

Job seekers with a disability or health condition

The issue of disclosure

Whether to disclose

Employers can (and often do) ask a question like this: 'Do you have a disability or health condition that might affect how you do this job you are applying for? If yes, what accommodation, if any, would you need in order to perform the tasks involved in this job?'

If your answer is yes to that type of question, please read the section on how to disclose and when to disclose.

If your answer is no to that type of question, you do not need to disclose your disability or health condition to the employer. You are only required to disclose disability and health issues that are relevant to the job.

If in doubt as to whether to disclose, consider these questions:

- Do you fully understand the job requirements? If yes, will your disability or health condition prevent you carrying out any aspect of the tasks or duties listed?
- Do you have a disability or health condition that may reoccur and impact on your ability to do the job in the future?
- Will you need some type of accommodation either at the job interview or if offered the job?
- Will the work place need to make some alterations or supports?
- Is your disability or health condition likely to put others at risk in the workplace or make your employer liable?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, you must declare this information to your potential future employer. Please read the section on how to disclose and when to disclose.

If you are still uncertain whether to disclose, discuss this issue with your general practitioner (GP)/doctor, or a member of the Careers, Internships & Employment team.

How to disclose

In disclosing your disability or health condition, be positive, constructive and specific in how you disclose this information. Identify where potential difficulties may arise in relation to tasks/duties in the position description and then offer solutions to the employer. Be clear about what you can do to prevent and/or manage those potential difficulties and what support you would need from the employer.

So if you were asked the above question verbally and/or in writing ('Do you have a disability or health condition that might affect how you do this job you are applying for? If yes, what accommodation, if any, would you need in order to perform the tasks involved in this job?'), you could respond using this framework:

Opening:

- *'I have applied for this position as I believe I have the skills, knowledge and experience to do the job.'*

Message:

- *'I need to let you know that I experience... (name disability or health condition)' Be brief.*
- *'In my past employment I have managed this disability/medical condition by...' and/or*
- *'How I would manage this disability or health condition in relation to this job (and/or name specific tasks/duties that might be impacted on) is...'*
- *'What I would need from you as my employer is (mention this only if required)...'*
- *'If you were to employ me (as you may already be aware) you can access...' (If you are aware of any additional support an employer might be able to provide in hiring you in the workplace, you might like to mention that e.g. a financial subsidy, a workplace assessment etc)*

Closing:

- *'While I do experience (name disability or health condition) I still believe I have the skills, experience and knowledge you are looking for.'*
- *'I am very willing to undertake a medical assessment and/or get a letter of support from my GP/doctor in support of my application if required.'*
- *'I am also happy for you to discuss my disability or health condition with my referees.'*

If you are unsure what to say in disclosing this information to a potential employer, discuss this with a member of the Careers, Internships & Employment team and/or your GP/doctor.

In disclosing, remember as a university graduate you have proven your ability to cope with demanding and intense work and study situations. Therefore, be enthusiastic, confident and honest in describing your skills, abilities and experience that you have to offer. Think of how living with a disability or health condition might serve as an asset in the workplace. Results from the EEO Trust survey (2005) on employment and disability issues show that disability is often seen as an ability and it was suggested that disability was a contributing factor to developing leadership skills. (Retrieved 2 October 2008: www.eeotrust.org.nz/toolkits/disability.cfm?section=faq)

When to disclose

If you are required to disclose your disability or health condition in a job application form, you must disclose relevant information at that point. Read the whether to disclose and how to disclose sections above prior to doing that to ensure you disclose the information in an honest, positive and constructive way.

If you are not asked the question in an application form prior to applying for the position, but for example, you might need some accommodations in attending the job interview, you will need to declare your disability or health condition prior to attending.

At the job interview, be proactive in disclosing your disability or health condition at an appropriate moment, if it is not asked of you. Briefly disclosing this information at a relevant point in the job interview will give you more of an opportunity to present your situation in a positive and relevant context. You can also deal with potential misconceptions, provide factual information and suggest strategies to accommodate any obstacle to the job.

If you do not get asked to disclose your disability or health condition in an application form or at a job interview, you can wait until the point at which you have been offered the job and then discuss it then if appropriate.

Conclusion

For further information on disclosing a disability or health condition, please refer to Getting a Job: An A to Z for employers and employees. Pre-employment guidelines published by the Human Rights Commission. www.hrc.co.nz/hrc_new/hrc/cms/files/documents/31-Jul-2008_21-34-42_A-Z_Pre-employment_Guide.pdf These guidelines are aimed at ensuring equality

& fairness for all job applicants regardless of characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, age, disability or sexual orientation. Careers, Internships & Employment has a copy available for viewing in our Resource Area. You can also read the Careers, Internships & Employment website for further information and links: www.canterbury.ac.nz/careers/student_graduate_employment/jobseekers_with_disability_health_condition.shtml

Acknowledgements

- www.hrc.co.nz
- www.eeotrust.org.nz
- www.studentservices.uwa.edu.au/ss/disability/getting_established

genius
WANTED.CO.NZ

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