Disclosing Your Disability: What You Need to Know

Disclosing your disability to an employer or admissions committee is a personal choice which is an important and complex decision. Only you can decide when, and if, you want to share this information with a current or prospective employer or school.

“I wish for a world that views disability, mental or physical, not as a hindrance, but as unique attributes that can be seen as powerful assets if given the right opportunities”
– Oliver Sacks

**WHEN TO DISCLOSE**

Should you choose to disclose your disability, you may do so at any of the following times:
- When applying to the job or program
- At the time of an interview offer
- During the interview
- At the time of a job or admission offer
- Once you begin work or the program
- After a problem or change is encountered

**CONSIDERATIONS WHEN DECIDING TO/NOT TO DISCLOSE**

- Will your disability impact your job performance or performance in the program?
- Deciding to disclose in one instance does not necessarily mean disclosing in every situation.
- The nature of the work, your qualifications, employer, school, policies and culture.
- Current trends in the environment, including the experiences of others who share a situation similar to yours.

**ADVANTAGES OF DISCLOSING**

- Prepares the employer or school for situations that may arise.
- Allows you access to accommodations.
- If there are any changes to your employment due to disability related reasons, you may be protected by the law.

**DISADVANTAGES OF DISCLOSING**

- May exclude you from opportunities.
- May lead to discrimination from supervisors, co-workers, or peers.
- Employer or school may focus more on potential issues than your actual work performance.
PROFESSIONAL

TIPS AND ADVICE ON DISCLOSING
If you decide to disclose your disability to an employer or committee, here are a few things to consider ahead of time:

- Be positive – focus on your skills, qualifications and your ability to do the job (don’t present your disability as a weakness), and practice what you will say and how you will say it.
- Identify any accommodations you may need. Include pertinent information regarding necessary resources, costing, and procedures for accommodation.
- Understand the position requirements to assess your functional limitations within the job
- Utilize an accommodation templates to assist in your preparation
- Practice in the mirror and connect with a Career Development Advisor for feedback

ACCOMMODATIONS RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Consider what informal adjustments could be arranged to support your success (i.e. longer breaks, flexible work or school schedule, more frequent breaks, having meeting notes taken or copied for you)
- An employer or school must accommodate the needs of people with disabilities short of causing undue hardship, however, if you choose not to disclose, and employer or institution will not be able to provide assistance or know how to assist you
- If you choose to disclose your disability, schools and employers do not have the right to know what the disability is or any specific information, such as your diagnosis
- If you request specific accommodations, it is your responsibility to inform the other party your needs, cooperate in obtaining necessary information, to participate in discussions about solutions, and work with the employer, union (if applicable), or school on an ongoing basis to manage the accommodation process
- If you choose not to disclose and a situation arises, you may not be covered under the Ontario Human Rights Code

Need additional guidance, an alternate/accessible format, or have any other accommodation needs? Get in touch with the SSC!

1. E-mail Tanya Kett, our Career Development Advisor at careeraccess@mcmaster.ca
2. Attend our drop-in hours:
   a. Maccess on every other Tuesday from 11:30AM-12:30PM starting Sept 25th
   b. SAS on every other Wednesday from 9:30AM-12:00PM starting Sept 5th

All information is provided on an "as is" basis without any warranties of any kind. -