Disclosing a Disability to an Employer

Deciding to disclose a disability to an employer can depend on a number of different variables. Initially, a job seeker must decide if he/she even wants to disclose a disability to a potential employer. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), **people with disabilities are not obligated to disclose their disability unless it is likely to directly affect their job performance.**

Disclosure is a personal choice dependent upon the type of disability you have, how the disability could possibly affect your work and your personal feelings.

If a job seeker does choose to disclose information related to their disability, there is no right or wrong way to do so.

However, here are some opportunities of when you could disclose your disability and some guidelines to do so:

**On an Application**  There is usually no reason to disclose your disability on an application. This may disqualify you with no opportunity to present yourself and your qualifications to the employer

**On a Resume or Cover Letter** Whether or not you choose to disclose on your resume and/or cover letter is your decision. If you do feel comfortable in disclosing just be sure to highlight your relevant skills. If you have work experience (paid or unpaid) related to your disability be sure to include it on your resume and/or explain it within your cover letter. It is not advised, however, to disclose on the top portion of your resume.

**Prior to the Interview** If you have a disability that requires special accommodations during the interview, then it is important to disclose this prior to the interview. This will help ensure that necessary accommodations have been made for you in your interview. This will help
eliminate or reduce unforeseeable accessibility issues that could potentially interfere with the interview process.

**During the Interview** If you choose to disclose your disability at this point be prepared to briefly discuss it, including accommodations that will be necessary for you to fulfill the duties of the potential job. Additionally, you will want to include examples of how you have already performed certain functions of the job at hand. Lastly, don’t forget to focus on your skills, experiences, and competencies that you could bring to the position.

**After the Job Offer** You may even decide that you will not disclose your disability until after you have been offered the job. If at this point you feel like you will need accommodations, contact your employer prior to your start date to make the necessary arrangements.

**During your Employment** Once you have started your job you may feel more inclined to disclose information about your disability. Furthermore, with time, if you feel that accommodations will be needed it is best to bring this up to your employer promptly and professionally so that the necessary accommodations can assist you in fulfilling your job duties.

**How to Prepare for Disclosure**

*Acquired from IUCareers.com*

- Consider developing a personal philosophy about disclosure—what does it mean to be a person with a disability? How does it affect your life?

- Educate yourself about your disability and learn how to discuss it.

- Contact the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) at 800-526-7234 to learn more about potential job accommodations based on your disability and the nature of the job.

- To help you gauge your potential employer’s attitudes about hiring people with disabilities, do your research—look at the job
announcement, browse the website, talk to current employees, and read company publications.

- Participate in internships or work-based learning to gain an understanding of accommodations needed and provided in a professional environment.

- Prepare yourself for personal or potentially illegal questions about your disability during the interview.

- Seek advice from other people with disabilities who have been successful in finding work.

**Special Note** If you are straightforward/honest and confident, you will be equipped to alleviate negative perceptions or hesitations that a potential employer may have.

With this, you will be fully prepared to discuss what is really important- the significance of your skills, abilities, experiences, and interest in the position!