

# AS@W...ACCOMMODATION

## What is an accommodation?

- An accommodation is a modification that is made in the work environment in order to allow an individual with a physical or psychological disability to successfully work in that environment.
- Without accommodations, many individuals would be unable to manage their workload, work schedule, or to complete tasks. **When accommodations are not offered in a work environment, individuals are more likely to take longer periods of time off work or not return to work at all.**
- Accommodation involves trying to balance the demands of an individual's workload with the limitations imposed by that individual's medical condition or disability.
- Employers have a duty to accommodate, in other words, they are required to make a reasonable effort, short of undue hardship, to accommodate an employee with a legitimate disability.

## Why is accommodation important?

- It allows individuals to continue to contribute and participate in a work environment that may not otherwise be available to them because of their disability.
- Offering and implementing workplace accommodations allows retention of skilled employees.
- Accommodations are governed by federal and provincial legislation which protects human rights and prohibits employers from discriminating against individuals on the basis of a disability.
- Employers that ensure appropriate accommodations for persons with disabilities are making a statement that employees matter. This enhances organizational morale, teamwork and discretionary effort.

## What is the evidence base for accommodation in the workplace?

- It has been found by one study that more than 80% of employers who provided accommodations to their employees had their investment either matched or exceeded by the economic benefits of having put that accommodation in place.



### **AS@W** Antidepressant Skills at Work Dealing with Mood Problems in the Workplace

Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health & Addiction  
Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University  
Rm 2400, 515 West Hastings St., Vancouver, BC V6B 5K3  
T: 778.782.5148 F: 778.782.7768 W: [www.carmha.ca](http://www.carmha.ca)



BC Mental Health &  
Addiction Services  
An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority



CARMHA  
Centre for Applied Research  
in Mental Health & Addiction  
www.carmha.ca

- The effectiveness of accommodations in the workplace can be demonstrated simply by the improvement in job performance of employees after the implementation of an accommodation.
- Successful accommodations are those that are developed collaboratively between the employer and the employee. They are also ones that are flexible and clear for both parties.
- It is important to re-evaluate the effectiveness of accommodations periodically to ensure that they continue to aid the employee in functioning in the workplace.
- Employers benefit from accommodations by not having to conduct job searches, hires, and training of new employees.
- Many accommodations are inexpensive so they can be implemented with no or little extra cost to the employer. It has been reported by one study that 90% of workplace accommodations **cost less than \$90**.
- A study examining the costs of accommodations found that:
  - 49.4% had no direct cost.
  - 42.9% were a one-time cost.
  - 6.2% were an annual cost.
  - 1.5% were a combination of a one-time cost and an annual cost.
  - When the costs of all accommodations were taken into account, including those with no cost, the median cost of an accommodation was only \$25.
  - 84.9% of the employers surveyed reported that there were no indirect costs associated with accommodation.

### **What kinds of tasks or situations may particularly challenging depressed individuals?**

- Work that involves social isolation
- Completing time-sensitive tasks
- Initiating new tasks or projects without clear direction



## **AS@W Antidepressant Skills at Work** Dealing with Mood Problems in the Workplace

Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health & Addiction  
 Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University  
 Rm 2400, 515 West Hastings St., Vancouver, BC V6B 5K3  
 T: 778.782.5148 F: 778.782.7768 W: [www.carmha.ca](http://www.carmha.ca)



- Excessive multi-tasking
- Tasks requiring ongoing concentration or decision-making
- Unexpected changes in workload demands
- Shift work

### **What accommodations are available to reduce or remove these limitations due to depression?**

- Allowing for flexible scheduling
- Allowing part-time shifts
- Providing longer or more frequent breaks
- Assigning a limited amount of time-sensitive tasks
- Allowing an employee to work from home during part of the day or week
- Planning for uninterrupted work time
- Conducting weekly meetings to divide large tasks into smaller, more manageable ones
- Making daily “to do” lists and checking off items as they are completed
- Providing reminders of important deadlines
- Allowing additional training time
- Providing written job instructions
- Giving praise and positive reinforcement
- Providing referrals to counselling and employee assistance programs
- Allowing an employee to take time for appointments with mental health or medical specialists
- Having weekly meetings between the supervisor and the employee



## **AS@W Antidepressant Skills at Work** Dealing with Mood Problems in the Workplace

Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health & Addiction  
 Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University  
 Rm 2400, 515 West Hastings St., Vancouver, BC V6B 5K3  
 T: 778.782.5148 F: 778.782.7768 W: [www.carmha.ca](http://www.carmha.ca)



- Exchanging minor tasks with other employees
- Allowing an employee to move to a quieter work area that is free from distractions

## References

Canadian Psychiatric Research Foundation. (2007). When Something's Wrong: Strategies for the Workplace.

Lesage, A., Dewa, C.S. & Savoie, J-Y, Quirion, R. & Frank, J. (2004). Mental health and the workplace: Towards a research agenda in Canada. *Healthcare Papers*, 5 (2), 4-10.

Schartz, H.A., Hendricks, D.J., & Blanck, P. (2006). Workplace accommodations: evidence based outcomes. *Work*, 27, 345-54.

Thomas, J.C. & Hersen, M. (2004). *Psychopathology in the Workplace: Recognition and Adaptation*. Brunner Routledge: New York.



## **AS@W** Antidepressant Skills at Work Dealing with Mood Problems in the Workplace

Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health & Addiction  
Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University  
Rm 2400, 515 West Hastings St., Vancouver, BC V6B 5K3  
T: 778.782.5148 F: 778.782.7768 W: [www.carmha.ca](http://www.carmha.ca)



## ABOUT AS@W

### How was *Antidepressant Skills at Work* developed?

The guide was developed by British Columbia Mental Health and Addiction Services (BCMHAS), an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority. The guide and accompanying materials have been authored by **Dr. Dan Bilsker**, **Dr. Merv Gilbert**, and **Dr. Joti Samra** – registered psychologists and scientist-practitioners with expertise in issues relating to workplace mental health. These psychologists are with the Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction (CARMHA), Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University. The guide was written on the basis of a review of the scientific literature; consultation with employers, unions, mental health providers and employee groups; and adaptation of existing self-care depression programs.

### How can the manual be accessed?

The manual is available for viewing and free download at [www.carmha.ca/antidepressant-skills/work/](http://www.carmha.ca/antidepressant-skills/work/) or from [www.bcmhas.ca/research](http://www.bcmhas.ca/research). Individuals or organizations are free to print and make multiple copies of the guide, with permission from CARMHA ([publications@carmha.ca](mailto:publications@carmha.ca)). Print copies and audio CDs are available at a low cost from our ordering page at [www.carmha.ca/ordering](http://www.carmha.ca/ordering).

For further information about AS@W and associated resources and materials, please visit [www.carmha.ca/selfcare](http://www.carmha.ca/selfcare). This information will be updated on a regular basis.



## AS@W Antidepressant Skills at Work

Dealing with Mood Problems in the Workplace

Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health & Addiction  
Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University  
Rm 2400, 515 West Hastings St., Vancouver, BC V6B 5K3  
T: 778.782.5148 F: 778.782.7768 W: [www.carmha.ca](http://www.carmha.ca)

 BC Mental Health &  
Addiction Services  
an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

