



Employment Rights Helpline at Equip for Equality

SELF-ADVOCACY ASSISTANCE ★ LEGAL ADVICE ABOUT EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ★ SAMPLE LETTERS & FORMS ★ REFERRALS

FACT SHEET: Best Practices for Your First Job as a Person with a Disability

I am ready to apply for my first job. Do I have any rights?

Yes. As a person with a disability, you have rights under many different laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). You even have rights under the ADA before you get a job.

Among other things, the ADA has rules about:

- Your right to keep your disability private before you get a job
- Your right to a reasonable accommodation

When I am applying for a job, do I have to tell anyone I have a disability?

No. You do not need to tell anyone about your disability during a job interview or on a job application. You are not lying by keeping information about your disability private.

There is one exception to this rule. If you need a **reasonable accommodation** for the job application or interview process, then you do need to disclose that you have a disability. However, even if you know that you will need a reasonable accommodation to do your job, you do not need to say that you have a disability on an application or during a job interview. You can ask after you get the job.

Review our Fact Sheet about [Disclosing Your Disability](#) to learn more.

What is a reasonable accommodation?

A reasonable accommodation is any change in the work environment or in the way things are usually done so that you, as a person with a disability, have equal access to employment.

Examples of reasonable accommodations during the **job application process** include:

- Making online applications accessible, such as compatible with a screen reader
- Providing extra time to take a pre-employment test
- Permitting an applicant to bring a service animal to a job interview
- Providing a sign language interpreter for a job interview
- Holding an interview in an accessible location

What should I do if I need a reasonable accommodation during the application process?

- **First:** Think about what accommodation you need to apply for the job. If you are not sure, the Job Accommodation Network is a great resource for think about accommodations: <https://askjan.org/>
- **Second:** Ask the employer for the accommodation. It is best to be as clear as possible about your request by saying “I am asking for a reasonable accommodation under the ADA.” Make this request in writing or follow up on any conversations in writing. Be sure to ask for the accommodation in advance so the employer has time to provide it.
- **Third:** Work with the employer to identify whether any other accommodations would be reasonable and effective.
- **Tip:** Review our Fact Sheet about [Requesting Reasonable Accommodations](#) to learn more about reasonable accommodations and the interactive process.

What do I need to know once I get the job?

Once you get the job, your ADA rights continue. The ADA protects you from being treated differently because of your disability. You still have the right to keep your disability private and to request a reasonable accommodation.

However, just because you have a disability, the ADA does not protect you from ever being fired or disciplined. You still need to be able to do the essential parts of your job with or without an accommodation. Additionally, you still need to follow reasonable workplace rules.

What should I do if I start having problems at work because of my disability?

Think about whether any **reasonable accommodations** may be able to help you. Remember that you can ask for reasonable accommodations at any time during your employment; it does not matter if you did not do so at the beginning.

If possible, ask for a reasonable accommodation **before** you have any performance problems. The ADA usually does not require employers to excuse past performance problems as a reasonable accommodation.

What should I do if I am being treated differently because of my disability?

If you are having any difficulties at work, contact our Helpline for free legal advice.

- It is much better to talk to us before problems get worse so we can help you come up with ideas and solutions to address the problems. You can reach our **Employment Rights Helpline** at (844-RIGHTS-9 or www.equipforequality.org/employment)

This resource material is intended as a guide for people with disabilities. Nothing written here shall be understood to be legal advice. For specific legal advice, an attorney should be consulted.