

Career Services Center, Kent State University. (n.d.). Disclosing a Disability. Retrieved from <http://www2.kent.edu/career/jobs/interview/disabilityfaqs.cfm>

Disclosing a Disability

Do I have to disclose a disability to a potential employer?

No. It is ultimately your decision to disclose your disability. There is no law that says a person with a disability has to disclose that disability to a current or prospective employer. Keep in mind that once disclosed, the employer may ask additional questions about the disability and/or require information regarding the individual's ability to safely perform the essential functions of the job. In general, the information revealed has to be kept confidential. Remember, you should focus on your abilities to perform the essential functions of the job, not your disabilities.

When is it time to disclose a disability and how should I disclose?

If you have a physical disability or visual impairment, the best time to let an employer know is when you first call for an interview. Discuss your disability with the person who will be conducting the interview, not the receptionist scheduling the interview. Be honest, professional, and positive.

There is otherwise no, one "right" time or place to disclose your disability. Select a confidential place in which to disclose and allow enough time for the person to ask questions.

One way to become comfortable with discussing your disability is to find someone you trust and practice the disclosure discussion with that person. The two of you can put together a disclosure script that contains relevant disability information and weave in your strengths. You should weigh the pros and cons of disclosure at each point of the job search, recruitment, and hiring process and make the decision to discuss your disability when it is appropriate for you.

What should I do if the office is not accessible because of my disability?

It is your responsibility to find out what your surroundings will be like and how they affect your disability. If you are in a wheelchair, you will need to know if there are stairs that lead to the office or a ramp, and if you are blind, you may need assistance getting there. Explore the setting prior to the interview.

How can I request reasonable accommodations from an employer?

Accommodations must be made on a case-by-case basis based on the nature and extent of the disability and the requirements of the job. The applicant or employee with a disability is responsible for letting the employer know that an accommodation is needed to participate in the application process, to perform essential job functions, or to receive equal benefits and privileges of employment.

Employers cannot provide accommodations if they are not aware of the need. The [American's with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) does not include specific guidelines or forms for requesting reasonable accommodations. However, some employers have developed in-house forms. If so, employees should use the employer's forms for requesting accommodations; otherwise, individuals can use any method that is effective since the ADA does not require a specific language or format.

What questions are inappropriate for an employer to ask me in the interview?

A potential employer should never ask if your disability will interfere with your ability to perform the job. Employers asking, "Do you have a heart condition, asthma, or other medical problem?" are inappropriate. Also, an employer asking, "How long have you been disabled?" is also inappropriate. If these questions do come up remember to turn your disability into ability! Give a brief explanation and focus on your skills, strengths and what you can do for the company.

What services can help me find a job or internship?

- [Job Accommodation Network \(JAN\)](#) is a source for free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues. JAN also 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.
- [Linking Employment, Abilities, and Potential \(LEAP\)](#) serves people with disabilities in northeast Ohio and promotes self-determination, peer support and self-advocacy which leads to empowerment, independence and inclusion. LEAP offers an individualized job-search plan and services to help build skills for maximized independence.

When can an employer ask an individual for medical documentation?

Contact JAN directly for specific situations and read the [EEOC's Enforcement Guidance on Disability-Related Inquiries and Medical Examinations](#) and *Pre-employment Disability-Related Questions and Medical Examinations* for an overview. Also, see JAN's *Medical Inquiry Response to an Accommodation Request*.

Where can I get funding for accommodations and how much do they cost?

Tax incentives are available to help employers implement workplace accommodations. Additional funding is available through several organizations. Read JAN's publication on Tax Incentives and visit its funding links for additional information. Since its inception, JAN has collected cost and benefit data from its customers. Data collected suggest that more than half of all accommodations cost nothing. JAN's statistics show that most employers report financial benefits from providing accommodations due to reduced costs in terms of insurance and training new employees and increased worker productivity.

How can I improve my interviewing skills?

Dress professionally and go alone so the employer knows you can be independent; unless you are blind, guide dogs are appropriate. Be prepared to answer questions about your qualifications for the position in which you're applying. Call [Career Services](#) for assistance for resume help and job search assistance.

I currently receive SSI/SSDI, will I lose it if I become employed?

No, not necessarily. It is important for the individual to get a Benefits Analysis done, which can be done through BVR/BSVI services (they pay for the analysis to be done). A Benefits Analysis will show how much an individual can earn without losing their [SSI/SSDI](#) benefits. For some individuals, such as those who are blind, the benefits can be used to pay for equipment they need, guide dog care, etc. A referral to BVR/BSVI is recommended.

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