The essentials, for employers

DLD at work

Simple steps that benefit the whole team

DLD at a glance

1 in 14

more than 7% of the population

In Quebec: more than 650,000 people

- **Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)**, formerly known as dysphasia, is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects language (understanding and/or expression).
- It persists into adulthood. **It is not an intellectual disability.**
- It shows up **differently from one person to the next**. For some people, the impact goes beyond language: working memory, attention, organization.

What you observe may have another explanation

What you observe	What it may mean	What can help
LANGUAGE		
The person says they understood, but the task isn't done as expected.	The spoken instruction may have been too long or implicit.	**One step at a time, confirmed in writing.**
They rarely speak up in meetings.	They may need time to put their ideas into words.	**The agenda and questions shared in advance.**
BEYOND LANGUAGE, FOR SOME PEOPLE		
They lose track when several instructions come at once.	Their working memory may be overloaded.	**One instruction at a time and a checklist.**
They tune out in a noisy space or a long meeting.	Staying focused may take more effort.	**A quieter space, breaks, shorter meetings.**
They struggle to prioritize or start a complex task.	Planning and organizing may be a challenge.	**Smaller steps and clear priorities.**
They underestimate how long a task will take.	Managing time may be harder.	**Precise deadlines, reminders, a timer.**
They seem unsettled by a change.	The change came without notice or explanation.	**Advance notice and the "why."**

These situations do not mean that a person has DLD. They are simply an invitation to adapt communication for all your employees.

"Silence is often a brain preparing an intelligent answer."

12 simple steps

Little or no cost.
A benefit for the whole team.

Also helpful for neurodivergent people: ADHD, autism, dyslexia...

1. **One instruction at a time.**
   Fewer things forgotten.
2. **Simple, concrete words, without hidden meanings.**
   Clear messages for the whole team.
3. **A written recap after each meeting: email, instruction notebook.**
   Fewer errors, for everyone.
4. **Check understanding: "Can you tell me, in your own words, what you understood?" rather than "Did you understand?"**
   Understanding is confirmed without making anyone uncomfortable.
5. **Precise deadlines: the date, and the time if it's the same day, rather than "tomorrow" or "next week."**
   Fewer misunderstandings about deadlines.
6. **Show first, explain after: demonstrations, photos, short videos.**
   A task better understood is better remembered.
7. **The agenda and questions before the meeting.**
   More efficient meetings.
8. **Visual tools: pictograms, checklists, illustrated procedures.**
   Smoother onboarding for every new employee.
9. **Changes announced in advance, with the "why": posted schedule, shared calendar.**
   A calmer team.
10. **Time to learn, plus reminders: shared calendar, alarms, timer.**
    Work mastered at the person's own pace.
11. **Regular check-ins, starting with what went well.**
    An employee who grows in confidence.
12. **Pay attention to how the person feels: they may find it hard to say what is bothering them.**
    Irritants resolved before they grow.

Hiring and onboarding

- **In interviews:** short questions, asked one at a time, and a hands-on exercise.
- **During onboarding:** written procedures, a go-to colleague and regular check-ins.
- **At all times:** disclosure is the person's choice; a climate of trust is the organization's responsibility.

"What do you need to do your best work?"

Resources

- **Employer booklet** from Regroupement TDL Québec: regroupementtdl.ca
- **Contrat d'intégration au travail (CIT)**: Services Québec financial assistance (Québec.ca)
- **Specialized employment services** for people with disabilities: ROSEPH network
- **Regional DLD organizations**: regroupementtdl.ca/ressources
- **RADLD (Raising Awareness of Developmental Language Disorder)**: radld.org

DLD doesn't disappear once someone is hired. But the barriers can be removed.

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