



Office for Disability

Disability Awareness Training

What is disability awareness training?

Disability awareness training includes information and awareness-raising sessions that provide facts about disability, and offer opportunities to test and respond to the information presented.

Many people in society have a low level of awareness about disability issues. This is often due to having infrequent contact with people with a disability. Some community members say that they are not comfortable communicating with people with a disability, often a result of feeling awkward or fear of saying the wrong thing.

Disability awareness training is designed to provide attendees with knowledge of disability in society, and should include a component on positive and inclusive communication. Importantly, the training provides information about the **abilities** of people with a disability. It also contributes to making disability-friendly organisations and workplaces, and making staff and individuals more at ease with disability and with people with a disability.

What is usually covered in disability awareness training?

Topics typically covered include:

- definitions and types of disabilities, and the likely associated access requirements of people with various disabilities
- awareness of positive contributions and abilities of people with a disability
- stereotypes and misconceptions about people with a disability
- disabling factors in society — physical and social environments
- communication skills that enable people to more effectively communicate at work and socialise with people with a disability

- disability legislation and legal requirements for disability equality.

Training methods

There are many ways to deliver disability awareness training. Some disability awareness training offers assimilation exercises that provide an opportunity to experience disability. This could include being blindfolded, placed in a wheelchair for a period of time to get from A to B, or being asked to communicate without words.

Although these methods of disability awareness have some useful application in understanding momentarily what having a disability may be like, and could point to some physical and attitudinal barriers in the immediate environment, caution should be exercised in using these methods. More often than not they can trivialise and suggest by the nature of the activity that the barriers have more to do with the disability located within an individual than a product of the social environment and the way society is structured.

How do you choose disability awareness training?

When choosing a disability awareness training consultant, it is important to look for:

- a professional training provider who has solid experience in delivering disability awareness training to a range of organisations
- a high level of knowledge and experience of disability issues
- a provider who has people with a disability involved in delivering the training
- training that can be tailored to the needs and context of your organisation
- methods of training that provide a balance of information and interactive exercises that are delivered in a respectful manner
- references from other organisations which have participated in the training delivered by the organisation or consultant.

How do you know if disability awareness training has been successful?

It is useful to know if disability awareness training has been successful. You can do this by asking for participant feedback immediately after the training.

A feedback sheet provided to participants immediately after training can be an effective way to get open and honest feedback about the quality of the training and usefulness of the information provided.

Feedback sheets are also useful for understanding whether participant's awareness and understanding of disability has changed as a result of the training.

If you would like to receive this document in an accessible format, contact the Office for Disability:

Telephone: (03) 9208 3015

Email: OFD@dpcd.vic.gov.au

TTY: (03) 9208 3631

Fax: (03) 9208 3633

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