

Academic Advising & Career Centre
DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

AccessAbility Services
DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

Managing Your Career: Strategies for Graduates with DisAbilities



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Module 4: Self-Advocacy and Disclosure



Agenda

- Self-Advocacy:
 - Definition
 - Importance
 - Situations On-The-Job Requiring Self-Advocacy
 - How to Develop Self-Advocacy Skills
- Disclosure:
 - What is Disclosure
 - When to Disclose
 - What Information to Disclose



Definition of Self-Advocacy

Self Advocacy means: identifying/knowing what you need and then asking for what you need in an appropriate way

The importance of Self-Advocacy:

- Self-advocacy is an important part in disclosing information about your disability to employers
- Parents and Disability Consultants can no longer advocate for you the way they did in university
- It helps you to take control of your life and become more independent
- Research shows that self-advocacy can help change the attitudes of employers for the better



What does a good self-advocate look like?

- Knowledgeable about your disability: able to describe strengths and areas of challenge
- Able to set goals and develop plans to reach goals
- Know when to ask for assistance
- Able to make decisions and take responsibility for actions



Steps to Self-Advocate

1. Define what the issue is
2. Think of possible solutions (accommodations)
3. Ask for help to come up with solutions (accommodations) or to put solutions (accommodations) in place
4. Monitor the solutions (accommodations)



Situations Requiring Self-Advocacy

Disclosing your need for accommodations to perform your job functions	Asking for help or clarification of the instructions for a work assignment	Asking for a vacation, raise or promotion	Resolving a conflict with a co-worker
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How to Develop Self-Advocacy Skills

 Workshops	 Books	 On-line Articles
 Talk to Others	 Practice	



What is Disclosure?

Telling an employer that you have a disability and require accommodations to perform job tasks

- Only necessary if you think you require accommodations
- Understanding your disability-related needs & knowing the job duties will help you decide if disclosure is necessary

If you disclose information about your disability, be sure to:

Know legal obligations of disclosure	Understand your diagnosis	Identify your needs	Know the job duties	Be prepared with solutions
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What Information to Disclose

- Provide only information as it relates to your needs: the impact of the disability is required and potential solutions can be given but the name of the disability isn't required

Example:

- Impact of disability = vision loss that prevents you from reading printed material
- Potential Solution = screen reader/magnifier
- Name of disability = Diabetes (you do not need to tell the employer that it is Diabetes that is causing your vision loss)

- You may be asked to provide supporting information about your disability-related needs such as a medical or expert opinion



When to Disclose



At the Time of the Job Application

When There's an employment equity program in place	Why Your application will likely be considered ahead of other applications
How On the cover letter or over the phone	Potential Concerns May not know why you weren't selected for an interview



When Offered a Job Interview

When Accommodations are needed in the interview	Why Provide employer time to put the accommodations in place for the interview
How Using the same method of contact used to offer you the interview	Potential Concerns Employer may develop preconceived notions about your disability and your skills & abilities before meeting you



During an Interview

When Opportunity presents itself & you know accommodations are required	Why Allows you to explain in person why employer should hire you & provide accommodations
How Same method being used to interview you (in-person or over-the-phone)	Potential Concerns Timing of disclosure is essential to make certain there's sufficient time to address concerns



At the Time of the Job Offer

When After you've accepted the offer & only if you know for certain you require accommodations	Why Provides time for the employer to put the accommodations in place
How In-person or over-the-phone	Potential Concerns Employer may feel resentful they weren't informed during the interview; they may rescind the offer



After Starting the Job

When After performing the job tasks, you realize accommodations are needed	Why Help you to perform the tasks better and reduce stress & anxiety
How In-person to the appropriate person (human resource manager or direct supervisor)	Potential Concerns Could impact your relationship with your boss & coworkers; job performance may have already been impacted



Change in the Job

When New job tasks were added to current job or moved to new position in the company	Why Require accommodations to perform new job tasks
How In-person to the appropriate person (human resource manager or direct supervisor)	Potential Concerns Could impact your relationship with your boss & coworkers



Never

When Job tasks can be performed without accommodations	Potential Concerns May not realize your not performing well so need to get regular feedback on your job performance
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When is Disclosure Appropriate & Required (Legal Obligation to Disclose)

The Ontario Human Rights Commission has noted disclosure of a disability is relevant if:

- It threatens the safety or property of others
- Prevents the applicant from safe and adequate job performance even when reasonable efforts are made to accommodate the disability

Source: Ontario Human Rights Commission
<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/issues/disability>



Resources to Explore

- Learning Disability Association of Ontario:
<http://www.ldao.ca/introduction-to-ldsadhd/ldsadhs-in-depth/articles/about-lds/disclosure-in-the-workplace/>
- Ontario Human Rights Commission
<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/>
- National Occupational Classification:
<http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2006/Welcome.aspx>



Contact Information

Thank you for reviewing this module. If you would like to provide feedback or if you have questions or concerns, please contact

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"Development of a Model for Self-Determination," by S. Field and A. Hoffman, 1994, *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 17, Figure 1. Copyright 1994


