CAREER SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

GUARDIAN TO

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

Who Does the ADA Protect?

The ADA protects "individuals with disabilities" from discrimination. An individual with a disability is someone who fits into one of the three categories by having:

- A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. A "substantial impairment" is long term and has a serious impact on a person's ability to function. "Major life activities" include walking, talking, hearing, seeing, working, caring for oneself, learning and speaking.
- A record of such impairment. A person who has recovered from an illness, such as cancer, that substantially limited one or more major life activities.
- An individual who is regarded as having such impairment. Examples include, a person with epilepsy treated with medication or a person who has tested positive for HIV.

Who Is Covered? All private businesses with 15 or more employees.

Who Is Protected? A qualified individual with a disability, meaning someone who meets the experience and other job related requirements and who can perform the essential functions with or without reasonable accommodation.

Before Hiring

- An employer may ask questions about the applicant's ability to perform specific job functions.
- An employer CANNOT ask questions about a disability or the severity of a disability.

An employer may ask ALL applicants to demonstrate how they would perform the job with or without a reasonable accommodation. However, an applicant with a known disability that may interfere with performance may be asked to describe or demonstrate how they would do the job even if others are not required to do so.

Reasonable Accommodations & Undue Hardships

Reasonable accommodations are changes to the work environment that enable a person to perform a job. An employer does not have to provide accommodations if it would result in "undue hardship". An undue hardship is something that is difficult/expensive in relation to many factors including:

FIRST STEPS

- Complete the Job Search and application process.
- Before each step of the hiring process, review your rights and decide if and when you wish to disclose information about your disability.
• The nature and net cost of the accommodation.
• The financial resources for the employer, including the size of the business, the number of employees and the corporate structure.
• The type of business operation, including structure and functions of the workforce, and the administrative and fiscal relationship between the corporation and franchises or subsidiaries.

Examples of Reasonable Accommodations

• Making facilities accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities.
• Job restructuring by reallocating and/or redistributing nonessential job functions.
• Part-time or modified work schedules.
• Obtaining or modifying equipment.
• Modifying testing materials and practices.
• Providing qualified readers or interpreters.
• Reassignment to a vacant position.
• Permitting use of accrued paid leave or unpaid leave for treatment.
• Reserved parking.
• Allowing an employee to provide equipment that the employer is not required to provide.

Request for reasonable accommodations should be made in writing whenever possible. Documentation about an individual's disability may be requested, but must be kept confidential.

DISCLOSURE

As a person with a disability, one of the issues you will encounter is whether or not to inform a potential employer of your disability. The first step of the disclosure process is to be informed of your rights with the American Disabilities Act (ADA). Remember that under the ADA no person with a disability is required to disclose to their employer unless you require special accommodations that must be met by the company. Furthermore, it is illegal for an employer to ask you if you have a disability.

The Disclosure Process

Deciding on whether or not to disclose
• Identify and understand your disability. Be familiar with what accommodations you may need.
• Understand the advantages and disadvantages of disclosing. Some are listed below.

If you decide to disclose
• Decide who to tell (manager, interviewer, HR representative, etc).
• What timing would be best (on the application, during the interview, when you receive the job offer, etc)?
• Decide how best to describe your disability and include an informative explanation.
• Make sure to describe your skills and abilities that make you able to perform the necessary duties of the position you are applying for.
• Be honest. Describe any limitations that may interfere with your performance and identify any and all possible accommodations you may require.

If you decide not to disclose
• First and foremost, make sure you can perform all the necessary duties before accepting.
• Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you legally do not have to disclose anything unless you choose to.
When Is It Appropriate to Disclose?

At times it may be difficult to gauge when to disclose your disability to your potential employer. The best time to disclose is when you feel comfortable, and when you perceive that your boss is going to be receptive to your disclosure. Some employers may even have guidelines of their own for persons with disabilities so that they already have accommodations in the workplace. You may never see the need to disclose. It is ultimately your decision.

Disclosing on the Résumé or Application

It is important to know that it is not necessary to disclose your disability on your résumé. Remember that it is illegal for employers to ask you if you have a disability on an application form.

Advantages of disclosing:
- You are being honest with your employer from the beginning.
- Lets your employer decide if your disability will become an issue.

Disadvantages of disclosing:
- An employer may automatically disqualify you.
- May decrease your chances of getting an interview.

Disclosing Before the Interview

If your disability requires accommodation during the interview, then you should disclose when the potential employer contacts you for an interview so that they can make the necessary arrangements.

Advantages of disclosing:
- Reduces the surprise when you meet.
- The employer can meet any accommodations prior to your interview.

Disadvantages of disclosing:
- Employer may cancel interview.
- May not receive adequate consideration during interview.

Disclosing During the Interview

If you disclose in the interview and do not receive the job offer, you will not know if it is because of your qualifications or your disability. If your disability is not obvious, you should disclose at the time of the job offer so that the employer has ample time to make accommodations before you start.

Advantages of disclosing:
- You will have to opportunity to discuss your disability in person and respond to any questions surrounding your abilities.
- The level of discrimination may be decreased when face-to-face.

Disadvantages of disclosing:
- Employer may feel that you have hidden your disability up to this point.
- You will have the responsibility to handle any issues or questions about your disability.

Disclosing During the Offer and Acceptance Period

In certain situations, it may be more beneficial to wait until an offer has been made before disclosing, especially if you can perform all duties necessary. Advantages and disadvantage may include:
Advantages of disclosing:
- Still gives the employer time to make arrangements if necessary.
- Employer may feel that you waited to disclose because you are able to perform all duties necessary for position.

Disadvantages of disclosing:
- Lack of honesty with employer if the disability information affects the hiring decision; if so, legal recourse could be taken.
- Company may not have the adequate accommodations for you to start when decided upon with your employer.

**Disclosing After You Start Work**

It is true that the longer you choose not to disclose, the harder it becomes. At this point, it may be difficult to decide who to approach in this matter. Remaining comfortable and confident with your disability and work performance is necessary.

Advantages of disclosing:
- You are given the opportunity to perform at work and prove your abilities.

Disadvantages of disclosing:
- Possible mistrust by employer or accusations of falsifying your application or abilities.
- May lose an option of legal recourse if you don’t disclose and can’t perform necessary functions.

**SOME GENERAL JOB-RELATED TIPS**

**Disclose a Disability Only As Needed**

The only reason to disclose a disability is if you require an accommodation for an interview or to perform the essential functions of a particular job. How you go about disclosing your disability is entirely up to you. *When you are applying for a job, remember that your résumé and cover letter should highlight your skills and experience, not your disability.*

**Know Your Rights in a Job Interview**

The focus of the interview should be your qualifications and skills, not your disability. In fact, an interviewer is prohibited from asking you questions about your disabilities that are not relevant to your ability to perform the job. You might choose to anticipate and address some of the questions that an interviewer may be reluctant to ask if you feel comfortable doing so. Remember to request any accommodation needed well in advance of the interview.

**Find a Mentor**

All new employees can benefit from the guidance of a more experienced employee when starting off at a new job. Finding a mentor in your field of interest, whether or not they have a disability, can be extremely beneficial for you to be confident and supported in your new job.

**Ask for Accommodation via an Accommodation Request Letter**

While not required, individuals with disabilities might find it useful to document accommodation requests in writing in case there is ever a future dispute. While there are no specific guidelines, here are some things you may choose to include in your letter:
• Identify yourself as a person with a disability and state you are requesting accommodations
• Identify which tasks you foresee as potentially challenging with your disability
• State your ideas for accommodation and ask for your employer’s input
• Attach medical documentation of your disability when appropriate

Take Advantage of the Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities

The Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities (WRP) is a great resource to connect public and private sector employers nationwide with highly motivated postsecondary students and recent graduates with disabilities who are eager to prove their abilities in the workforce. Employers look to fill temporary and permanent positions in a variety of fields. To learn more about this program, visit https:// wrp.gov/AboutPre.do#Students.

Gain Experience

Actively seeking experiences whether in a job setting or through volunteer or extracurricular involvement early on is the best way to show yourself and others what you are able to do in spite of your disability. By securing a part-time job, volunteer position, or membership in an organization while in college, you are building your résumé and making yourself more marketable once you enter the workforce. Through these experiences you will also work with people who can serve as references for future jobs—people who can vouch for your abilities are critically important in obtaining employment. Below are several places on and off-campus that provide excellent opportunities for students:

Academic
• MU Study Abroad Homepage: http://international.missouri.edu/studyabroad/
The International Center homepage can answer your questions about study abroad and help you explore a program.
• MU Office of Service Learning: http://servicelearning.missouri.edu/
Find out how to serve your community while earning academic credit.
• MU Learning Center: http://learningcenter.missouri.edu/
Includes information on the Writing Lab, Tutoring, and the Student Success Center classes offered each semester.

Paid
• HireMizzouTigers.com: http://www.HireMizzouTigers.com/
Includes a job search database for students of Mizzou.
• MU Career Center: http://career.missouri.edu/
Visit the Career Center’s Resources link for online Guide to Résumé, Cover Letter, & more.
• MU Work Study: https://career.missouri.edu/work-study
A database of positions for work study eligible students.

Volunteer
• MU Student Life: http://studentlife.missouri.edu/
Collection of all campus organizations and ways to get involved.
• Office of Service Programs: https://service.missouri.edu/
Strives to connect students with local and national agencies in directed, meaningful, quality volunteer experiences.
Volunteer opportunities for anyone in Columbia to get involved in the community.
**RESOURCES**

### Websites

  Website for the U.S. Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division, providing information on the Americans with Disabilities Act.

- **Job Accommodation Network (JAN)** - [https://askjan.org/index.html](https://askjan.org/index.html)  
  JAN provides many helpful links and resources about workplace accommodations and ADA related legislation.

  Provides job search engines, employer information, and ADA help, helping enable people with disabilities to enhance their professional lives.

  Promotes inclusion and success by working to increase participation of individuals with disabilities in challenging academic programs and careers. Their goal is to help promote the use of computer and networking technologies to increase independence, productivity, and participation in education and employment.

- **UTK Disability-Careers Office** - [http://career.utk.edu/students/dco/](http://career.utk.edu/students/dco/)  
  University of Tennessee Knoxville’s Center for Career Development hosts a Disability Career Resources page full of great links and information, as well as many success stories of former students.

### Agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone Numbers</th>
<th>Website URL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Point</td>
<td>1500 Vandiver Dr., Ste. 109 Columbia, MO 65202</td>
<td>(573)474-8560</td>
<td><a href="http://www.jobpointmo.org">http://www.jobpointmo.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation</td>
<td>3024 Dupont Circle Jefferson City, MO 65109</td>
<td>(877)222-8963 (573)751-0881</td>
<td><a href="http://dese.mo.gov/vr">http://dese.mo.gov/vr</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services for Independent Living</td>
<td>1401 Hathman Place Columbia, MO 65201</td>
<td>(573)874-1646</td>
<td><a href="http://www.silcolumbia.org">http://www.silcolumbia.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Accommodation Network</td>
<td>West Virginia University 918 Chestnut Ridge Road Suite 1, P.O. Box 6080 Morgantown, WV 26506-6080</td>
<td>(800)526-7234</td>
<td><a href="http://www.jan.wvu.edu">http://www.jan.wvu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Able</td>
<td>1850 West 21st Street Chicago, IL 60608</td>
<td>(312)997-2030</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities</td>
<td>P.O. Box 1492 Washington, DC 20013-1492</td>
<td>(800)999-5599 (703)893-8614 (TDD)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nichcy.org">http://www.nichcy.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### NEXT STEPS

- ✔ Come to the MU Career Center to talk with someone about your career planning.
- ✔ Visit [https://career.missouri.edu](https://career.missouri.edu) and click on the “Resources” Tab to visit Mizzou Career Tools, where you can search our site for more handouts on this and other topics relevant to you!