

Disclosing Your Disability: The Pros & Cons



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Introduction

Deciding to disclose your disability to a potential employer can be a difficult decision. Is there a “right” time to tell a hiring manager? How do you go about communicating your needs? These are big questions. This resource may help provide some insight so you make the best decision for you.

The Pros and Cons

There are advantages and disadvantages of disclosing your disability to a potential employer. Depending on timing, your experience could vary. Read the charts that follow; these will help you consider your disclosure options.

While no one can tell you what to do, the decision needs to feel right to you – based on your needs and level of comfort.

A Personal Decision to Disclose

Lauren Hamer was frustrated with her job search experience. Read her article *Real Talk: Here’s How You Should Actually Interview When You Have a Disability*. She shares her point of view about disclosing information in the job interview process.

Lauren is the creator of CaPABLE and Beyond and US-based, LaunchPoint Resume. She actively helps people with their professional portfolio and is a person with Cerebral Palsy.

Disclosure in the Workplace

The Occupational Safety Group Inc. outlines the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)* and discusses the process by which workers may reveal their disabilities.

The article discusses:

- Why workers might choose or not choose to disclose
- How they might do so
- What employers’ responsibilities are after disclosure of disability.

PLEASE NOTE:

The Occupational Safety Group Inc. (OSG) is a consulting service that includes accessibility services. It is not affiliated with or endorsed by the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility. To review Accessibility laws in Ontario, visit the Ontario government website.



1. ON A JOB APPLICATION

Possible Advantages:

Allows you to be honest.

Gives you peace of mind.

Easy to let employer decide if disability is an issue.

Possible Disadvantages:

Might disqualify you with no opportunity to present yourself and your qualifications.

You may never know if you've been screened out of the competition.

Possible Issues:

You may have a harder time finding work, but usually have no disability-related problems when you do.

2. DURING AN INTERVIEW

Possible Advantages:

Allows you to be honest.

Gives you peace of mind.

Opportunity to respond positively and in person to specific disability issues.

Discrimination less likely face-to-face.

Possible Disadvantages:

Puts responsibility on you to handle disability issues right up front.

Too much emphasis on issue indicates possible problem.

You may not be evaluated on abilities.

Possible Issues:

How comfortable are you discussing your disability? Are you too preoccupied with your disability?

You must prepare to answer these difficult questions.



3. AFTER THE INTERVIEW When a job is offered but before you begin.

Possible Advantages:

Allows you to be honest.

Gives you peace of mind.

If the disclosure information changes the hiring decision and you're sure your disability will not interfere with your ability to perform the job, *The Human Rights Code* will apply.

Possible Disadvantages:

Employer might feel you should have told them before the hiring decision was made.

May lead to distrust between you and the employer.

The job may be rescinded.

Possible Issues:

Need to honestly evaluate disability condition in light of the specific tasks of the prospective job.

Need to be able to explain ability to perform the job.

4. AFTER YOU START WORK

Possible Advantages:

Opportunity to prove yourself on job before disclosure. Allows you to respond to disability questions with peers at work. If disclosure affects employment status and the condition doesn't affect your ability to perform the job or job safety, you may be protected by law.

Possible Disadvantages:

Nervousness on the job.

Employer may accuse you of falsifying your application.

Problems on the job may begin.

Could change interactions with peers.

Possible Issues:

The longer you put off disclosing, the harder it becomes.

It's difficult to identify whom to tell.



5. AFTER A PROBLEM ON THE JOB

Possible Advantages:

Opportunity to prove yourself on job before disclosure.

Possible Disadvantages:

Possible employer accusation of falsifying application.
Can perpetuate disability myths and misunderstandings.

Possible Issues:

Relationships you establish with co-workers may be hurt if they feel you have been untruthful with them.
It may be difficult to regain trust.

6. NEVER

Possible Advantages:

Employer and coworkers will not automatically assume that any work performance issues are disability related.

You will not be asked to explain your disability.

Possible Disadvantages:

If disability is discovered, you run the risk of being fired.

Possible Issues:

If you're unsure your disability will not be an issue for your job performance, the issue of disclosure becomes less critical.