

Resources for Job Seekers with Disabilities

The Autism Empowerment Kit

In May 2017, Autism Speaks was proud to partner with Microsoft at its annual Microsoft Supplier Program (MSP) Summit in Redmond, Washington. Beyond Microsoft's exciting direct Autism Hiring Program, the summit presented an opportunity to promote the employment of people with autism and other neurological differences to a much larger audience – the tens of thousands of members of Microsoft's global supply chain.



TheSpectrumCareers.com

A new jobs portal designed to promote inclusive employment of the autism community by matching job seekers with businesses, as well as employment service providers.

Ability Jobs www.abilityjobs.com

ABILITY Jobs is the first and largest employment website for job seekers with disabilities. Since 1995 has provided a place where people with disabilities can seek employment, confident they will be evaluated solely on their skills and experience. Posting your resume or searching job postings is free. Also offers a Best Practices publication: <http://bestpractices.abilityjobs.com/>

AFB CareerConnect, the American Foundation for the Blind www.afb.org

CareerConnect is a free resource for people who are blind or visually impaired to learn about the range and diversity of the jobs that are performed throughout the United States and Canada by adults who are blind or visually impaired. CareerConnect takes you through the process of examining what you have to offer an employer and exploring careers, offers tips on finding a job, getting hired, and making that job work for you and gives you information on technology to assist you in your job.

Disability.gov www.disability.gov

Sponsored by several agencies and departments of the Federal Government, this site provides one-stop access to information resources important to the disabled. This includes employment, education, housing, transportation, health, income support, civil rights, and much more. It is an easy to use and well organized and each area includes several resources designed to help you.

Emerging Leaders www.emerging-leaders.com

The National Business & Disability Council's Emerging Leaders Summer Internship Program for undergraduate and graduate students with disabilities has begun. Applications are being accepted. If you are a student who would like to participate in the program stay tuned for upcoming details at www.emerging-leaders.com.

Entry Point! <http://ehrweb01.aaas.org/entrypoint/>

This program of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) offers students with disabilities outstanding Internship opportunities in science, engineering, mathematics, computer science, and some fields of business. Application and program information is available on the site.

GettingHired www.gettinghired.com

Designed to create sustainable employment growth and opportunity for people with disabilities. There are some good employers associated with this resource and the database is quite well populated. You must register in order to view any piece of the real site, including the job listings, and in some cases you must have "an active jobseeker profile" (a resume) in their system to use resources such as the career assessment. However, for those who are disabled this looks like a strong site.

Hire Disability Solutions www.HireDS.com

Partnering with several related non-profit organizations, numerous corporations, and Monster.com, this full-service staffing and consulting firm works to assist individuals to find meaningful employment while also aiding employers in finding the very best staffing for their companies. Individuals can easily search the database of employment opportunities and view contact information for the posting organization, but you will need to create a Monster.com account in order to apply for these positions. You can also post a resume on the HireDS.com site by completing their quick registration (name, email address, and a password).

Job Accommodation Network (JAN) www.askjan.org

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is the leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues. Working toward practical solutions that benefit both employer and employee, JAN helps people with disabilities enhance their employability, and shows employers how to capitalize on the value and talent that people with disabilities add to the workplace.

JobTIPS - www.Do2Learn.com

A free program designed to help individuals with autism spectrum disorder and other learning differences explore career interests, seek and obtain employment, and successfully maintain employment.

National Association of the Deaf (NAD) www.nad.org

Offers information for the hearing disabled as well as their families and communities, and you can also learn about sign language and interpreter certification. While some sections of the site are limited to members, the NAD Job Market is open to all for viewing.

What Can You Do? The Campaign for Disability Employment www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org

A collaborative effort to promote positive employment outcomes for people with disabilities by encouraging employers and others to recognize the value and talent they bring to the workplace. There is information for employers on how they can capitalize on the talents of persons with disabilities, and information and resources for teachers and family members.

Workplace & Employment: American Association of People with Disabilities www.aapd.com

According to their website, AAPD is the largest national nonprofit cross-disability member organization in the United States, dedicated to ensuring economic self-sufficiency and political empowerment for the more than 50 million Americans with disabilities. They partner with several employers to offer internship programs specifically for young persons with disabilities.

Disclosing Your Disability to an Employer



Job seekers with disabilities are inevitably faced with the decision of whether to disclose their disability. Disability disclosure is a hotly-debated topic among disability services and career development professionals. However, the decision to disclose, as well as when and how, is ultimately yours. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), **people with disabilities are not obligated to disclose their disability unless it is likely to directly affect their job performance.**

If you have a disability, you must consider whether you can perform the essential functions of the position for which you are applying and if you need any accommodations to be successful. Remember that an accommodation is not intended to compensate for a lack of knowledge, skills, or abilities. Workplace accommodations will only be provided when the employee discloses his/her disability and requests job accommodations.

Advantages and disadvantages of disclosure

Disclosing your disability can be daunting. Some employers may reject you because of negative, preconceived notions about people with disabilities. Additionally, you may not feel comfortable sharing personal information with strangers. On the other hand, disclosing your disability allows you protection against discrimination under the ADA. It also allows you to speak honestly and openly with your employer about accommodations.

Things to consider

- Your knowledge of your disability and how clearly you can discuss it
- Your ability to perform the essential job functions without accommodations
- How your disability may affect your ability to perform the job
- The employer's attitude toward people with disabilities
- Your own comfort and trust level with the employer
- Your past accommodations in a professional environment
- Your suggestions for accommodations, if needed

What to include in a disclosure

- General information about your disability
- The effect of your disability, both positive and negative, on job performance
- The types of accommodations used in the past
- Suggested or anticipated accommodations

Timing your disclosure

Many experts suggest not disclosing your disability if it is undetectable and no accommodations are needed.

Resume and cover letter

There is rarely a reason to disclose your disability this early, unless you use TTY or a voice relay for phone calls, or if your disability might be an asset to the position. However, if you are comfortable with disclosing at this point, carefully consider where and how the information is presented. Your resume and cover letter should focus on and highlight your relevant skills and experiences and make brief mention of your disability and your disability management skills.

Pre-interview

If you have a visible disability or need an accommodation for the interview it is best to discuss your disability and accommodations prior to the scheduled interview so the interviewer is prepared. To initiate conversation about your disability, you might include a question about accessibility or a request for accommodation when you ask about the interview location or directions.

The Interview

If you have a visible disability, you will want to briefly discuss your disability and assure the interviewer that it will not negatively affect your job performance, especially with proper accommodations. Be prepared to answer any questions regarding specific accommodations, but provide examples of how you have already performed many of the functions of the job. Focus on your competency, including skills, experience, and education. If not apparent, you may use greater discretion about when to discuss your disability.

After being offered the job

Many people choose to disclose their disability after a job has been offered to ensure that the employer will focus solely on the individual's qualifications and skills. If you determine that you will need an accommodation, discuss it prior to your start date to ensure accommodations are made prior to your arrival.

During the course of employment

If you discover over time that you have underestimated your need for an accommodation, it is best to disclose your disability to your employer and ask for accommodations before your work performance is affected.

How to prepare

- Consider developing a personal philosophy about disclosure—what does it mean to be a person with a disability? How does it affect your life?
- Educate yourself about your disability and learn how to discuss it.
- Contact the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) at 800-526-7234 to learn more about potential job accommodations based on your disability and the nature of the job.

- To help you gauge your potential employer's attitudes about hiring people with disabilities, do your research—look at the job announcement, browse the website, talk to current employees, and read company publications.
- Participate in internships or work-based learning to gain an understanding of accommodations needed and provided in a professional environment.
- Prepare yourself for personal or potentially illegal questions about your disability during the interview

Source: Indiana University Career Services

Sample Accommodation Request Letter

The following is an example of what can be included in an accommodation request letter and is not intended to be legal advice.

Date of Letter

Your name
Your address

Employer's name
Employer's address

Dear (e.g. Supervisor, Manager, Human Resources, Personnel):

Content to consider in body of letter:

- Identify yourself as a person with a disability
- State that you are requesting accommodations under the ADA (or the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 if you are a federal employee)
- Identify your specific problematic job tasks
- Identify your accommodation ideas
- Request your employer's accommodation ideas
- Refer to attached medical documentation if appropriate*
- Ask that your employer respond to your request in a reasonable amount of time

Sincerely,

Your signature

Your printed name

Cc: to appropriate individuals

* You may want to attach medical information to your letter to help establish that you are a person with a disability and to document the need for accommodation.

Source: Job Accommodation Network