

Disclosing Invisible Disabilities in the Workplace

JVS Toronto
Project GOLD Program
74 Tycos Drive
Toronto, ON
M6B 1V9

Learning Objectives

- **Discuss the types of disclosure**
- **Identify the stages of disclosure**
- **Evaluate the benefits and risks of disclosure**

DISCLOSURE

Disclosure: explaining the impact of your invisible/visible disability.

Disclosure is often needed due to an accommodation that is required.

THE TYPES OF DISCLOSURE

FULL DISCLOSURE

Disclosing the disability to its full extent, including type of disability, type of accommodations, etc.

PARTIAL DISCLOSURE

Partially stating what the disability is (parts of the disability related to the position that the candidate may have a hard time doing) e.g. loud or fast-paced environments

THIRD PARTY DISCLOSURE

Having someone else disclose on the individual's behalf, e.g. JVS Toronto.

BENEFITS AND RISKS OF DISCLOSURE

DISCLOSURE ON JOB APPLICATION

Advantages:

- Peace of mind
- Easy
- Provides the employer time to plan

Disadvantages:

- Might disqualify you with no opportunity to present the candidates qualifications
- Potential for discrimination

Remember: If you use this technique, you may have a harder time finding work, but usually have no disability-related problems when you do.

DISCLOSURE DURING AN INTERVIEW

Advantages:

- Peace of mind
- Opportunity to respond briefly and positively - in person - to specific disability issues
- Discrimination is less likely face-to-face

Disadvantages:

- Employer may focus on the disability and not the candidates abilities
- Adds more pressure on the candidate as they need to clearly describe the disability/accommodations they may need

Thoughts: How comfortable are you with discussing your disability?

AFTER YOU START WORK

Advantages:

- Opportunity to prove yourself on job before disclosure
- Allows you to respond to disability questions with peers at work
- If disclosure affects employment status and the condition doesn't affect ability to perform job or job safety, you may be protected by law

Disadvantages:

- Nervousness
- Possible employer accusation of falsifying your application
- Could change interaction with peers

Remember: The longer you put off disclosing, the harder it becomes

NEVER

Advantages:

- Employer can't react to your disability unless it presents itself on job

Disadvantages:

- Risk of being fired if disability surfaces and you are unable to complete essential tasks

0.5 STRATEGY

- This is a method of “disclosing without disclosing”
- Try framing your disclosure around a “learning style” or a “work style” as opposed to a disability.
- This way you express your needs as an employee without revealing the disability

Example:

“I work best with written instructions”

DISCLOSURE TEMPLATE (FOR LD)

I am ambitious, creative, dependable, hardworking individual who enjoys working with others. I am a team and goal oriented person, and have a love for literature. I enjoy writing, proof reading, researching and editing.

Learning Disabilities can affect the way a person takes in, remembers, understands and expresses information.

My Learning Disability affects my auditory- processing, which results in difficulties processing accurate information from my sense of hearing. The information that I hear sometimes may be distorted.

TEMPLATE SAMPLE (CON'T)

Therefore I may miss important information that someone is telling me. I have learned, when this happens to compensate by requesting instructions to be repeated for future reference. This way, I ensure that I know exactly what employers expect so I can do my tasks correctly and to the best of my ability. At work I ask employers and supervisors to give me specific times frames and deadlines, to help me organize my time and get assignments finished promptly.

Other simple accommodations that will enable me to work efficiently include:

- Extra time to learn new tasks and process information
- Written instructions/Things to do list
- Assignment of repetitive tasks when I first begin my job
- More complex tasks can be handed to me when time goes on

TEMPLATE SAMPLE (CON'T)

As a person with a disability I can appreciate the barriers faced by others in the workplace. I'd like my employer to focus on my ability, not my disability. By providing simple and appropriate accommodations in the workplace I will do my job efficiently, and I believe that I would be a benefit to your organization.

KEEP IN MIND:

- Participants need to be reminded that employers hire on **ABILITY** not **DISABILITY**
- Emphasize skills and achievements not difficulties
- Create efficiency statements not weakness statements
- Employers must be educated about the strengths about people with disabilities and the accommodations that are helpful; don't assume they know.
- Show a willingness to collaborate with the employer, supervisor, or co-worker in providing specific information regarding needs.

Thank you for your time😊

Questions?

puviya.punniyasingam@jvstoronto.org

RESOURCES

- <https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/disclosure-and-accommodations>
- <https://www.edcan.ca/>
- <https://www.ldao.ca/>