DISCLOSING A DISABILITY TO EMPLOYERS

It is ultimately your decision as to whether or not disclose information about your disability to your employer, which may be influenced by visibility of the disability, your comfort level, and whether or not your disability might impact your job performance. Before making the decision, give it a good amount of thought and develop a game plan.

Things to think about before deciding whether to disclose:

- How do you feel about your disability? Is it something you are comfortable talking about? Would it be more stressful to hide your disability than it would be disclosing the information?

- Have you reviewed the Americans with Disabilities Act to determine your rights and responsibilities of being an employee with a disability?

- Do you know what accommodations (if any) you may need to go through the hiring process or to perform the job successfully?

- If you choose not to disclose, can you perform the job expectations successfully?

- What are the benefits and risks of disclosing your disability?

- If you decide to disclose, who will you tell, when will you tell them, and what will you say?

Who might you tell?

- Human Resources Officer
- EEO/ Affirmative Action Officer
- Your interviewer
- Your supervisor or manager

When might you tell them?

- Before your interview
- During your interview
- After the interview
- Before a job offer
- After a job offer but before you start working
- After you start working
What might you say?

- It might be helpful to create a script of what you want to say and practice going over the script with someone you trust and are comfortable with. Remember to focus on your strengths and qualifications for the position.

- Decide how specific you will be. Will you provide information in very general but informative terms or will you provide your exact diagnosis and other details about your disability?

- Describe the skills you have that make you able to perform the main job expectations. What qualifications, strengths, and skills do you possess that will allow you to be successful in this position?

- Describe why you are disclosing your disability and how your disability might affect your ability to meet the job expectations. Are you disclosing because certain behaviors/ symptoms may be seen, because you will need accommodations, etc.?

- Describe any accommodations that have allowed you to be successful in the past as well as any accommodations you would need to meet the current job expectations.

- Be ready to answer any questions the employer may ask you (reverse side- Handling Illegal Questions).

Be sure to focus on your ability to perform the job expectations, not on your limitations. Employers only want to know whether you can perform the job as well as or better than other candidates and whether you will be valuable to their organization.

Additional Disability Disclosure Information:

“The Americans with Disabilities Act: A Brief Overview”
http://www.jan.wvu.edu/links/adasummary.htm

“The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities”
http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/411.html