



PFC - Sheltered Work Project

Frequently Asked Questions or FAQs

Thank you for attending our presentation. We know that this isn't an issue that will be fixed overnight. But we wanted to share actions that people can take to address this issue in their community. This presentation is being given by members of People First across the country in both English and French.

We also know that some communities are already taking action to solve this problem. We support any changes that help people labeled with an intellectual or developmental disability have 'real work for real pay'.

As we say in our presentation, this project is not pointing fingers at any organizations or day programs. This project just talks about the fact that some people are working at jobs and not getting paid fairly for their work.

People First of Canada would like to thank all of the People First members who shared their stories with us. Thank you also to the People First members who are giving this presentation in their communities. We also want to thank everyone who is attending a presentation and for giving your attention to this issue. Last, we want to thank the Government of Canada for supporting us in this project.

Question

What is the difference between someone going to a day program and who might do some work there, and someone going to a sheltered workshop?

Answer

Sheltered workshops are focused on work. People in sheltered workshop are expected to work like an employee. They might even be punished for being late or not working fast enough. But they are not getting paid fairly for the work that they do.

Day programs have a different focus than sheltered workshops. Some day programs are focused on learning. Some are focused on activities. Some people who go to day programs may not want to work in a regular job. Some people who go to day programs take part in employment skills training there. This is where a day program might start to look like a sheltered workshop or program.

In the following examples, a day program can be like a sheltered work program.

- If people are training for work in a day program for many years, then it might be a sheltered work program.
- If people are not supported from this training into finding a job of their own, then it might be a sheltered work program.
- If people do actual work for their training in a day program and don't get paid, then it might be a sheltered work program.

Question

What about people who are scared to hire someone with an intellectual disability.

Answer

You can let them know that a person with an intellectual or developmental disability is the same as any other employee. They have strengths and weaknesses and like everyone else, they will benefit from training and direction.

Let them know that having a diverse workforce helps everyone. We learn from each other when we all bring our different skills together. That is what makes a workplace successful.

You can also let them know there is support to help them to be a more inclusive workplace. There is an organization called **Ready Willing and Able** and they can give suggestions and support. Their website is www.readywillingandable.ca.

Question

How did this project start?

Answer

In 2019, People First of Canada began a national project about sheltered work. This project was started because 'Employment' is one of the five priorities for the organization. These priorities were chosen by our national board and the issue of sheltered work fits into the employment priority. We wanted to give a presentation that explains the issue of sheltered work from a People First perspective.

Question

What was the goal of the project?

Answer

1. Our first goal for the project was to find out as much as we could about sheltered work in Canada. We also wanted to learn more about the experiences of People First members. We wanted to learn what our members called places that have sheltered work and the words members used to describe this issue.
2. A second goal for this project is to share that information with people in communities across Canada. We wanted everyone to be aware of the issues with sheltered work. We wanted to start a conversation with people who don't know about this issue. We also wanted to talk with people who *do* know that this is a problem and who are looking for ways to fix this problem.
3. Our third goal was to make a 'call to action' or activities that people across Canada could do to work together to end sheltered work.

Question

What is your definition of a Sheltered Workshop?

Answer

Our definition of a Sheltered Workshop is:

“A place where people labeled with an intellectual or developmental disability might work. These are places where they are segregated or separated. They don’t get paid fairly for the work they do.”

Our definition of not getting paid fairly is when a person’s hourly pay does not at least meet minimum wage requirements in their province or territory. If people labeled with an intellectual or developmental disability are working alongside people who are not labeled, and they are all getting paid fairly, then this is not a sheltered workshop. We are only talking about people who are working in a segregated workplace or program and not making a fair wage.

Question

How did you do the research about this issue?

Answer

PFC hired the Institute for Research and Development on Inclusion and Society (IRIS). They also worked with Pooran Law and Chronical Analytics to help find information about sheltered work. Their research included looking at laws and policies in five different provinces and territories. These were: Ontario, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Quebec, and the Northwest Territories.

IRIS also did a review of the articles written about sheltered work programs. They also met with organizations that changed over from sheltered work to inclusive employment. IRIS also did an online public survey with agencies across the country and tried to reach as many organizations as they could.

As part of this project, IRIS put together a research report with everything they learned. A plain language summary of the IRIS research is included on the People First of Canada website www.peoplefirstofcanada.ca.

People First of Canada also talked to our members. We started by asking questions about the experiences that members personally had with sheltered workshops. We put together a visual question board and gave people a chance to add their thoughts. The questions included asking members to tell us what words they used to describe sheltered work and what the solutions could be.

Later in the project, we also did focus groups with PFC board members. We asked questions that helped us understand the issue and the experience of our members. We also did interviews with self-advocates who are labeled with an intellectual or developmental disability. We talked to people who had spent time in a sheltered workshop. They shared their stories and some of them we included in our presentation. We also did interviews with self-advocates who work in inclusive employment. And some of those stories are included as well.

Question

How did you create the presentation?

Answer

After we did the interviews and the research, we wrote our presentation and shared it with an advisory group who gave us their feedback and suggestions. We also did a pilot presentation (or practice session) with a group of people in Eastern Canada. This feedback helped us create a presentation that People First members were able to give in their community.

Our presentation includes what we learned from the research and the interviews and helps explain the issue of sheltered work from a People First perspective. This is how People First members see it and we hope to work together with other organizations to make changes where needed.