to be?"*  
*"What would make this process easier for you?"*

### **Use real-life scenarios and practice:**

Role-playing common situations (e.g., a worker struggling with instructions, becoming overwhelmed during busy periods, or requesting adjustments) helps leaders build comfort and confidence.

### **Clarify boundaries and supports:**

Managers and supervisors need to understand when they can manage a situation directly and when it should move into a more formal process. In general, situations move beyond informal support when a worker requests changes in their role, asks for formal accommodations, or when performance concerns persist despite reasonable supports among many other scenarios. At this point, the employer should follow formal accommodation procedures. For questions and general support around this process, the [go2HR health & safety team](mailto:safety@go2hr.ca) is here to help. Contact [safety@go2hr.ca](mailto:safety@go2hr.ca) for more information.

### **It's okay not to have all the answers:**

The goal is not to solve everything immediately, but to foster a culture of care and compassion: listen, ask questions, and work collaboratively to identify what will help.

### 9. What can workplaces do if the environment is naturally loud, busy, or unpredictable?

Tourism and hospitality environments will always involve some level of noise and pace. Neuroinclusive practices focus on reducing unnecessary stressors, not eliminating the realities of the industry.

#### Helpful strategies include:

- holding pre-shift briefings to provide clear leadership and expectations
- predictable routines where possible
- written task priorities during busy periods
- designated quiet break areas
- explaining changes before shifts begin

These small improvements in communication and predictability can significantly reduce stress for workers and improve team performance.

Even with good practices in place, some environments may still be challenging for certain workers. In these situations, open communication is important. **Workers should feel comfortable discussing possible adjustments with a supervisor, such as modified duties during peak periods, different shift patterns, or clearer task structures.**

If the environment continues to be a poor fit despite reasonable adjustments, employers can also support workers by exploring alternative roles within the organization that better match their strengths and working preferences.

Neuroinclusive workplaces recognize that job fit matters and supporting workers to find roles where they can perform well benefits both workers and the business.

### 10. How can managers reduce sensory overload in hospitality settings?

Sensory overload often comes from **constant noise, bright lighting, crowding, and rapid task switching**. While these environments can't be completely changed, small adjustments can help, including:

- allowing access to quieter break areas
- minimizing unnecessary interruptions
- using visual task boards or checklists
- giving advance notice of peak periods
- assigning consistent stations where possible

These adjustments often reduce fatigue, mistakes, and conflict for the entire team.

### 11. What if a worker attributes performance issues to neurodivergence?

In some situations, a worker may indicate that aspects of their neurodivergence are affecting how they complete certain tasks or respond to workplace conditions.

Neurodivergence does not change the core expectations of a role. However, it can influence how someone processes information, organizes work, or experiences busy or unpredictable environments. In many cases, small adjustments or clearer supports can help workers meet performance expectations.

Managers and supervisors should approach these conversations with openness and a focus on problem-solving. A productive discussion may include:

- clarifying what successful performance looks like in the role
- identifying specific tasks or situations that are challenging
- discussing possible adjustments or supports that could help
- checking whether instructions, training, or expectations were communicated clearly

Examples of helpful supports might include:

- written task lists or step-by-step instructions
- structured or more frequent feedback
- modified training approaches
- clearer shift priorities during busy periods

Addressing workplace barriers early often prevents small challenges from becoming larger performance issues.

If a worker continues to raise neurodivergence as a factor affecting performance, managers and supervisors should keep the conversation focused on **specific supports and expectations**. Once reasonable adjustments have been explored or implemented, the discussion should return to how the worker can meet the core requirements of the role.

If challenges continue, managers and supervisors should follow normal performance management processes while ensuring any reasonable accommodations required under the **BC Human Rights Code** are considered.

The goal is the same for every worker: to identify barriers early, provide appropriate supports, and maintain clear expectations so people can perform successfully in their role.

## 12. How can small teams implement inclusive practices when staffing is already tight?

**Check-in and clarify tasks:** In fast-paced environments, clear priorities and easy-to-understand instructions reduce mistakes and stress.

**Build in small structure:** Checklists, routines, and consistent roles during shifts help workers stay on track when things get busy.

**Allow flexibility:** Short resets after intense guest interactions or small adjustments in how tasks are done can make a big difference.

**Ask what helps:** Approach workers during a pre-shift huddle or informally one-on-one and ask: “What helps you on a busy shift?” or “How can I support you during today’s rush?”.

We’re here to help! If you have questions or would like more information contact us at [safety@go2hr.ca](mailto:safety@go2hr.ca).