**Project title:** Supporting the needs of disabled young adults in the workplace

**Study team:**

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A disability may add to the challenges faced by young adults during the school-to-work transition. At the same time, few studies have examined differences in soft (e.g., scheduling modification) and hard accommodation need (e.g., ergonomic adaptation) by disabled young adults, and the factors associated with accommodation need.

Through funding from the Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy (CRWDP) seed grant, an online survey was conducted of 155 Canadian disabled young adults (mean age = 25.8±5.1). Respondents were either employed, seeking employment or enrolled in school, and were recruited using a registry from a national disability students organization, National Educational Association for Disabled Students. Respondents were asked about their need for soft and hard accommodations and medical benefits. Demographic (e.g., gender), health (e.g., disability type, work limitations), and work characteristics (e.g., work status, hours worked/week, permanent vs. short-term contract) were collected. Participants were also asked about perceived barriers to accessing accommodations using eight items (e.g., disclosure difficulties, cost of accommodation). Multivariable logistic analyses were conducted to examine the factors associated with soft and hard accommodation need.

Most participants reported psychological (79%) and learning disabilities (45%), and 68% had >1 disability. Over half (55%) were employed at the time of the survey, and 80% worked in non-standard employment conditions (e.g., part-time or short-term work). An average of five perceived accommodation barriers were indicated. Health benefits and soft accommodations were most needed by participants in comparison to costlier hard accommodations. Also, an average of six perceived accommodation barriers were indicated; difficulty with disability disclosure was most frequently reported. Findings from the multivariable analysis indicated that more perceived accommodation barriers were associated with a greater need for health benefits (OR 1.17, 95% CI 1.04–1.31) and soft accommodations (OR 1.13, 95% CI 1.01–1.27). A psychological disability was associated with a greater need for health benefits (OR 2.91, 95% CI 1.09–7.43) and soft accommodations (OR 3.83, 95% CI 1.41–10.42).

Employers play an important role in supporting the employment of young adults with disabilities through the provision of extended health benefits and soft accommodations. Addressing accommodation barriers could minimize unmet workplace need and improve employment outcomes for young adults with disabilities as they begin their career and across the life course.

**Study outputs**

*Peer reviewed publication*

**Jetha A**, Bowring J, Furrie A, Smith F, Breslin C. (2018). Supporting the transition into employment: A study of young adults living with disabilities in Canada. Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation. *In press.*

*Conferences*

**Jetha A**, Bowring J, Furrie A, Smith F, Breslin C. (2018) Accommodations best served soft: supporting the needs of disabled young adults in the workplace. Occupational and Environmental Medicine. 75 (Suppl 2), A570-A570.

**Jetha A.** (2018). Supporting the labour market participation of millennial young adults with chronic episodic health conditions. Education at Work professional conference. Toronto, ON.

*Other KTE outputs*

**Jetha A.** (2017). Addressing the challenge of supporting young adults with chronic disease and disability in the labor market. Center for Promotion of Health in the New England Workplace News and Views. Issue 54. University of Massachusetts-Lowell. Available at: <https://www.uml.edu/Research/CPH-NEW/News/emerging-topics/Issue-54.aspx>