

# The Importance of a Disability Disclosure Plan When Seeking Employment

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Navigating a job search is stressful and sometimes confusing as it is, but when you have a disability, it can be even more so. Through my years working in the disability employment field, one important thing I've learned is that having a disability disclosure plan in place can ease some of that stress and confusion. Your disability disclosure plan will help you determine how, when, and to whom to share your disability information with when it comes to employment-related opportunities. But first, you have to have a good understanding of what disability disclosure is and isn't.

## What Disability Disclosure is

**Disability Disclosure** is sharing disability related information with a prospective or current employer. This can happen at any point in the employment process. **It is a personal decision to choose to disclose a disability, including the how, when, and why.** Typically, people choose to disclose a disability when they need to request an accommodation to perform their job.

## Self-Identification (What Disability Disclosure is not)

Because businesses are adopting more inclusive hiring practices, you may encounter a **Self-Identification Form** on a job application. This form explains that the company invites qualified individuals with disabilities to tell them if they need an accommodation to apply for a job or perform a job. This form is voluntary, so you may choose to disclose your disability status or not.

The information you provide helps the employer understand how well they are doing with their recruitment efforts to hire individuals with disabilities. This is different from **disclosing a disability** to your employer with the purpose of requesting an accommodation, as the information on the Self-Identification Form is kept confidential and a hiring manager/supervisor would not have access to it.

## Things To Keep in Mind When Considering the Disclosure of a Disability For Employment:

- **There is no one required time when you need to disclose.** It all comes down to *WHY* you are disclosing:
  - Will you need an accommodation during the interview process? Then you would choose to disclose to the employer when you are setting up the interview.
  - Do you not need any accommodations for the position you are applying for/being hired for? Then maybe you choose not to ever disclose.
  - Do you feel more comfortable when people you work with know about your disability but don't necessarily need an accommodation? Then maybe you choose to disclose once you are comfortable with your environment at work, and it is just for informal personal sharing.
- **There is no need to disclose on your resume.** Your resume is meant to focus on your professional experience and skills.

- *Keep in mind*, there may be times when a resume may inadvertently disclose disability information, and you may want to review how to best format it so that it doesn't set you up for discrimination by an employer.

**For Example:** Attending National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) would disclose a disability. A solution to this would be to put Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) instead, as NTID is a college within RIT.

**Fun Fact:** Lindsay hosts monthly RochesterWorks workshops called "Disability and Disclosure," "(dis)ABILITY Job Search Group," and "Increase Your Income."

### **Additional Resource:**

Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is an excellent resource for learning about possible accommodations, and to help you decide when disclosure may be right for you. Check out this JAN article on Disability Disclosure and the Americans with Disabilities Act [Disability Disclosure \(askjan.org\)](https://askjan.org/Disability-Disclosure)