



# Disclosing Information About Your Disability

## Learning When and How to Disclose Information About Your Disability

Although self-advocacy means speaking up for yourself, it does not mean that you need to disclose information about your disability in all situations. Remember that your disability is, in large part, a function of your environment. For example, a painter with dyslexia (a reading disability) would probably not experience much difficulty with his or her disability on the job. On the other hand, a college student with the same disability would probably need specific supports and accommodations in order to do well in class. You will need to make decisions about how and when to disclose information about your disability throughout your entire adult life. It is best to think about disclosing information regarding your disability on a “need-to-know” basis. Generally speaking, if you will not need any accommodations as a result of your disability, it is probably best to keep the information private. If you will need accommodations, the only way you will be able to get them under disability laws (ADA and Section 504), is by making your disability known. As an adult, the primary responsibility for requesting accommodations rests with you.

## Things to Think About When Applying for a Job:

- Employers may NOT ask whether you have a disability during a job interview, although they may ask probing questions such as “This job is stressful for many people as it involves tight deadlines and coordinating multiple projects. How would you handle this?” If you voluntarily disclose your disability, however, an employer may ask you follow-up questions regarding your disability.
- Does the job require a pre-employment examination? These tests must measure your ability to do the tasks required by the job (for example, a proofreading test would be an appropriate skill measure for an editorial assistant position but probably not for a job as a server in a restaurant). An employer is only allowed to give you a pre-employment exam if this is something done with all prospective employees.
- Will you need accommodations in order to take the test? The employer must provide reasonable accommodations (such as extended time or use of a reader) in pre-employment examinations, but you will have to self-disclose in order to request the accommodations and may have to provide proof of your disability in order to receive them.
- Is a medical exam required? If all job applicants are required to have a medical examination, an employer may request that you have a medical examination, but only after an employment offer is made. Do you have any physical limitations that would get in the way of your ability to do the job? Can you perform the job with appropriate and reasonable accommodations?
- Will drug testing be done? Some employers may test applicants for illegal drugs. If you take a prescription medication for your disability, ask your doctor whether it is likely to show up in the test results. Decide whether or not you should disclose information about your prescription drugs prior to taking the drug test.
- Will you need accommodations to perform the essential functions of a job? In most cases, if you need accommodations to perform the essential functions of a job, the best time to disclose your disability is AFTER you receive a job offer, and BEFORE you begin work.

## Things to Think About When Applying to College:

- A college admission form CANNOT require you to disclose whether or not you have a disability.
- Students may choose to disclose their disability during the admissions process. If you decide to disclose your disability to a college, this information CANNOT be used to deny admission. Colleges and universities cannot discriminate on the basis of disability.
- Disclosing a disability does NOT guarantee admission. Colleges and universities do not have to alter their admission requirements or standards. Students with disabilities must meet the same admissions criteria as all prospective students.
- Disclosing a disability can provide you with an opportunity to explain possible discrepancies in your academic record. For example, it is typical for students with learning disabilities to have good high school transcript grades and low SAT scores or vice versa. Does this describe you? If so, you may want to consider disclosing your disability during the application process either through the required essay or during a personal interview, if there is one. You can put your self-advocacy skills to good use by explaining how your academic strengths and weaknesses relate to your proposed course of study.
- If you choose not to self-disclose during the application process, you may still do so at any time after you have been accepted to a college or university. At that point you will need to go to the Office of Disability Support Services (or the department and/or person responsible for coordinating services for students with disabilities) and request services. You will also need to provide recent documentation of your disability. Be aware that you cannot disclose and expect an adjustment on classes that have already been taken.

**For more resources on transitioning from school to adult life,  
visit [www.cpacinc.org/hot-topics/transition-to-adult-life](http://www.cpacinc.org/hot-topics/transition-to-adult-life).**

*Adapted from "Stepping Forward: A Self-Advocacy Guide for Middle and High School Student," 2014.*



*Distributed by Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center, Inc., 2014*

*[www.cpacinc.org](http://www.cpacinc.org) • 1-800-445-2722*