

Disclosure & Accommodation

In this tipsheet, you will learn:

- What disclosures and workplace accommodations are
- Why you might choose to disclose
- When you might disclose and the opportunities and challenges
- How to disclose and other considerations

This tipsheet is not legal advice; it is a starting point. Decisions about disclosure are individual and nuanced. For further support, book an appointment with a Career Coach or come to Drop-In Career Advising.

What is Disclosure?

In employment, disclosure often refers to the choice to share or not share a piece of personal information that may be a barrier to your employment and where you may need specific formal or informal accommodations. This may include disclosing:

- A disability
- Personal identity or other protected group (e.g.: 2SLGBTQ+, religion, ethnic group, caregiver etc.)
- Neurodivergence

Formally, disclosure and accommodation refer to disabilities under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. However, there are overlaps with disclosing other personal information like identity or neurodivergence, which may or may not require an accommodation.

What is a Workplace Accommodation?

Workplace accommodations are adjustments or modifications made by employers to enable employees to perform their job duties effectively. Accommodations can include physical modifications (i.e. an ergonomic workstation), technological supports, flexible work arrangements, or modified job duties. Accommodations can be temporary (i.e. adapted schedule and screen time after a concussion) or ongoing.

Some accommodations may be informal; for example, if you pray throughout the day, a confidential conversation with your manager to inform them that you will be leaving your desk at certain times may be all that is required. Other accommodation may require medical or other documentation.

What are my Rights?

Employers in Ontario are required to provide reasonable accommodations to the point of undue hardship. Undue hardship is evaluated by cost, funding, and health and safety requirements. If you are working outside Ontario, refer to the appropriate legislation that protect your rights. The two main

pieces of legislation that govern accommodations are the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) and [The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#).

Why Disclose?

You are not required to disclose personal information that is not relevant to the job. However, disclosure can be useful. You may want to disclose some aspects of your identity and/or disability for the following reasons:

- **To identify as a part of an equity-deserving group.** Employers may be recruiting candidates from equity-deserving groups and disclosing your identity may help your application.
- **To demonstrate relevant knowledge and experience.** If the position involves working with a specific community, your identity and experience may make you an ideal candidate.
- **To get an accommodation.** If you require an accommodation during the hiring process or at work, you will need to disclose what type of accommodation you need. You do not need to disclose health information.
- **To lead and shape the narrative.** You are the best person to inform an employer about who you are. Initiating the discussion on your terms can help you to feel more empowered, while dispelling misinformation and representing your needs.
- **To be your whole self at work.** Withholding personal information about yourself can be stressful. Choosing to disclose may make you feel more comfortable at work.

How to Disclose and Considerations

When you disclose, you want to keep in mind the following things:

- **Understand the barrier and focus on what you need.** When disclosing the need for an accommodation, focus on the functional limitations, not the diagnosis. What do you need from the employer/supervisor (time, equipment, flexibility, etc.) to do your job in the most efficient and effective way? When disclosing a need for accommodation due to non-disability related factors (i.e. flexible schedule for childcare, time/space for religious activities), focus on how you will still meet workflow or deadline priorities.
- **Focus on your strengths.** Provide examples of how you have managed or how accommodations have facilitated your success in the past. Show how these experiences have led to success and what strengths you have developed as a result.
- **Consider inadvertent disclosure.** Information that you may want to keep private or reveal in your own way may be evident to the employer. For example, your resume might list clubs and interests that are associated with your identity or disability, or your references may inadvertently disclose information. Consider how you want to disclose and if that will impact what you include in your application and how you prepare your references.
- **Use your resources.** Seek out and consult with others who have similar experiences. If you have a trusted mentor within your workplace, ask for their guidance. If you are in a union, they can be an excellent resource and support to their members with disclosure and accommodations needs.

- **Keep an open mind.** Be ready to consider a variety of options for meeting your needs, and review these with your manager and/or Human Resources to determine what will work best for all parties while meeting your accommodation needs.

When to Disclose

Disclosure is a personal choice and often requires a degree of vulnerability. You may choose never to disclose. Disclosing important personal information can provide you with opportunities to be fully open and/or seek the accommodation you need. The point at which you disclose, however, it may present some challenges to consider.

When	Opportunities	Challenges
Never	You may avoid discrimination associated with your identity or disability.	Never disclosing may impact your ability to perform well in your job and may add stress.
In the application process	The employer may be seeking diverse candidates. The employer can provide any accommodations needed in the application process.	There is limited time/space to fully describe your abilities and needs. If you are not selected for an interview, you may wonder if it is due to your lack of skill or employer prejudice.
At the interview stage	If you require an accommodation for the interview, the employer can meet those needs. During the interview you may have more time to explain the details of your abilities and strengths.	You cannot know how an interviewer might react. If you do not get the job, you may question whether it was due to your disclosure or other factors.
After the offer	The employer's formal obligations to accommodate are more apparent and you may have legal recourse if the offer is withdrawn. You can establish your accommodation needs before you start work.	The employer may question why you did not disclose sooner.
After you begin work	You have time to understand the scope of the job and where you may need an accommodation. You have the chance to build relationships and understand how best to communicate your needs or identity	It may take time to implement accommodations needed to perform well in your job. You may need to navigate challenging conversations with colleagues who have knowledge gaps or prejudices.
As the need arises	Allows you to demonstrate your strengths and skills while allowing you to establish yourself in the job.	It may be more difficult to bring up a challenge later. It may take time to implement the appropriate accommodation needed for you to perform well in your job.

Final Thoughts

Sharing personal information about yourself can be challenging. It may be necessary for you to disclose a disability or other accommodation need, or you may wish to share information that will help your employer understand your needs. Regardless of why you might disclose, it is important that you:

- **Know yourself.** What are your barriers and limitations? What do you need to do well at work? What are your unique strengths and abilities? What do you want to disclose?
- **Know the job and employer.** Does the employer have policies around disclosures and accommodations? What is the employer's reputation around hiring and supporting diverse workers? What barriers might you anticipate within the specific job and what accommodations might help you succeed in that role?
- **Know your rights.** What are the employer's obligations to provide accommodations?
- **Know your resources.** Where can you find more information? Who might support you during the disclosure process?

Additional Resources

- The Learning Portal, College Libraries Ontario. *Disclosing a Disability*: <https://tlp-lpa.ca/career/disclosing-disability>
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. *Disclosures of Disability in the Workplace*: <https://aoda.ca/disclosure-of-disability-in-the-workplace/>
- AGCAS Disability Task Group. *Disclosure, Neurodiversity*: <https://www.agcas.org.uk/write/MediaUploads/Resources/Disability%20TG/disclosure.pdf>
- Ontario Human Rights Commission. *Duty to Accommodate*: <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-based-mental-health-disabilities-and-addictions/13-duty-accommodate>