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How to Find a Job When You Have a Disability

Searching for a new position is not always an easy road to travel. If you have a disability, you may encounter additional complexities, but there are assurances, tips, and resources that can provide layers of support as you pursue your dream job.

If you have a disability, whether visible or not visible, there are federal laws to protect you when searching for a position. “*The [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) of 1990 makes it illegal for employers to ask job candidates about their medical history during a job interview. More important, it requires employers to provide ‘reasonable accommodations’ to qualified job applicants or employees. A reasonable accommodation is any modification or adjustment to a job or work environment that will enable an employee with a disability to perform essential job functions.*” The ADA does not require you to disclose a disability to employers or potential employers, but if you choose not to do so, employers are not required by law to make accommodations for you.

Because an employer cannot ask you about your disability, if a job application asks questions like “Are you able to perform the essential responsibilities of the job with reasonable accommodation?” and “Are you a person with a disability?” with answers like “Yes,” “No,” and “Prefer Not to Disclose,” remember that you have the choice to disclose or not disclose this information. Employers may ask such questions to provide statistics for their affirmative action data, but it is your choice in how you answer these questions.

When beginning your search, keep in mind that you are the one who determines what you need to share, and when to share it. You do not need to reveal your disability on your resume or in your cover letter. Rather, you only need to share your qualifications for the position you are applying for. If you decide to disclose information about your disability, what should you mention before, during, and after the interview? There are no right or wrong answers for when you should reveal your disability, but when making the decision that is best for you, consider the following:

- **Before the interview:** If you have a visible disability, it may be helpful to share this early in your search. Bringing it up before an interview may be beneficial, especially if you need accommodations to arrive at or complete the interview successfully. Additionally, the focus of the interview can be solely on your skills and qualifications.
- **During the interview process:** If you disclose your disability during the interview, you can still keep the focus on your qualifications and skills for the specific position you've applied for. Highlight any unique strengths, perspectives,

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or experiences that you bring to the table, and let your confidence show in your interview.

- **After the interview:** If you land the job and need adaptations to make your work-life easier, consider discussing your disability prior to starting your new job. Doing so before your first day of work may allow you and your employer to be equipped with what you need to perform your job functions.

Remember, legally employers are not able to bring up any concerns you may have about accommodations for the job. If you choose to disclose your disability, you are opening the door to the conversation on how the employer may have to adapt the office layout, your schedule, or work responsibilities within the team. Most employers are eager to create a flexible and adaptive work environment for their employees.

In fact, the NorthCentral FSET Program has relationships with employers within our region who understand and embrace individuals' unique job search journeys. If you have any questions about how to find a job with a disability, contact your NorthCentral Region FSET case manager. We have the resources to help guide you in your search.

Sources:

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