



Recruiting Facial Difference Community Members

The Workplace & Facial Difference

More than two million people in Canada are living with a facial difference.

A person with a facial difference refers to anyone whose appearance, from the neck or above, has been affected by a congenital (from birth), acquired (after birth), or episodic (comes and goes) condition or syndrome.

The facial difference community is made up of individuals from every province and territory and includes people from many equity-seeking groups. The intersectionality of the facial difference community includes Black people, Indigenous peoples, people from racialized communities, members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, refugees, and other diverse and underrepresented populations. Our 2022 community survey revealed that one-third of individuals with facial differences identify as a person with a disability, while two thirds do not. Recognizing the unique and intersectional needs of the community is critical to building safe, inclusive workspaces where individuals feel valued, respected and equally supported.



Job Postings & Online Applications

One of the first and best ways to ensure that applicants from the facial difference community are welcome and encouraged to apply to positions within your organization is to ensure that facial difference is expressly included as a self-identification option along with other equity-seeking groups in your job postings and/or applications. This will build trust and confidence with applicants and signal the existence of a positive, inclusive, and diverse culture in your workplace.

Be mindful when using artificial intelligence (AI) programs in the application process, as the use of these programs may result in people with a facial difference being automatically eliminated from an application process due to the algorithms and the lack of knowledge, information, or examples of facial differences. These programs have difficulty analyzing or “reading” facial differences and can negatively impact the outcomes of the application process for people with a facial difference.

Interviewing

In our last organizational survey, 50% of respondents with a facial difference shared that they had encountered unwelcome or uncomfortable experiences during the recruitment process. For many individuals with facial differences, participating in interviews can be a vulnerable part of the recruitment process. There are a variety of ways that employers can ensure a positive and inclusive experience for applicants with a facial difference, including the following:

- Recognize the existence of unconscious bias and take steps to address unconscious bias within your organization. This can include organization-wide training focused on recognizing and challenging long-held internal biases and on how stereotypes, misconceptions, and microaggressions can affect the workplace, including during the interview and hiring process.
- Ensure that those involved in the hiring process are briefed on the candidate's status as belonging to an equity-seeking group. Additional training for staff who have never worked or interacted with a person with a facial difference is an excellent tool to ensure interactions remain respectful and to avoid staring or inappropriate or intrusive questioning.
- Ask the candidate if they require any accommodations before the interview and ensure the accommodation is provided to the point of undue hardship. The duty to accommodate is a legal obligation in Canada and applies during the hiring process. Remember, there is no set formula for accommodations and it is important to consider the unique and specific needs of the individual.
- Standardize and structure the interview process to ensure fairness to all candidates. A standardized or structured interview process will ensure that the same questions are asked of every candidate, and that candidates are being equitably evaluated, based on the job criteria.
- Be prepared to share with the interviewee how your organization supports diversity, equity, and inclusion and how facial difference is incorporated into your policies, procedures, and training.
- Do not assume a person's facial difference will affect their ability to fulfill the job requirements or integrate into the workplace. Employers can ask job-related questions during the interview process to determine an applicant's qualification or ability to perform the essential duties of the job, however, careful consideration must be given to ensuring these questions are reasonable and not intrusive. Employers should avoid questions about job-related accommodations unless it is raised by the applicant. If the applicant identifies a disability-related need as an issue during the interview, disability and accommodation measures related to the essential duties can be discussed. Otherwise, on-the-job accommodation discussions should only take place once the offer of employment has been extended.¹

¹ Source: Ontario Human Rights Commission 5. Interviewing and making hiring decisions | Ontario Human Rights Commission (ohrc.on.ca). Other territories and provinces in Canada have similar guidance. For another example, see Other territories and provinces in Canada have similar guidance, see this example from the Government of British Columbia: [Human Rights in BC - Protection in Employment fact sheet \(gov.bc.ca\)](#).

Onboarding

- Provide for any accommodations required for the successful candidate to undertake their new job (See our Information Sheet: Accommodations in the Workplace).
- Provide new employee training which includes a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion and how to address discrimination in the workplace. In our last survey, 3 in 5 members of the facial difference community reported having encountered barriers or discrimination at work. Providing clear training on policies and procedures will help build confidence for the employee and provide them with the tools and resources necessary to ensure inclusion in the workplace.
- Support the orientation and integration of new employees who are members of the facial difference community through workplace mentorships or using “buddy-systems”.
- Recognize that each person will have different preferences when it comes to addressing or acknowledging their facial difference in the workplace. Some individuals may choose to share about their facial difference as part of a welcome meeting or introductions in the workplace, while others may prefer to not share anything. Support and honour the employee’s preference and ensure they have the avenues and opportunities to share with others, if that is their preference.

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A B O U T F A C E[®]

Who We Are

AboutFace is a national charity and our mission is to cultivate equity and opportunity for individuals with a facial difference through supportive programming, advocacy, and education.

If you would like more information or support, please contact us or visit aboutface.ca.

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