What to Say about Your Disability and When

Today, more job seekers with disabilities are entering the workforce. For persons with disabilities, finding and keeping work is usually no different than for those without disabilities. However, there may be additional things to consider, such as disclosure . . . if, when and how to tell people about your disability.

It's up to you
Disclosure is an important and complex decision that is entirely yours to make. What’s right for one person may not be right for another, and what works in one situation may not be successful in another. Whether you mention your disability in your cover letter or resumé, during the interview or at the time of the job offer depends on you and the situation. If you’re dealing with a service provider or agency that works specifically with persons with disabilities, you will still have some say in how much is disclosed. Disclosure is entirely your choice.

To disclose or not to disclose
Before deciding if, when and how to disclose your disability, think about the following questions:

• Is your disability visible?
• How do most people react when they learn about your disability? How do you deal with their reactions?
• When do you feel most comfortable and confident disclosing your disability?
• Does not disclosing put your safety or the safety of others at risk?
• Will the employer think you’re dishonest? How would you deal with that reaction?
• What misconceptions might the employer have about your disability?
• If you disclose, will you be able to reassure your employer that your disability will not affect your ability to do the work?
• Asking for accommodations will almost certainly require you to disclose. Do you need accommodations for the interview? Or if you get the job?
• What do you know about this employer’s policies and experiences regarding people with disabilities?

(Adapted from University of Alberta, Career and Placement Services Tips)

Options for Disclosure: Advantages and Disadvantages

Tips for disclosing

• If you’ve had little success in disclosure situations or feel uncomfortable, try role playing the disclosure process with supportive friends or family members.
• Be positive. Focus on your skills and qualifications and don’t present your disability as a weakness.
• Be prepared to address any concerns employers express, even if they’re not expressed directly.
• Know what workplace accommodations you may need, including their availability, cost and funding programs the employer can access.
• Anticipate the employer's questions about your disclosure and know how you’ll answer them. Use examples.
• Telling employers about your disability may be the biggest uncertainty in your work search. How, when and whether or not you disclose is entirely up to you. Once you’ve reached a decision about disclosure, ask yourself one last question: will disclosing my disability at this time and in this way help me reach my goal of getting work?

For more information, visit the Commission's website at www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca