

Disclosing a Disability

Career Services

Introduction & Contact Information

Resources, documents, and presentation slides will be emailed to participants by the end of the day.

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Ground Rules

To maintain a safe space for all participants, please obey the following:

- Video and microphones are turned off for all participants.
- Change your Zoom name to protect your privacy.
- For questions/comments:
 - Use the **hand raise reaction** if you wish to speak.
 - Use the **chat** option if you'd prefer to type your question.

What is a disability?

*A **disability** is any condition of the body or mind that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities and interact with the world around them.*

Disabilities can affect a person's **vision, movement, hearing, learning, communication, mental health, social relationships**, and so much more. They come in many different forms, and **two people with the same disability can be affected in different ways.**

People can be born with a disability or develop one later in life. Depending on the person and the disability, a person's disability might not be visible to others.

Americans with Disabilities Act

People with disabilities may experience **discrimination**, which is unfair treatment based on someone else's perception of their disability.

Known as the ADA, this 1990 law forbids discrimination against people with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, school, transportation, etc. The ADA's goal is to guarantee that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else.

In the workplace, this means that employers must provide **reasonable accommodations** to their applicants and employees. Reasonable accommodations are modifications that allow the employee to perform their essential job duties and/or candidates to participate in the application process.

Reasonable Accommodations at Work

Reasonable accommodations are not special treatment, but are solutions to barriers a person with a disability might face when applying for a job or performing their work duties because of their disability.

They're considered 'reasonable' because they don't create an 'undue hardship' for the employer, such as installing an elevator for a small company with limited financial resources.

For example, someone with hearing loss might need a sign language interpreter during an interview. At work, someone who uses a wheelchair can request that meetings be held on the first floor of a building.

These accommodations allow the person to fully participate in the hiring process and at work.

Video: [Employment Accommodations](#)

What is Disclosure?

Disclosure is the act of telling someone new information and can be very tricky to navigate as a person with a disability. If you have a disability, you might be worried about how others view or treat you, especially if it's at work.

There are two situations in which you might wish to disclose that you have a disability:

1. If you need a reasonable accommodation, or
2. If there is something visible or audible you feel would hurt someone's impression of you.

What is Disclosure?

Disclosure looks different for everyone, and is completely optional. **You do not need to share information that you are not comfortable sharing.**

Tell the fewest number of people needed to get your accommodation, and only disclose the necessary information and how it relates to your work.

Even if your disability is visible, you still need to formally request an accommodation from your supervisor or Human Resources in order to receive one.

When Should I Disclose?

You should disclose as soon as you need an accommodation or as soon as you are in a position where you need to demonstrate to the employer why you are a good candidate for the job.

Employers value openness earlier in the process, but **it is up to you as the job seeker to decide what and when to disclose.**

There are many points within the job search where you may choose to disclose a disability, and **the best time is different for each person.**

When to Disclose

- Before or during an application
- While completing a pre-work assessment or computer-based tryout
- Before a phone screening
- When scheduling an in-person interview
- During an interview
- Upon receipt of a job offer
- On your first day of employment
- Any time after starting a job

Should I Disclose?

If you need an accommodation or believe your employment will be impacted if you do not, you will need to disclose at least some of your disability. If you do not need an accommodation, you do not need to disclose anything.

Sometimes you may be able to do the job without an accommodation but you still may wish to disclose your disability.

If your disability is visible and you have experienced others making assumptions about your abilities, choosing to disclose is your chance to sell yourself as the right candidate for the job.

Creating a Disclosure Statement

If you decide to disclose a disability to your employer, it's best to create a disclosure statement. The Office of Disability Employment Policy suggests including the following information in your statement:

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

Creating a Disclosure Statement

Write your disclosure statement ahead of time so you can practice. It's all in the delivery - an important part of self-advocacy is being able to express yourself effectively.

As you're creating your statement, it's important to do the following:

- Be truthful, but put a positive spin on your story
- Sell yourself!
- Be confident in your skills
- Use language that the employer will understand
- Make it easy for the employers to see how an accommodation will help you be the ideal worker
- Focus the conversation on your ability to accomplish the primary functions in the job description, not your disability

Try it yourself!

Goodwill SWPA has a [fillable disclosure statement template](#) available on Google Drive.

To save this to your personal Drive, click **File** in the top left corner and select **Make a Copy**. Once you've renamed it, click **OK** to save.

What if....

What if I need to disclose before I'm hired?

Contact the company's Human Resources department to request an accommodation and explain what you need to complete the application or attend an interview, such as more time on a personality assessment or the presence of a job coach.

What if I'm not sure what accommodations are available for me?

Use [AskJan.Org](https://www.askjan.org) to find accommodations by disability or limitation (such as speech impairment or walking). This is a useful resource to give to your employer if they're unfamiliar with your disability or limitation.

What if....

What if my accommodation request is denied?

Your disclosure should be a conversation. There's a possibility that your employer can't accommodate your first request, but they should be willing to work with you to find another solution that works for both of you. If they ignore your request or won't work with you, bring your request to a higher-level employee, such as their supervisor or Human Resources.

Be sure to document your request, the date it was made, and people involved for every conversation you have.

What to Do if You Experience Discrimination

If you believe that you have been discriminated against, you have many options. Before filing a complaint or a lawsuit, consider if the hiring manager simply made a mistake due to a lack of experience. Try calling the company's Human Resources department and let them know what happened. You might get another interview and avoid litigation.

If this doesn't resolve your issue, you can file a Charge of Discrimination.

Filing a Charge of Discrimination

Submit an initial inquiry with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) at www.publicportal.eeoc.gov.

You will then be contacted by the EEOC for an interview.

During the interview, an EEOC staff member will help you determine if filing a formal Charge of Discrimination is your best option.

Video: Disability Disclosure

Pay attention to the different disabilities, the accommodations they requested, and when they disclosed.

Next Steps

Newsletter, Webinars, and More

- To stay up-to-date on the latest events, resources, and job postings from partner employers, sign up for our monthly newsletter by emailing jobsearch@goodwillswpa.org.
- Register for the another webinar by visiting <https://careerservices.corsizio.com/>.
- Ask questions and schedule individual appointments by email jobsearch@goodwillswpa.org.
- For other resources, contact our Welcome Center at welcome@goodwillswpa.org or call 1-877-499-3526.

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