Best practice guide - Employer

For employers of staff who have dyslexia

Introduction

As an employer, it is very likely that some of your staff members will have a neurological difference called dyslexia. Dyslexia affects learning and regular workplace behaviour. It is a difference – not a disability. Across the entire population, at least one person in ten will be dyslexic. Obviously, the larger the workforce the greater the likelihood of employees with dyslexia. The actions of team leaders, supervisors, and employers can have a major impact on the workplace success of adults with dyslexia. The following advice and guidance is based on the best current international knowledge.

Dyslexia is a difference – not a disability

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a lifelong learning difference where people struggle with reading, writing and spelling. Having dyslexia is not an indication of low intellect. Associated with dyslexia are a number of challenges with short-term memory, time management and verbal and cognitive processing speed.

Facts

- The most obvious signs of dyslexia are poor reading, writing and spelling skills.
- Dyslexia affects at least 10% of the population no matter the culture, language or ethnicity of a person.
- Dyslexia lasts a lifetime - we do not grow out of it.
- Dyslexia affects all genders.
- Dyslexia is a genetic condition, passed down from generation to generation.
- Most people with dyslexia will not have been diagnosed and therefore are not aware of their condition.

Positive signs

The story about dyslexia is not all about challenges and problems. There are a number of very positive and attractive features associated with dyslexia, including strong:

- Visual, spatial and three-dimensional skills
- Innovative “left field” thinking
- Creativity
- Entrepreneurship
- Strong empathy and cooperation skills – producing great team players

Implications of dyslexia

Understanding some of the implications of dyslexia can also help to support your staff member, in particular:

- Dyslexic people may resist training, promotion and new roles because they struggle with new routines
- They often have low self- esteem and will need extra encouragement.
- Oftentimes dyslexic people will have limited short-term or working memory and may need assistance when receiving instructions.
- Dyslexic people will try many methods to avoid reading or writing in front of people and it is unreasonable to ask them to do so.
- The symptoms of dyslexia will be much greater when learners are under pressure or tension.

Tips to assist your employee

- Advise employees that your workplace is dyslexia friendly.
- You could assist your dyslexic staff member by having a discussion with them to find out what they find challenging and what you could do to help.
- Let them know that it is OK to be dyslexic and that they will not be penalised in any way because of their dyslexia.
- Provide information to all of your staff about dyslexia.
  If possible link up the dyslexic employee with a buddy in the workplace.
- Giving instructions is very important. Avoid giving your dyslexic employee multiple instructions
- Where ever possible give them instructions in two ways, such as written and oral. Encourage them to write instructions down.
- Use charts and diagrams as much as possible when explaining things to them.
- Dyslexic people often need additional support with time management. You may consider suggesting that they use the time and clock functions on their phones.
- You could also provide them with a wall planner and encourage them to use it.
- Encourage them to use the large number of technological aids available.

Above all – provide them with opportunities to use their innovative, creative skills. We all need chances to excel.

Lets get positive about Dyslexia

This resource is part of the an Ako Aotearoa co-funded project.
For more information, visit: https://ako.ac.nz/dyslexia-support

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