

FINDING A JOB

and keeping it

Tips for self advocates



Originally presented and distributed by the BC Association for Community Living, the BC Self Advocacy Foundation and the Self Advocacy Caucus in June 1993.

Updated and reprinted in April 2010.

The **BC Self Advocacy Foundation (BCSAF)** is a unique, independent organization whose sole purpose is to assist people with developmental disabilities to become full, participating citizens in their own communities. The Foundation provides individual self advocates and self advocacy groups with practical, plain language information on basic rights.

The **BCACL Self Advocacy Caucus** is a group of 14 self advocates from across B.C. who are elected every year by other self advocates at the BC Association for Community Living's (BCACL) annual general meeting. The Caucus advises the BCACL Board of Directors on issues that are important to self advocates. The Caucus works together, with the BCACL Board of Directors and with other community partners to lobby for changes that will benefit self advocates.

The **BC Association for Community Living** is a federation working with partners to build community and to enhance the lives of children and youth with special needs, adults with developmental disabilities, and their families by supporting abilities, promoting action and advancing rights, responsibilities and social justice.



British Columbia
Association for
Community Living

227 6th Ave,
New Westminster, B.C.
VA5 3L5

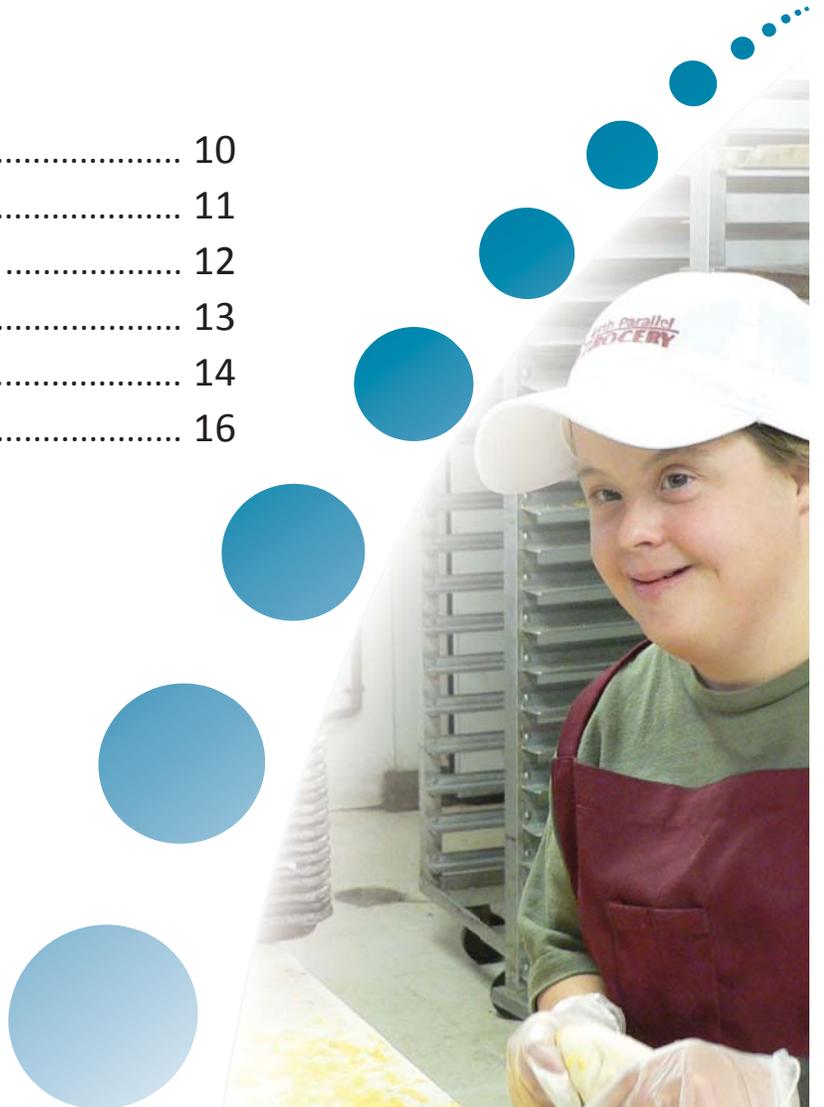
phone: 604-777-9100
toll free: 1-800-618-1119
e-mail: info@bcacl.org

This publication was made possible by:

vanouver
foundation

CONTENTS

Why work?	4
Top ten reasons why working is important	4
What self advocates need to go to work	4
Our voice on employment	5
• Our vision	
• Our responsibilities	
• Our future	
What if I have never worked before?	6
Services and supports — who can help me?	6
Finding a job	7
Job search tips	7
Interview tips	8
Resume example	9
• Resume tips	
• Cover letter tips	
Keeping a job	10
Workers' rights	11
Myths and facts about employment	12
Employment success stories	13
Definitions	14
Links to helpful information	16



*photo courtesy of Ladysmith Chronicle

Earning money is very important to self advocates, who often live in poverty. Self advocates need more money to pay rent, medical and other bills, so they can live more independently and so they can save up for things like traveling and education.

WHY WORK?

In 2007, at the BC Association for Community Living conference, over 150 self advocates from across the province got together to talk about why working is important to self advocates and what self advocates need to go to work. The session was called “Working Matters to Self Advocates.” The group answered these three questions:

The responses from the conference session are summarized below.

TOP TEN REASONS WHY WORKING IS IMPORTANT

1. To make money
2. To meet new people
3. To have good self-esteem
4. To be part of the community
5. To show the community and employers our abilities
6. To live with a purpose
7. To keep busy and be active
8. To learn and keep learning
9. To get and stay healthy
10. To have choices about what we do during the day

WHAT SELF ADVOCATES NEED TO GO TO WORK

1. Training and education
2. Transportation to get to work
3. Job coaches to help us learn new jobs
4. Motivation and encouragement
5. Money for things like uniforms, special equipment or tools
6. Practice and experience doing jobs
7. Employers and coworkers who understand and will give us a chance
8. Funding for programs that provide employment supports

In 2007, BCACL, with help from the Vancouver Foundation and Human Resources and Social Development Canada, provided funding and support to six self advocacy groups across the province. They each did projects in their communities to raise awareness with local employers about Real Work for Real Pay. These six groups formed the 2007 Self Advocate Employment Project Group and created a book for self advocates called “Real Work for Real Pay” that outlines their projects.

OUR VOICE ON EMPLOYMENT

(From the 2007 Self Advocate Employment Project Group)

Our Vision

- Paid work
- In all types of jobs
- By our own choice
- With the support we need to learn and grow
- Better lives

Our Responsibilities

- Work before leisure
- Being a full citizen – this means paying taxes and other costs
- Getting a job
- Being motivated to keep a job
- Learning about the workplace
- Learning to meet new demands
- Take care of ourselves
- Knowing about the risks of working

Our future

- The right to use our skills and abilities
- The right to choose our future
- The right to travel and be independent
- The right to have respect
- The right to speak up
- The right to have full citizenship

If you would like to talk to a self advocacy group in your area or get copies of the Real Work for Real Pay book, contact BCACL at 604-777-9100.



WHAT IF I HAVE NEVER WORKED BEFORE?

Finding and keeping a job can be scary if you have never worked before. But there are many benefits to working and many supports and services that can help you. This booklet provides tips for you to find and keep a job and provide you with helpful information on this very important journey. Don't be afraid to ask for help and advocate for yourself when you need to!

SERVICES and SUPPORTS — WHO CAN HELP ME?

Some people choose to look for work on their own. Other people may need some help to find and keep a job. There are many services and supports that may be available to help you. See the back of this book for more information about these services.

- **Family and friends** are always a good place to look for help when you may not know where to start. They can help you with your job search or know people that can help.
- Many **Community Colleges** have special training programs for helping you find a job. Some programs let you try different kinds of work and some programs train you for specific jobs
- Many **community living organizations** have **Supported or Customized Employment Services** or **vocational programs** that help you to find out what skills, interests and abilities you have. The staff at these services can help you determine where to start and support you through your job search process. Visit the BCACL website at www.bcacl.org to find a community living organization near you.
- **Employment Resource Centres** within some communities are specifically for people with disabilities. The staff at these centres can help you to look at your employment and/or training needs and provide the guidance and resources needed to help you find work or training.
- The **Ministry of Housing and Social Development (MHSD)** income assistance office in your community can help you with income assistance and provide resources for you about different programs in your community. Sometimes, depending on your need, the Ministry can help you pay for training, employment clothing and equipment.
- The **Employment and Labour Market Services** division can give you information about the **Employment Program for People with Disabilities (EPPD)** and where you can access this program.
- **Community Living BC (CLBC)** — CLBC has facilitators who can tell you about the different employment programs that may be available in your community and refer you to one if necessary.
- **Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC)** has an Opportunities Fund for People with Disabilities that can help you get funds to go to school or start up your own business. Go to a Service Canada centre to learn more about the Opportunities Fund.

FINDING A JOB

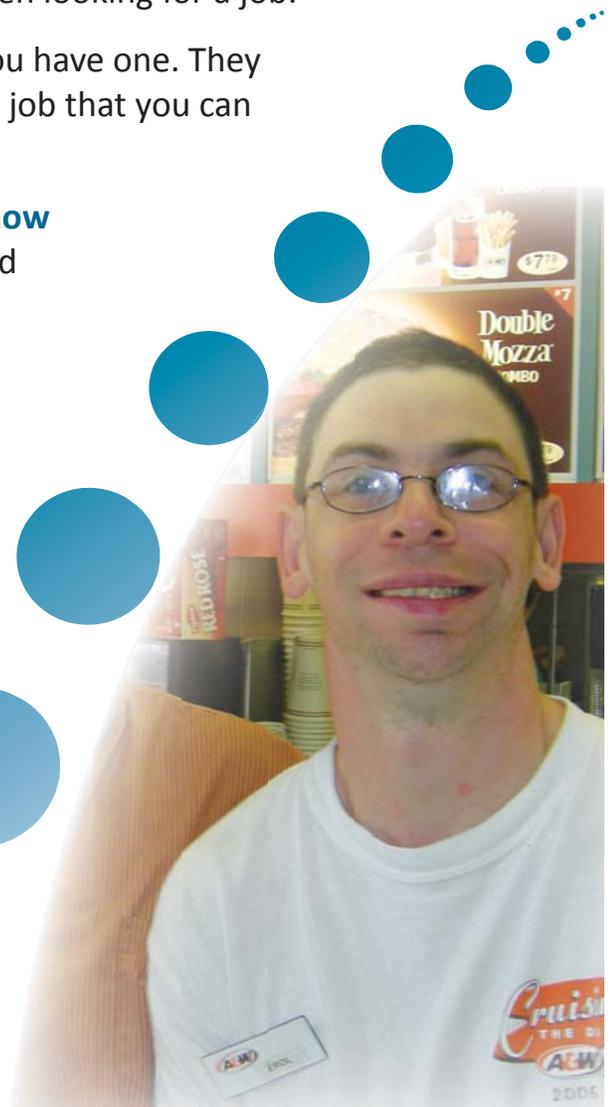
In order to find a job, you will need to build a resume or job seeker profile to send to employers that you are interested in working with. It is also just as important to send a cover letter with your resume to introduce yourself and highlight your skills, abilities and interests. You may also need a personal or work reference. You should have these on hand when an employer requests them.

A reference is a person that you know well or may have worked with in the past that can provide some positive information to the employer about you. This person cannot be a family member and you must get their permission to be your reference before giving out their contact information. There are many resume and cover letter writing guides and examples available on the internet if you have it, if not, **there is an example of a resume on page 9.**

JOB SEARCH TIPS

Once you have your resume and cover letter ready to go, you can begin your job search! Finding a job can be very hard. It is important to keep trying and not give up. Keep a positive attitude. Here are some things you may want to try when looking for a job:

- Talk to your **friends and family** or an **old boss** if you have one. They may know someone that is hiring or know about a job that you can apply for.
- The best way to find a job is to **tell people who know you** well that you are looking for a job, this is called networking.
- Go to an **Employment Resource centre** to look at the job ads. They usually have computers, newspapers and other places to look for jobs.
- **Bulletin boards** sometimes have help wanted ads.
- **Newspapers** have a **classified section** where you will find ads for employers looking to hire new people. If you need help reading through them, ask someone to help.
- You can **search online** on **job websites** if you have your own computer and internet connection, or have access to one.



INTERVIEW TIPS

Now that you have applied for a job, you might be asked to attend an interview. It is important to be prepared. Do your homework and find out as much as you can about the business. It is a good idea to practice before you go to the interview and have someone like a friend or family member help by doing some role playing. They can pretend they are the interviewer and you can be you. You should also find out as much as you can about the business.

DO

- Be on time and no more than 15 minutes early
- Turn your cell phone off
- Dress appropriately for the industry
- SMILE. Be friendly and pleasant
- Use a good firm handshake but not too firm
- Make eye contact
- Sit up straight
- Listen to questions carefully and answer to the best of your ability
- Be confident
- Shake hands when you leave and thank the interviewer

DON'T

- Be late or show up more than 15 minutes early
- Wear too much cologne or perfume
- Avoid eye contact
- Lie, even if you don't know the answer
- Talk about personal problems or issues
- Act desperate for the job
- Chew gum
- Forget to shake hands and thank the interviewer

RESUME EXAMPLE

Put Your Name Here at the Top

Your Address: 12345 1st Street, City, B.C., Postal Code

Your Phone Number: 604-555-2345

OBJECTIVE: *(Tell the employer about the position you are interested in.)*

I am very interested in the Library Clerk position that is available at the City Library.

SKILLS: *(List skills, successes or accomplishments, list 3-5 things)*

- Great at multi-tasking
- Excellent team player

WORK HISTORY: *(List any work experience you have beginning with current work and going back, you will include company name, company location, dates you worked there and the duties you have or had.)*

McDonald's - City, B.C. Food prep and cashier February - December 2008

EDUCATION: *(List any education including program and year of graduation or completion.)*

Secondary School High School Diploma June 2002

HOBBIES AND INTERESTS: *(List hobbies or interests that you have.)*

- Playing baseball
- Playing piano
- Reading mystery novels

REFERENCES: *(You can list your references here if you have room or type "Available upon request." Which means that you will give them the reference name and phone number when they request it from you.)*

John Smith - Manager of McDonald's
Phone: 604-555-9876

Resume Tips: Type with 12 font and no more than 2 pages in length. Leave a lot of white space with 1 inch margins all around the page. Use bold or underlined headings to bring attention to them.

Cover Letter Tips: A cover letter is often the first thing an employer will look at before looking at your resume so it is really important to list your skills that suit the position you are seeking at this company. This will get them to look at your resume. Always spell check your cover letter and get someone to read it over for grammar and spelling mistakes.

If you need help with your resume and cover letter, don't be afraid to ask friends, family members or employment resource centres to help!

KEEPING A JOB

You got the job! Congratulations! Now what? Many people have worked on their resumes and gone to interviews but have never been offered a job before. Getting a job can be very exciting and scary at the same time. These are normal feelings for anything new. If you want, you can ask a friend or family member to talk it over with you before you go in for your first day. Now that you have the job, it's important to keep it because you worked very hard to get this far! Some of the rules and responsibilities at work are:

- 1.** Be on time just as you were for the interview. This is also called "being punctual". If you are sick or running late for any reason, it is very important to phone your boss and let them know what is going on.
- 2.** Be responsible. If your boss gives you work to do, they expect you to finish it. Don't say that you have done your work if you haven't.
- 3.** Stick to the schedule. Many jobs have schedules or routines. It is very important to follow the routine unless your boss changes it.
- 4.** Follow directions. When your boss gives you work or explains a job to you, they expect you to do the job the way they want it done. If you don't understand what they want, ask the boss to explain it again.
- 5.** Be friendly and helpful. It is important to have a good attitude. Your job will be easier if you are polite and friendly.
- 6.** Your work comes first. This means that your friends shouldn't drop by or call you on the phone for a chat.
- 7.** Keep busy. Sometimes you might get your work done ahead of time. If you do, you should ask your boss if there is other work to do. You could also look around to see if your co-workers might need help.
- 8.** Accept feedback. Feedback is when someone, usually your boss, tells you how to do your work better. It is important not to get upset but to listen and learn how to do your job better.
- 9.** Don't take your personal problems to work. If you complain about your personal problems at work you might not get your work done or you might upset your co-workers.
- 10.** Take pride in your work. If you feel good about your work, you will do a better job.
- 11.** Don't argue with your boss. Sometimes you might not agree with your boss but it is important to do what they say.
- 12.** Be honest. Don't steal or tell lies at work.

The Employment Standards Act is a law in B.C. that protects you as a worker. It sets rules about working conditions and the minimum or lowest wage workers must be paid on the job.

If you need more information about your rights as a worker you can contact your local Employment Standards Branch (Ministry of Labour). For office locations and contact information, call **1-800-663-3316** or go on the internet and go to this website: <http://www.labour.gov.bc.ca/esb/>

WORKERS' RIGHTS

Regular Minimum Wage – When this book was published, in March 2010, B.C.'s general minimum wage rate is \$8 per hour.

First Job/Entry Level minimum wage — If you have no paid work experience before November 15, 2001, your employer can legally pay you \$6 per hour until you have worked for a total of 500 hours with one or more employers. After 500 hours, you are entitled to the regular minimum wage rate of \$8 per hour.

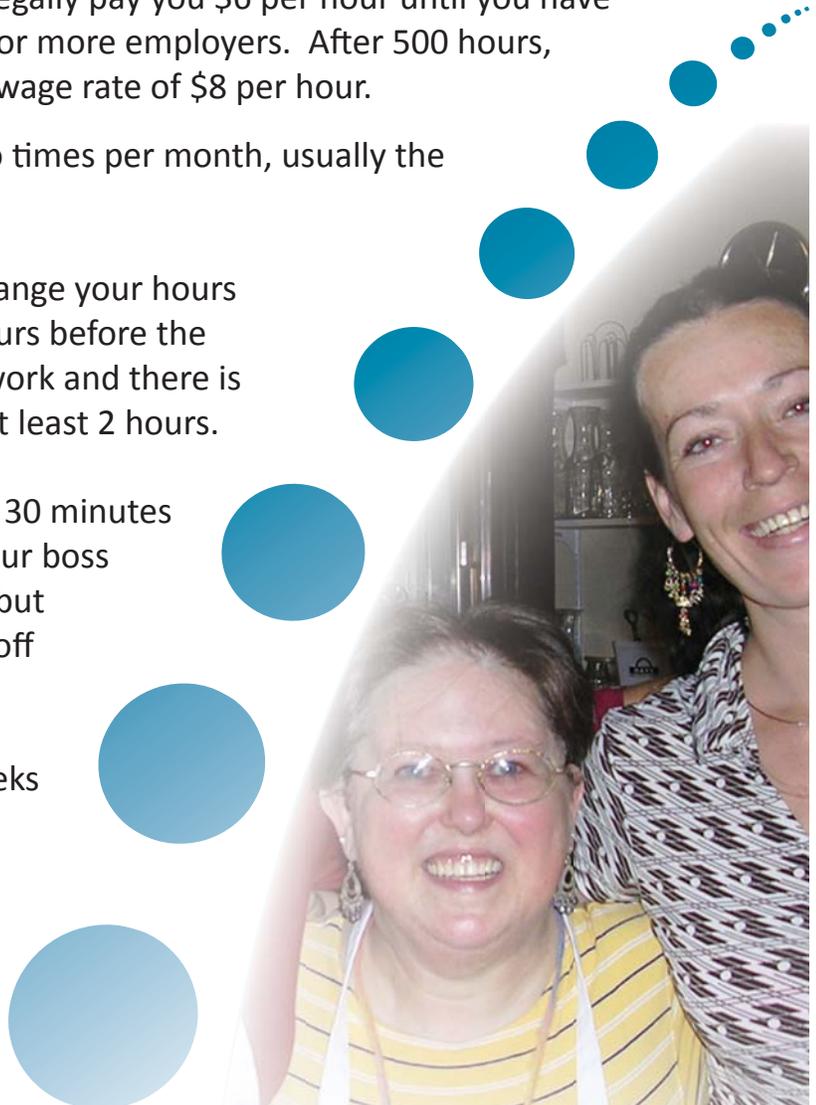
Pay Days – You must get paid at least two times per month, usually the middle and the end of the month.

Hours of Work – If your boss wants to change your hours of work, they must tell you at least 24 hours before the change. If you are scheduled for a day's work and there is no work to do, they have to pay you for at least 2 hours.

Breaks – Your boss must give you at least 30 minutes off to eat every 5 hours that you work. Your boss does not have to give you a coffee break but some do. You must have at least 8 hours off between shifts.

Vacation Time – You are entitled to 2 weeks paid vacation time after you have worked for one year.

Uniforms – If your employer wants you to wear a uniform, they must pay for it. They must also pay for your uniform to be cleaned or mended.



FACTS ABOUT EMPLOYMENT

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO MY PERSONS WITH DISABILITY (PWD) BENEFITS AND STATUS IF I MAKE MORE THAN \$500 PER MONTH?

FACTS:

- If you are receiving Persons with Disabilities (PWD) benefits and you find a job, you must report how much money you make.
- You can make up to \$500 a month before it affects your PWD benefits.
- Once you make over \$500, your PWD benefits will be replaced with your wages dollar for dollar. This is where it gets exciting because you can stop relying on the government's money and make your own!
- If you make \$500 plus all of your PWD benefit, you will stop getting a cheque from the government but your medical, dental and pharmacare benefits continue as long as you are eligible for Medical Services Plan (MSP) Premium Assistance (meaning you make less than \$30,000 net per year or unless you get a job where those benefits are supplied by the employer).
- Once you make more than \$1400 per month from your job, you will no longer receive a PWD cheque; however, you get to keep everything that you make above that amount.
- Your bus pass benefit continues as long as you are receiving any amount of PWD. The benefit ends at the beginning of the next year after you are not receiving a PWD cheque. For example, if you stop receiving PWD in may of 2010, your bus pass benefit ends in January 2011.
- If you happen to lose or quit your job, which happens from time to time, you will have to reapply for PWD benefits but you never lose your PWD status. It is a good idea to have at least three months cost of living put away in a savings account in case this happens.

Anytime you need help trying to figure this out or filling out your reporting card, you can ask someone at a Ministry of Housing and Social Development office for help. It may be helpful to take a friend or relative with you as well.

Myth: I don't have the right skills for any job out there.

Fact: Like all people, you will find success in a job that matches your skills, abilities and interests. The job for you is out there and there are people that can help you find it by working with you.

EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS STORIES

Many people with developmental disabilities across B.C. are finding meaningful employment in their communities. In 2008, BCACL published three employment success stories, featuring Kris, Mike and Linda. To read the entire success stories, and to see what made these employment situations successful, visit the employment section of the BCACL website: www.bcocl.org/our-priority-areas/employment or contact BCACL at 604-777-9100.

Below are a few “sneak peaks” at the three employment success stories:

KRIS' EMPLOYMENT STORY

... Stepping outside of the comfort zone

One of the big changes for Kris from working as a volunteer is that he now earns his own money. “It’s way different! I get paid for it! With money that I make at my job I can buy CD’s, wrestling magazines, and go out for coffee and lunch with my friends.” This is a change that Kris has handled well!

MIKE'S EMPLOYMENT STORY

... Building on interests and strengths

Mike was excited! He started his job learning to wash windshields, pump gas, wash cars, and sweep up the station. By his second shift, he was already greeting customers with confidence. Soon, Mike was checking oil and tire pressures, and operating the cash register.

LINDA'S EMPLOYMENT STORY

... It's never too late to explore new possibilities

Linda is proud of the job she does at Riley’s, and likes the people she works with. The restaurant owner is happy to have Linda as an employee. And just as Dawn predicted, Linda has been working there for a year and a half and has no plans to leave!

DEFINITIONS

Employment – Real work for real pay. Pay is the same as any other employee in that position. People in real work enjoy the rights of every other employee typical for that industry and are protected by legislated employment and safety standards.

Inclusive Employment – The amount of workers with disabilities is roughly equal to the amount of people with disabilities in the general population. For example, if the amount of people with disabilities in the community is 10 %, then the employees with disabilities should represent 10 % of the business.

Customized Employment – An individualized employment relationship between employees and employers that is designed to meet the needs of both. It is based on an individualized plan called “Discovery” that finds out your skills, interests and abilities and matches those with the needs of the employer.

Supported Employment – Real work with ongoing support and expertise.

Enclave/Work Crew – A group of segregated employees who are contracted by a social service agency to perform a repetitive and specific job within a larger business.

Micro enterprise – Small businesses owned and operated by individuals who are the sole recipients of the profit.

Social Enterprise – Social mission-driven organizations pursuing profitable outcomes through operating a business.

Volunteer – Tasks performed on the shared understanding that no financial payment will be provided. Volunteering is not employment or a job but can be a valuable extracurricular activity to do after work to give back to your community or gain extra skills.

Work experience – Time-limited work performed for the purpose of gaining skills and experience in a particular job, often part of a high school program. Unpaid work experience is not a job.

Centre based day programs – Programs whose activities are not necessarily focused on employment and tend to be congregated and segregated activity centres.

Seasonal work – Work that is only available at certain times of the year; like landscaping or snow removal.

Shift-work – Working different shifts during the days or nights that may change back and forth between day and night.

Day Shift – Work during the day that starts between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. and finishes between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Evening Shift – Work during the afternoon and evening that starts between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. and finishes between 10 p.m. and 12 p.m.

Night Shift – Work during the night that will start in the evening between 11 p.m. and 12 a.m. and finishes between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. This is also known as the “graveyard shift”

Full-time – Work between 35 and 40 hours per week.

Part-time – Work that is less than 35 hours per week and can be as little as 2 hours per week.

Casual/Relief – People who work casual or relief are usually on an “on-call” list. The employer phones the people on the list to fill in for workers who are sick or on holidays. They may also use the on-call list if they have extra work during the year like Christmas rush or for special events.

Union – A group of employees who join together to talk to the employer about working conditions and wages. If you work at a place that is unionized you will have to pay union dues. Union dues are money that is taken off your cheque and paid to the union. A shop steward is a person at work who represents the union. They can help you as their co-worker understand your rights as a union member.

Gross pay – Is the total amount of money you make on your pay cheque before deductions are taken off.

Net pay – Is the amount of money left on your pay cheque after deductions are taken off.

Honorarium – Pay provided in recognition of a contribution made by an individual, it is not a wage.

Deductions – Things like income tax, employment insurance, Canada Pension plan contributions, medical and dental benefits and union dues. Your pay stub is a record that shows you what your deductions were.

LINKS TO HELPFUL INFORMATION

BC Association for Community Living Employment Initiative

www.bcacl.org/our-priority-areas/employment

Self Advocate Net

www.selfadvocatenet.com

BC Coalition of People with Disabilities

www.bccpd.bc.ca

Community Living BC Employment Initiative

www.communitylivingbc.ca/what_we_do/employment_overview.htm

WorkAble Solutions

www.workablesolutionsbc.ca

