



Belonging and Excellence for All (BE4ALL) is a joint effort by SMART, SMACNA, and the ITI to create an industry-wide culture where everyone is welcome and belongs, including those from historically underrepresented groups, and where we all strive for the highest standards of performance and professionalism, resulting in a thriving unionized sheet metal industry that affirms the dignity and worth of us all. These Toolbox Talks are in support of this mission.

## BE4ALL Toolbox Talk

# Accessibility and Invisible Disabilities in the Workplace

**An invisible disability is a physical, mental, or neurological condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities and is "invisible" to most onlookers.** Unlike disabilities with distinct physical signs and attributes, invisible disabilities may not affect the outward appearance of an individual. Invisible disabilities can include conditions such as chronic pain, mental illness, diabetes, neurological disorders, and many others. People who suffer from these conditions can face unique challenges due to not appearing ill, such as having difficulty receiving proper medical care, workplace accommodations, resources, and other forms of aid.

**Fostering an accommodating workplace begins with recognizing that anyone, regardless of their physical appearance, may have different physical needs.** Employees and co-workers with invisible disabilities may struggle with various symptoms, such as fatigue, difficulty concentrating, or physical pain, which can affect their performance and well-being at work.

### How we can offer our support:

- **Promote an Inclusive Culture:** Encourage openness and understanding about disabilities. This reduces stigma and supports those who might otherwise hide their conditions.
- **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Offer flexible schedules or remote work options, if possible, to accommodate various needs without compromising work quality.
- **Provide Reasonable Accommodations:** Adjustments in the workplace, such as ergonomic tools or modified workstations, can make a significant difference.
- **Education and Awareness:** Regular training sessions can educate employees or co-workers on the nature of invisible disabilities and the best support practices.
- **Open Communication:** Maintain open lines of communication and encourage employees or co-workers to speak freely about their needs without fear of discrimination.

**As colleagues and leaders, it's crucial to approach disability with empathy and proactive support.** Check in with your team members, listen to their needs, and seek to understand rather than to respond. Supporting each other makes our workplaces and jobsites stronger and more inclusive. Reflect on how you can contribute to an inclusive environment that supports your employees or co-workers with visible and/or invisible disabilities.



# USEFUL RESOURCES

For more information on supporting employees or co-workers with disabilities, consider the following resource: <https://askearn.org/page/disability-etiquette>

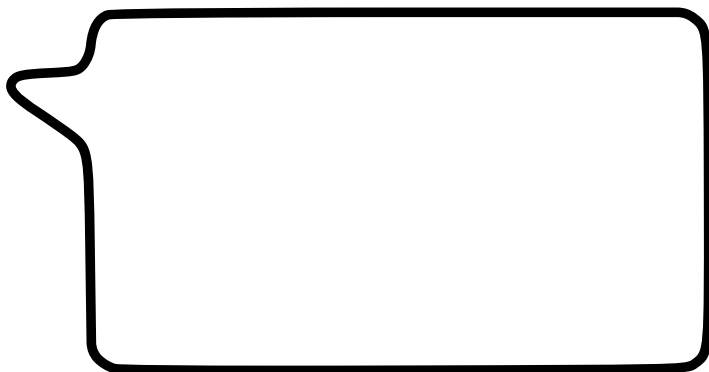
Additionally, Americans can visit [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov) to learn more about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA is a United States law that protects people with disabilities from discrimination and sets the standard for disability accommodation within both public and private spaces/businesses.

In Canada, provincial laws protect people with disabilities from discrimination in employment and also set forth the standard for accommodations. For example, here is a link to information from the Ontario Human Rights Commission: <https://www3.ohrc.on.ca/en/discrimination-based-disability-and-duty-accommodate-information-employers>. Employees in other provinces are encouraged to consult their own provincial human rights commission/tribunal for more information specific to their province.

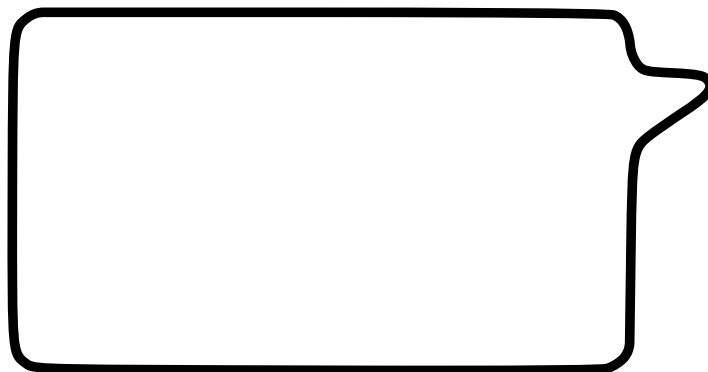
**By recognizing and properly accommodating invisible disabilities, we enrich our work culture, ensuring that all employees and co-workers, regardless of their physical or mental condition, can contribute to their fullest potential.**

## Staff Conversation & Notes:

Share your thoughts or experiences on how workplace adjustments have helped you or your colleagues:



What actions can you take to contribute to an inclusive environment for those with invisible disabilities?



Use the link below or scan the QR code to fill out a survey to win a BE4ALL Tool Pouch!

<https://forms.office.com/r/Fz4NXaCjbM>



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## BE4ALL Toolbox Talk Participation Sheet

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_


Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant	Initials

Participant	Initials



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