



South African
EMPLOYERS 4 DISABILITY



SAE4D

Quarter 1 Newsletter



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**March
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QUARTER 1 NEWSLETTER

SOUTH AFRICAN EMPLOYERS 4 DISABILITY

Greetings SAE4D Members & Ambassadors,

We trust the year has started off well, we wish you all the best with your goals and objectives for the year both personally and professionally.

As we hit the 2-year mark since COVID-19 first made its very sudden and life altering presence, we have made huge strides towards adjusting in our lives and working environments. Many companies have fully settled in, and larger corporates have adopted the Hybrid work model and have started returning to the offices a few times a week.

Many have suffered or currently are suffering from the mental impact of Covid i.e., non-visible disabilities due to various challenges experienced during this time. Wellbeing and overall health is critical hence our Q1 Webinar on the 31 March highlighted the importance of self-care. We also shared research on Disability inclusion and practical steps Employers can incorporate in the workplace.

ACQUIRED VS CONGENITAL DISABILITIES: CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE OF DISCLOSURE - By Nontobeko Mdluli (Director at SAE4D)

With **World Birth Defects Day** on the 03 March and **World Down Syndrome Day** on the 21 March, both being congenital disabilities, I could not help but ponder the subject of acquired disabilities, adaptation, and the question of reasonable accommodation at work.

In a study of 226 participants with congenital and acquired mobility disabilities, a questionnaire was used to measure satisfaction with life, self-esteem, disability identity and disability self-efficacy. The findings were that self-esteem, disability identity, disability self-efficacy and income were significant predictors of satisfaction with life. The study found that, people born with a disability, were more satisfied with life, but had self-esteem challenges, whereas people with acquired disabilities, struggled to identify as disabled. So, I looked at some ways that employers can better deal with recent and newly acquired disability disclosures in the workplace. (Source: The role of disability self-concept in adaptation to congenital or acquired disability - Kathleen R Bogart 2014 February)

When an employee confirms that their physical health status has changed:

1. Confirm that the employee has received medical approval to return to work.
2. Review the job description and the inherent requirements of the job with your employee based on their abilities and restrictions.
3. If modifications or adjustments are required to the workplace, these should be implemented prior to the employee returning to work. (Ongoing checks to be built in, to evaluate effectiveness).
4. If an employee discloses a disability, you are required to keep all information confidential.
5. The nature of disability is deeply personal and the decision to identify as a person with a disability can be difficult and there should never be an obligation to do so.

Why Employees may not be comfortable disclosing their new disability:

- Their disability may not affect their ability to do their job.
- They may not require any support or reasonable accommodation by the organisation.
- They may be worried about potential discrimination, harassment, or reduced opportunities for career progression.
- Their disability may be temporary or episodic, but they may feel any associated stigma or stereotyping.
- They may already have good support networks outside the workplace and feel there is not much to gain by talking about their condition.

Some reasons why an employer May wish for employees to disclose their disabilities:

- To better understand the demographics and diversity of the workforce
- To ensure the provision of a safe and inclusive workplace for all employees
- To increase the representation of employees and leaders with disabilities
- To provide targeted recruitment initiatives
- To develop a solid EE recruitment policy and measure progress and reporting
- To develop a Disability Inclusive culture

Identifying employees with non-visible disabilities may be a challenge in the workplace, however ongoing education and creating an inclusive work environment can go a long way towards creating a conducive atmosphere for disclosure with no fear of stigmatisation or discrimination. In this way all employees feel accepted and can be supported.

(Source: Quality of life, self-esteem, self-efficacy and social participation of persons living with mobility-related disability using mobility aids devices within select Nigerian communities, Chigozie Ikenna Uchenwoke ,08 Feb 2021 / World Health Organisation (WHO) -World Report 2011)

May this be an exceptional year for each of you.
We look forward to connecting with you a lot more.
Please reach out to us at any time.

Please e-mail us on info@sae4d.co.za or admin@sae4d.co.za

Best Wishes,
Ms Losh Pather (Chairperson) & Executive Committee

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