



Guide to Career Services for Students with Disabilities

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MU Career Center's Guide to Career Services for Students with Disabilities: Part of the Diversity Guide Series

Diversity Guide Series:

- ⇒ Guide to LGBTQ Career Questions
- ⇒ Guide to Work Abroad
- ⇒ Guide to Career Opportunities While Studying Abroad
- ⇒ Guide to Study Abroad
- ⇒ **Guide to Career Services for Students with Disabilities**

**MU Career Center
Guide Series:**
*Career and Major Exploration
Job Search Preparation
After College Planning
Diversity*

ADA

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title 1

Title 1 protects qualified individuals with disabilities from discrimination in employment.

Whom does the ADA protect?

The ADA protects "individuals with disabilities" from discrimination. An individual with a disability is someone who fits into one of the three categories by having:

- A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. A "substantial impairment" is long term and has a serious impact on a person's ability to function. "Major life activities" include walking, talking, hearing, seeing, working, caring for oneself, learning and speaking. For example, a person who uses a wheelchair for mobility or a person who is blind.
- A record of such an impairment. A person who has recovered from an illness, such as cancer, that substantially limited one or more major life activities.
- An individual who is regarded as having such an impairment. Examples include: a person with epilepsy treated with medication or a person who tested positive for HIV.

Who is excluded from Protection?

Individuals with certain conditions or characteristics are not protected under the ADA, including:

- Someone engaged in current, illegal drug use. However, there are exceptions: if they have completed a supervised rehabilitation program, or have otherwise been rehabilitated and are no longer using illegal drugs; if they are in a supervised rehabilitation program and are no longer using illegal drugs; or if they are mistakenly regarded as using illegal drugs.
- Homosexuals and bisexuals are not considered to have disabilities based on their sexual orientation.

Other "conditions" specifically excluded are: transvestitism, transexualism, pedophilia, exhibitionism, voyeurism, gender identity disorders not resulting from physical impairments, other sexual disorders, compulsive gambling, kleptomania, pyromania and psychoactive disorders resulting from the current use of illegal substances.

Who is covered?

Private businesses with 25 or more employees prior to July 26, 1994, after which the law applies to all private businesses with 15 or more employees.

Who is protected?

A qualified individual with a disability, meaning someone who meets the experience and other job related requirements and who can perform the essential functions with or without reasonable accommodation.

Before Hiring

- An employer may ask questions about the applicant's ability to perform specific job functions.
- Questions about a disability or the severity of a disability may not be asked.

An employer may ask ALL applicants to demonstrate how they would perform the job with or without a reasonable accommodation. However, an applicant with a known disability that may interfere with performance may be asked to describe or demonstrate how they would do the job even if others are not required to do so.

Conditional Offers of Employment

Reasonable accommodations are changes to the work environment that enable the person to perform the job. An employer does not have to provide a reasonable accommodation if it would result in an undue hardship. An undue hardship is something that is difficult or expensive in relation to several factors, including:

- The nature and net cost of the accommodation.
- The financial resources for the employer, including the size of the business, the number of employees and the corporate structure.
- The type of business operation, including structure and functions of the workforce, and the administrative and fiscal relationship between the corporation and franchises or subsidiaries.

Examples of reasonable accommodations

- Making facilities accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities.
- Job restructuring by reallocating and/or redistributing nonessential job functions.
- Part-time or modified work schedules.
- Obtaining or modifying equipment.
- Modifying testing materials and practices.
- Providing qualified readers or interpreters.
- Reassignment to a vacant position.
- Permitting use of accrued paid leave or unpaid leave for treatment.
- Reserved parking.
- Allowing an employee to provide equipment that the employer is not required to provide.

Request for reasonable accommodations should be made in writing whenever possible. Documentation about an individual's disability may be requested, but must be kept confidential.

Disclosure

As a person with a disability, one of the issues you will encounter is whether or not to inform a potential employer of your disability. The first step of the disclosure process is to be informed of your rights with the American Disabilities Act (ADA). Remember that under the ADA no person with a disability is required to disclose to their employer unless you require special accommodations that must be met by the company. Furthermore, it is illegal for an employer to even ask you if you have a disability.

The Disclosure Process

Deciding on whether or not to disclose

- Identify and understand your disability.
- Be familiar with what accommodations you may need.
- Understand the advantages and disadvantages of disclosing.

If you decide to disclose

- Decide who to tell (manager, interviewer, HR representative, etc).
- What timing would be best (on the application, during the interview, when you receive the job offer, etc)?
- Decide how best to describe your disability and include an informative explanation.
- Make sure to describe your skills and abilities that make you able to perform the necessary duties of the position you are applying for.
- Be Honest. Describe any limitations that may interfere with your performance and identify any and all possible accommodations you may require.

If you decide not to disclose

- First and foremost, make sure you can perform all the necessary duties of the position before accepting it.
- Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you legally do not have to disclose anything unless you choose to.

When is it Appropriate to Disclose

At times it may be difficult to gauge when to disclose your disability to your potential employer. The best time to disclose is when you feel comfortable, and when you perceive that your boss is going to be receptive to your disclosure. Some employers may even have guidelines of their own for persons with disabilities so that they already have the accommodations in the workplace. You may never truly see the need to disclose. It is ultimately your decision.

Disclosing on the Resume or Application

First and foremost, it is important to know that it is not necessary to disclose your disability on your resume. Remember that it is illegal for employers to ask you if you have a disability on an application form.

Advantages of disclosing:

- You are being honest with your employer from the beginning.
- Lets your employer decide if your disability will become an issue.

Disadvantages of disclosing:

- An employer may automatically disqualify you.
- May decrease your chances for getting an interview.

Disclosing Before the Interview

If your disability requires accommodation during the interview, then you should disclose when the potential employer contacts you for an interview so that they can make the necessary arrangements.

Advantages of disclosing:

- You are being honest with the employer.
- Reduces the surprise when you meet.
- The employer can meet any accommodations prior to your interview.

Disadvantages of disclosing:

- Employer may cancel interview.
- May not receive adequate consideration during interview.

Disclosing During the Interview

When you disclose in the interview, if you do not receive the job offer, you will not know if it is because of your qualifications or your disability. If your disability is not obvious, you should disclose at the time of the job offer so that the employer has ample time to make accommodations before you start.

Advantages of disclosing:

- You will have the opportunity to discuss your disability in person and respond to any questions surrounding your abilities.
- The level of discrimination is decreased when face-to-face.

Disadvantages of disclosing:

- Employer may feel that you have hidden your disability up to this point.
- You will have the responsibility to handle any issues or questions about your disability.

Disclosing During the Offer and Acceptance Period

In certain situations, it may be more beneficial to wait until an offer has been made before disclosing your disability to your employer, especially if you can perform all the duties necessary. However, there are still advantages and disadvantages associated with waiting this long to disclose.

Advantages of disclosing:

- Still gives the employer time to make arrangements if necessary.
- Employer may feel that you waited to disclose because you are able to perform all duties necessary for position.

Disadvantages of disclosing:

- Lack of honesty with employer if the disability information affects the hiring decision; if so, legal recourse could be taken.
- Company may not have the adequate accommodations for you to start when decided upon with your employer.

Disclosing After You Start Work

It is true that the longer you choose not to disclose, the harder it becomes. At this point, it may be difficult to decide who to approach in this matter. Remaining comfortable and confident with your disability and work performance is a must.

Advantages of disclosing:

- You are given the opportunity to perform at work and prove your abilities.

Disadvantages of disclosing:

- Possible mistrust by employer or accusations of falsifying your application or abilities.
- May lose the option of legal recourse if you do not tell anyone and cannot perform necessary functions.

Job Tips

Disclose a Disability Only as Needed

The only reason to disclose a disability is if you require an accommodation for an interview or to perform the essential functions of a particular job. How you go about disclosing your disability is entirely up to you.

When you are applying for a job, remember that your resume and cover letter should highlight your skills and experience, not your disability.

Find a Mentor

All new employees can benefit from the guidance of a more experienced employee when starting off at a new job. Finding a mentor in your field of interest, whether or not he or she has a disability, can be extremely beneficial for you to be confident and supported in your new job.

Ask for Accommodation via an Accommodation Request Letter

While not required, individuals with disabilities might find it useful to document accommodation requests in writing in case there is ever a future dispute. While there are no specific guidelines, here are some things you may choose to include in your letter:

- Identify yourself as a person with a disability
- State that you are requesting accommodations under the ADA
- Identify which tasks you foresee as potentially problematic
- State your ideas for accommodation and ask for your employer's input
- Attach medical documentation of your disability when appropriate

Take Advantage of The Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities

The Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities (WRP) is a great resource to connect public and private sector employers nationwide with highly motivated postsecondary students and recent graduates with disabilities who are eager to prove their abilities in the workforce. Employers look to fill temporary and permanent positions in a variety of fields. To learn more about this program, visit www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/brochures/wrp1.html.

Know Your Rights in a Job Interview

The focus of the interview should be your qualifications and skills, not your disability! In fact, an interviewer is prohibited from asking you questions about your disabilities that are not relevant to your ability to perform the job. You might choose to anticipate and address some of the questions that an interviewer may be reluctant to ask if you feel comfortable doing so. Remember to request any accommodation needed well in advance of the interview.

Disability Friendly Companies

Check out <http://www.esight.org/> for company profiles, employment contacts, employee benefits, and diversity policy information about each company.

Aerospace/defense:

[Lockheed Martin Corporation](#)
[Northrop Grumman Corporation](#)
[Raytheon Company](#)
[The Boeing Company](#)

Auto Manufacturing:

[Ford Motor Company](#)
[General Motors Corporation](#)

Banking:

[Bank of America](#)
[Citibank](#)
[HSBC USA](#)
[JP Morgan Chase](#)

Computer Hardware:

[3COM](#)
[Dell Computer Corporation](#)
[Hewlett-Packard](#)
[IBM](#)
[Pitney Bowes](#)

Computer Software and Services:

[Electronic Data Systems Corporation \(EDS\)](#)
[Microsoft](#)

Consumer Products (Non-Durable):

[Colgate-Palmolive](#)
[Procter & Gamble](#)

Diversified Services:

[Avis Group Holdings](#)
[TMP Worldwide](#)

Electrical Business Equipment:

[Xerox Corporation](#)

Electronics:

[Texas Instruments](#)

Energy:

[Amerada Hess](#)
[Public Service Enterprise Group](#)

Financial Services:

[AG Edwards](#)
[American Express](#)
[Bear Stearns](#)
[FMR Corporation](#)
[Merrill Lynch](#)
[Salomon Smith Barney](#)

Food Products:

[PepsiCo](#)

Insurance:

[American International Group](#)
[New York Life](#)
[Prudential Financial](#)
[State Farm Insurance Companies](#)

Internet Service Providers:

[Globix Corporation](#)

Leisure - Lodging:

[Marriott International](#)

Leisure - Restaurants:

[Domino's](#)
[McDonald's](#)

Media:

[The New York Times Company](#)
[Viacom](#)

Media - Publishing:

[McGraw-Hill](#)

Medical Laboratories:

[Quest Diagnostics](#)

Non-profit:

[Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation](#)

Personal Care:

[L'Oreal USA](#)

Pharmaceutical:

[Abbott Laboratories](#)
[Aventis Pharmaceuticals](#)
[Johnson & Johnson](#)
[Pfizer](#)

Retail:

[Albertson's](#)
[Wal-Mart Stores](#)

Retail - Department Stores:

[JC Penney](#)
[Macy's East](#)

Specialty Retail:

[Home Depot](#)
[Toys "R" Us](#)

Telecommunications:

[AT&T](#)
[SBC Communications](#)
[Sprint Corporation](#)
[Verizon Communications](#)

Tobacco Products:

[Altria Group, Inc.](#) [Go back to Main Menu](#)
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Resources

Websites

ADA Home Page <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm>

Website for the U.S. Department of Justice's Americans with Disabilities Act.

ADA Project <http://www.adaproject.org/>

The DBTAC - Great Plains ADA Center provides information on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to those in the Mid-West.

ADA Hot Links <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/links/adalinks.htm>

The Job Accommodation Network including links to the ADA Handbook, ADA Questions and Answers, and Employment Regulations.

Ability Jobs <http://abilityjobs.com/>

Provides job search engines, employer information, and ADA help.

DO-IT <http://www.washington.edu/doit/>

Serves to increase the participation of individuals with disabilities in challenging academic programs and careers. It promotes the use of computer and networking technologies to increase independence, productivity, and participation in education and employment.

UTK Disability-Careers Office <http://career.utk.edu/dco/>

The goal of the Disability-Careers Office is to assist college students, with all types of disabilities, by providing career planning and guidance.

Books

"Real Work for Real Pay: Inclusive employment for People with Disabilities" (2007).

Wehman, Paul et al., Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc.

"Job Search Handbook for People with Disabilities" (2004). Ryan, J. Daniel. JIST Publishing, Inc.

"How to find Work that works for People with Asperger Syndrome" (2004). Hawkins, Gail

"Career Success for People with Physical Disabilities." (1997). Kissane, Sharon F. VGM Career Horizons.

"The Americans with Disabilities Act: Hiring, Accommodating & Supervising

Employees With.... (Legal Issues for Business Series)." (1995) Dickson, Mary & Keppler, Kay.

"The Job Placement~ ADA Connection." (1993). Pimentel, Richard K., Bell, Christopher,

G., & Lotito, Michael, J. Milt Wright & Associates, Inc.:Chatsworth, CA.

"Job Strategies for People with Disabilities." (1992). Witt, Melanie A. Peterson's Guides: New Jersey.

"Yes You Can." (1990). Hoffa, Helynn & Morgan, Gary. Pharos Books: New York.

Agencies

Job Accommodation Network
West Virginia University
918 Chestnut Ridge Road
Suite 1, P.O. Box 6080
Morgantown, WV 26506-6080 (800) 526-7234

President's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities
1331 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20004-1107 (202) 376-6200 (202) 376-6205 (TDD)

Program Able
205 W. Wacker Drive, Suite 2200
Chicago, IL 60606 (312) 424-5300

Administration on Developmental Disabilities
200 Independence Ave. SW
349 F Humphrey Building
Washington, DC 20201 (202) 690-6590

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities
P.O. Box 1492
Washington, DC 20013-1492 (800) 999-5599 (703) 893-8614 (TDD)

Job Point (<http://www.jobpointmo.org>)
1500 Vandiver Drive, Ste. 109
Columbia, MO 65202 (573) 777-1500

Magazines

CAREERS & the disABLED
The nation's first and only career-guidance and recruitment magazine for people with disabilities who are at the undergraduate, graduate, or professional level. Each issue features a special Braille section.

Videos

"Making the ADA Work For You" Barr Films
12801 Schabarum Ave.
P.O. Box 7878
Irwindale, CA 91706-7878 (800) 234-7878