**Talking about Disability Disclosure**

**https://choosework.ssa.gov/blog/2018-07-16-talking-about-disability-disclosure**

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Many people struggle with the idea of disclosing their disabilities in the workplace, and for many good reasons. Disclosure involves giving out personal, medical, and/or disability information to an employer. It can be overwhelming and scary.

How much information should I provide? When is the best time to do it? Will my employer keep the information confidential? Will he or she use it against me? These are all valid questions that may run through the mind of an applicant or employee trying to determine if he or she needs to disclose a disability.

If you need reasonable accommodations in the workplace or for the application or hiring process, disclosure is a very real and necessary step in the accommodation process. It is the first and sometimes most difficult step. So what exactly is involved?

When disclosing personal information about a disability, it is important to provide information about the nature of your disability, the limitations involved, and how the disability affects your ability to learn and/or perform the job successfully. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), employers have a right to know if a disability is involved when an employee asks for accommodations. Although there is no specific time frame under the ADA for requesting an accommodation, you should disclose a disability and request accommodations before you have difficulties on the job, or at least before they become too serious.

Let's look at 3 reasons why someone with a disability may choose to disclose to their employer.

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| **Learn more with JAN***If you're interested in learning more about the ADA, disability disclosure and reasonable accommodations, check out this month's WISE webinar! JAN will join us to talk about the ADA and how reasonable accommodations may help you succeed as you apply for jobs and transition to the workplace.****Date:****Wednesday, July 25, 2018****Time:****3 – 4:30 p.m. ET****Register:***[*choosework.ssa.gov/wise*](https://choosework.ssa.gov/webinar)*or call 866-968-7842 or 866-833-2967 (TTY) M-F 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. ET* |

**Accommodations**

The main reason to disclose a disability is to ask for accommodations. Accommodations, which are changes or modifications to the way things are usually done, aren't just necessary for the completion of job tasks; they are often helpful during the application and interview process as well.

For example: Matt is an automotive tech recovering from treatment for cancer. He is ready to return to work and is interviewing for jobs. He has a difficult time when the interviews are in the late afternoon because he feels tired and not at his best later in the day. If no morning interviews are available, he may have to disclose and request an earlier slot where he can better represent himself and his abilities.

**Benefits and privileges of employment**

A second reason to disclose a disability in the workplace is to receive benefits or privileges of employment. The ADA requires employers to provide accommodations so employees with disabilities can enjoy the benefits and privileges of employment equal to those enjoyed by employees without disabilities. Benefits and privileges of employment include, but aren't limited to, access to employer-sponsored trainings, transportation, credit unions, cafeterias, auditoriums and social functions.

For example: Jake is an employee who has difficulty hearing well in large group trainings. He asks for the accommodation of being allowed to take part in training electronically while remaining in his office. His disability limits his ability to make sense of what goes on in the large group.

**Unusual circumstances**

A third reason to disclose in the workplace is to explain an unusual circumstance. For instance, Ty was corrected after a meeting with clients where he interrupted and added his own personal opinions, unrelated to what was being discussed. Before he got into further trouble, Ty decided to explain that the cause of the impulsiveness is his mental health impairment and that with accommodations, like working with a job coach and using role-play scenarios to demonstrate appropriate workplace behavior, he should be able to control his impulsiveness during meetings.

**Finding help**

As you can see from the examples above, accommodations can help individuals with disabilities perform their job duties. Being honest with your employer about disclosure and the need for accommodations is a direct and effective way to handle issues that may arise. And open communication can help you get the tools you need to succeed as you start a new job and complete workplace assignments.

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) may be able to offer you more information, answers and support. JAN is funded by a contract with the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), U.S. Department of Labor. JAN offers free, expert and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations. Their experts can help you through the disclosure process and help you find accommodations that may help you succeed during job interviews and on the job. Learn more about JAN and start finding accommodations information at [askjan.org](https://askjan.org/).