



ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

The Job Search for Students with Disabilities

The Job Search Process

- » Scary
- » Unsettling
- » Overwhelming

For job seekers with disabilities there is an added challenge - to disclose or not disclose your disability.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in five general areas:

1. Private sector employment
2. Activities of state and local governments
3. Places of public accommodation
4. Transportation
5. Telecommunication services

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

Title I - Employment

- Employers may not discriminate against an individual with a disability in hiring or promotion if the person is otherwise qualified for the job.
- Employers can ask about one's ability to perform a job, but prior to offering a job they cannot inquire if someone has a disability or require medical examinations.
- Employers cannot use tests that tend to screen out people with disabilities unless the tests measure job-related skills.
- Employers need to provide "reasonable accommodation" to individuals with disabilities. This includes steps such as job restructuring and modification of equipment.
- Employers do not need to provide accommodations that impose an "undue hardship" on business operations.
- Who needs to comply:
 - Private employers with 15 or more employees
 - State and local government employers, regardless of how many employees they have

Disclosure

- » Personal decision after weighing advantages and disadvantages
- » Accommodations in the workplace are only provided when a worker discloses his/her disability and requests accommodations (ADA)

Effective disclosure skills require that you

1. Share information regarding your disability-related needs
2. Provide creative, practical suggestions for job accommodations

Disclosure - Advantages

- Allows you to receive supports and reasonable accommodations so that you can pursue work, school, or community activities more effectively.
- Provides legal protection against discrimination as specified in the ADA and other related statutes.
- It reduces stress, since protection a “secret” can take a lot of energy.
- Gives you a clearer impression of what kinds of expectations people have of you and your abilities.
- Ensure that you get what you need to be successful.
- Provides full freedom to examine and question health insurance and other benefits.
- Provides greater freedom to communicate should you face changes in your particular situation.
- Improves advocacy self-image through self-advocacy.
- Allows you to involve other professionals in the learning of skills and the development of accommodations.
- It increases your comfort level.

Disclosure - Disadvantages

- May cause you to relive bad past experiences that resulted in job loss or negative responses from peers.
- May lead to the experience of exclusion.
- May cause you to become an object of curiosity.
- May cause others to blame you if something doesn't go right.
- May cause others to treat you differently.
- May bring up conflicting feelings about self-image.
- May cause others to view you as needy, not self-sufficient, or unable to perform on par with peers.
- Could cause others to overlook you for a job, team, group, or organization.
- Can be difficult or embarrassing.

Disclosure - WHY

Choose not to disclose:

- Manage their careers in the same way as any other job seeker
- Skilled at developing compensatory strategies and self-accommodate
- Fear being treated differently or being denied the same opportunities as those without disabilities

Disclosure - WHY

Choose to disclose:

- Obtain information to assist then in developing a career plan that addresses possible barriers and accommodations
- Identify disability-specific employment services and support networks
- Discuss employment requirements with recruiters or other professionals
- Discuss disability issues with prospective employers to determine whether requirements of the position can be met with or without reasonable accommodations
- Investigate the supports available at the workplace
- Develop mentoring and peer support structures with employees and employers with disabilities

Disclosure - WHY

Things to keep in mind when deciding to disclose or not:

1. Disability is only important if it affects a person's ability to perform the ***essential functions of a job***.
 - Consider how your disability affects or may affect your ability to perform the essential functions of the job
 - Identify what supports would provide the most favorable environment for success in the workplace and possible accommodations to request in the workplace.
2. You may already be disclosed - social media.

Disclosure - WHEN

There is no one right time and place to disclose. Be proactive; when possible, take action before problems or challenges arise.

- » Third-party phone call or reference
- » Letter of application/cover letter or resume
- » Pre-interview
- » Employment application
- » Interview
- » Once job offer extended
- » During the course of employment
- » Never

Disclosure - WHAT

Things to keep in mind

- Preparation is essential
- Unnecessary to disclose very detailed medical or personal information

Disclosure - WHAT

Employer - supervisor - work mentor - co-worker

- General information about your disability
- Why you have chosen to disclose your disability, including its impact on your job performance
- The types of job accommodations that have worked for you in the past
- The types of job accommodations you anticipate needing in the workplace
- How your disability and other life experiences can positively affect your work performance

NOTE: keep the disclosure conversation focused on abilities, not the disability

Disclosure - WHOM

A job seeker with a disability might choose to disclose a disability when developing a career plan and searching for employment.

- Career counselors
- Disability-specific adult employment services personnel
- Prospective employers or human resources personnel
- Workplace mentors

Disclosure - WHOM

When selecting the person, consider the following questions:

- Does this person have the power to determine the reasonableness of the request for accommodation(s)?
- Can the person provide the required accommodation(s)?
- Is the person responsible for hiring, promoting, or firing?
- Is the person in a supervisory role, and will he/she support me?
- What experiences does this person have with similar disclosure situations?
- Do I have respect for this person and trust him/her to keep my disclosure confidential?

Disclosure - WHOM

Remember:

- Select a private, confidential, comfortable place to disclose
- Allow plenty of time to discuss the impact of the disability

Disclosure - the SCRIPT

Research shows that having a disclosure “script” and practicing it with friends, family, teachers, and mentors can be very helpful.

Most people find that it is easier to talk about the impact of having a disability rather than offering a formal or clinical definition.

Disclosure - the SCRIPT

Here are some tips to consider when preparing a disclosure script:

- Write about positive attributes and strengths first
- Identify any limitations or challenges faced at work because of the disability
- Identify which accommodations have worked best in the past and why
- Consider how disclosing can help the employer and co-workers (try to put yourself in their shoes)
- End the script with positive points such as how you expect you will succeed with the necessary support

Disclosure - the SCRIPT

Pre-interview:

“I’m really looking forward to this interview and I am checking to make sure that the interview room can accommodate my wheel chair.”

During an interview:

“I can lip-read in face-to-face interaction, but will need TTY services and devices when using the phone.”

During employment:

“I am having more difficulty than I anticipated keeping up with my co-workers because of my learning disability. In the past, it has helped to work alongside an experienced mentor.”

Disclosure - RIGHTS and RESPONSIBILITIES

People with disabilities have the RIGHT to:

- Have information about their disability treated confidentially and respectfully.
- Seek information about hiring practices from any organization.
- Choose to disclose at any time during the employment process.
- Receive appropriate accommodations in an interview so they may demonstrate their skills and abilities.
- Be considered for a position based on their skills and merit.
- Be questioned in a respectful manner about their disability for the purpose of reasonable accommodation.
- Be self-determined and proactive.

People with disabilities have the RESPONSIBILITY to:

- Disclose their need for accommodation if they desire any work-related adjustments.
- Search for jobs that address their skills and abilities.
- Inform the manager or interview panel about their need for appropriate interview accommodation in a timely manner.
- Identify appropriate and reasonable accommodations for interview.
- Negotiate reasonable accommodation(s) with an employer at the point of job offer and beyond.
- Bring their skills and merit to the table.
- Be truthful, self-determined, and proactive.

Accommodations

Any change or adjustment to an environment that makes it possible for an individual with a disability to enjoy equal opportunity.

Three categories:

1. Changes to facilities and equipment (ramps and parking spaces, materials available in large print, low- and high-tech assistive technology)
2. The provision of special services such as sign language interpreters or qualified readers
3. Creative thinking and problem solving

Work Accommodations

- Changing an employee's workstation environment (adjusting the lighting, raising up a desk on blocks)
- Modifying equipment or devices (computer software)
- Reassigning non-essential functions through job restructuring
- Providing qualified readers and interpreters
- Providing part-time or modified work schedules
- Telecommuting options
- Job coaches
- Personal assistance services
- Adjusting or modifying examinations, training materials, and policies

Job Accommodation Network

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is the leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues.

Working toward practical solutions that benefit both employer and employee, JAN helps people with disabilities enhance their employability, and shows employers how to capitalize on the value and talent that people with disabilities add to the workplace.

<http://askjan.org/>

Career Opportunities for Students with Disabilities (COSD)

COSD's mission is to assist college students or recent graduates with disabilities, to have the tools and the knowledge to have the career of their choice.

This takes work and effort, but with great support from your Disability Services and Career Services offices on campus, as well as employer connections through COSD, everyone can work together to navigate career development and landing that career.

<http://www.cosdonline.org/>

<https://connect.ourability.com/login>

Job Search Resources

AbilityJobs.com

disABLEDperson.com

Gettinghired.com

[National Business & Disability Council](#)

[Starkloff Disability Institute](#)

Additional Resources

[American Association of People with Disabilities](#)

[Association of Higher Education and Disability](#)

[DisAbility Online: Employment and Training - USDL](#)

[Disability Resources - USDL](#)

[DO-IT: Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking and Technology](#)

[Federal Employment of People with Disabilities - USOPM](#)

[Illinois Department of Human Services](#)

[National Organization on Disability](#)

[Office of Disability Employment Policy](#)

[Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services - USDOE](#)

[U.S. Business Leadership Network](#)

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