

# Challenges and Barriers in the Skilled Trades Workplace



When apprentices feel valued and supported, they're more engaged, productive and loyal. This resource shares how to create an inclusive and positive workplace. It also shares strategies to address challenges so your business and apprentices can thrive.

## Caregiving and Dependent Responsibilities

Many apprentices care for children, older parents or both. Caregivers may feel overwhelmed, tired, anxious or distracted.

### Ways to Support Caregivers

- offer flexible scheduling to allow apprentices to complete hand-offs/drop-offs and pick-ups as needed by day or home care providers (for both children and adults)
- consider paid personal days or allowances for PA/PD days and illness
- talk openly with apprentices and offer supports

### Resources for Employers

- [!\[\]\(49aa2e1da5fe39294864e9598c593810\_img.jpg\) Caregiver-Friendly Workplaces - Carers Canada](#)
- [!\[\]\(7d0a8d8b1031f74abe67b09fcf4a2322\_img.jpg\) Guidance for Supporting Caregiving Employees](#)
- [!\[\]\(6557fa7496e6a507d2326ea0bef061ee\_img.jpg\) Caregivers in the Workplace: A guide for Employers](#)

## Neurodiversity

It's estimated that [20% of the population](#) is neurodiverse. Neurodiversity can be a strong asset in the workplace, leading to innovation and increased productivity. Neurodiverse apprentices face different challenges in the workplace. It's important to remember that everyone learns and understands information differently.

### Ways to Support Neurodiverse Apprentices

- talk with apprentices to come up with solutions that work for them, such as flexible schedules, written instructions etc.
- provide accommodations and tools that help apprentices at work, such as note-taking or speech-to-text apps
- include mandatory neurodiversity awareness training in staff onboarding and/or health and safety training

### Resources for Employers

- [!\[\]\(569ff5d1aa9137b5defb690d1175fea6\_img.jpg\) Employer Services - Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work](#)
- [!\[\]\(59bff645cb030955f45f21c74e7ddbd4\_img.jpg\) Neurodiverse Workplaces - A Manager's Toolkit](#)
- [!\[\]\(dd83808d77658902b474c9e02c5f52d1\_img.jpg\) Supporting Neurodiversity for Leaders](#)

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## Mental Health

One survey found that 50% of apprentices reported their mental health was less than good. Common symptoms include stress (75%), anxiety (62%) and burnout (50%).

### Ways to Support Apprentices with Mental Health Concerns

- offer extra breaks or mental health days
- share mental health and wellness resources, support groups or strategies for stress management
- speak openly about the importance of mental health care
- make mental health first aid training mandatory

### Resources for Employers

- [!\[\]\(c6a8736a601a632e2c96605cf66055ed\_img.jpg\) Mental Health and Employee Wellbeing - Workplace Safety and Prevention Services \(WSPS\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(64ef2b19d70b31fbbfce0e0e2aa3d7b4\_img.jpg\) Mental Health First Aid Course - Canadian Mental Health Association](#)

## Substance Use

Substance use among workers in the skilled trades is [often linked](#) to pain and stress management. Apprentices may hesitate to report substance use issues due to fear of judgement or losing their job.

### Ways to Support Apprentices with Substance Use

- share substance use resources with all apprentices, whether on a bulletin board, email or online portal
- work with apprentices to find treatment if they disclose concerns (learn more about your obligations [here](#))
- strengthen health and safety policies to reduce injury and mental health strain
- support apprentices who need time off for medical care

### Resources for Employers

- [!\[\]\(adb0331d22f78481623cc605df40612a\_img.jpg\) Substance Use and the Workplace: Supporting Employers and Employees in the Trades – Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction](#)
- [!\[\]\(7e3a264c08e10137510d1aa76522412b\_img.jpg\) Connex Ontario](#)
- [!\[\]\(13ab9bea7a2b6465d20b6fafd4770e28\_img.jpg\) Impaired at Work - Tools for Employers - Canadian Human Rights Commission](#)

# Challenges and Barriers in the Skilled Trades Workplace



## Physical Injury

Health and safety in the skilled trades has improved a lot. But injuries still happen. Common injuries for apprentices include

- back and spinal injuries
- musculoskeletal injuries
- hand and wrist injuries
- cuts and abrasions
- foot injuries
- fractures

### Ways to Support Apprentices with Injuries

- provide clear, concise health and safety policies/training
- share repetitive strain prevention strategies like stretching and frequent, short breaks
- allow time off for medical care or preventative maintenance (for example, physiotherapy)
- share proper techniques for heavy lifting, material handling and personal protective equipment (PPE)

### Resources for Employers

- [!\[\]\(e492b5d52ab457a7a3c2826c4091dfee\_img.jpg\) Essential Health and Safety Training Tools for Skilled Trades Workers - FTI Ontario](#)
- [!\[\]\(1d9440fab1f214291ce1c26a75f9c2cd\_img.jpg\) Health and Safety Training - Workers Health & Safety Centre](#)

## Additional Resources

- [!\[\]\(d27edc55493507da2f9b8c7a52b3b96f\_img.jpg\) Strategies for Successful Learning](#)
- [!\[\]\(9bf7a72a60a57323fa980b9b0338593f\_img.jpg\) How to Navigate Difficult Conversations](#)
- [!\[\]\(4b60241e906ef61007ada3e521a0c6a3\_img.jpg\) Support Organizations](#)
- [!\[\]\(5c2af0230acb459edf1f07c643964277\_img.jpg\) Workplace Safety and Prevention Services Webinars](#)



[!\[\]\(0d5ec72f61334709c3fc9450209b754f\_img.jpg\) Click this link](#) or scan the QR Code with your mobile device's camera to check out the Apprenticeship Hub!