



Utah Parent Center
Special needs, extraordinary potential

Help Your Young Adult Learn about Accessing Accommodations after High School

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When your young adult with disabilities graduates from high school, many aspects of his or her life will change. Services that had been provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) will end, and your son or daughter will need to find new ways to receive accommodations in postsecondary education and training, employment, and for independent living.

Although accommodation rights are provided to adults with disabilities through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, services are not provided automatically. In order to receive services, adults must disclose their disabilities to schools or employers, request accommodations, and provide required documentation showing that the accommodations are necessary because of a disability.

Here are three ways you can help your son or daughter learn how to understand, manage, and explain his or her disability to others and obtain needed accommodations.

1. Make sure your son or daughter knows these three things in order to request an accommodation:

- General and specific information about his or her disability. Naming the disability can increase your young adult's confidence and self-awareness. Provide your child with factual information that shows both the strengths and challenges of his or her disability. Be prepared to return to the topic a number of times as your child grows and his or her ability to understand increases.
- Types of accommodations that have worked in the past. Knowing which supports have worked (and which haven't) will help your young adult identify the types of accommodations he or she may find useful in the future. Think of these supports as tools in a toolbox. Teaching your youth how to choose familiar "tools" for future "projects" provides an important life skill.
- Types of accommodations that may help in adult roles. Moving into postsecondary education or employment situations will present your youth with new challenges. Help your son or daughter think about which accommodations have worked in the past, how they might be modified for these new situations, and what new supports might be useful. Discuss which "tools in the toolbox" might still be helpful and what new "tools" are needed.

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2. Teach your young adult how and when to disclose information about his or her disability.

Disclosing means intentionally releasing information for a specific reason. People may disclose disability information in order to receive an accommodation, explain behavior, or obtain services. Disclosure does not mean telling everything about a disability. It means sharing only information that will result in accommodations that promote success in the workplace or at school.

To help your young adult decide whether and how to disclose, you may want to role play.

Remember, too, an employer can ask about your son's or daughter's ability to perform the essential functions of the job but cannot ask directly if he or she has a disability. For example, a boss could say, "I see you use a wheelchair. How will you move our manufactured parts from your workstation to quality control?" Your young adult could reply, "I have used an attachable tray to move items at my school-based employment. It worked really well."

3. Teach your son or daughter ways to accommodate needs without disclosing.

Not everyone with a disability wants to disclose. Some young adults would prefer to be fired from a job or expelled from college than disclose they have a disability and would benefit from accommodations. To a parent, this attitude can be frustrating and difficult to accept, but ultimately it is your youth's choice.

If your son or daughter decides not to disclose, you can offer tools and teach strategies that can promote success. Here are some approaches that people with and without disabilities often use to accommodate their own needs. For example, if people become drowsy during the workday, they may have a caffeinated drink. If they take a stressful call from a customer, they might vent to a co-worker or take a short break. If they find themselves overwhelmed with new tasks or duties, they might make a list or discuss the issue with their supervisor to find a solution. If they find it hard to get going in the morning, whether due to medication or sleeping habits, they might work a second shift so mornings aren't so rushed. If they find driving too stressful, they might car pool, take a bus, or move closer to work. They might hire monthly household cleaning support, pick up ready-to eat meals, and use lawn care services. There are many ways people accommodate themselves with hectic schedules, stress, heavy workloads, and multiple responsibilities at work and at home.

There are many ways to compensate. As you think about the ways you accommodate your own needs, consider how you might share these methods with your son or daughter. With these supports, your young adult may not need to disclose at all in order to succeed.

Resources

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

Web site: www.jan.wvu.edu

Phone: 800 –JAN-7234 (toll free)

JAN consultants provide guidance regarding the ADA's definition of reasonable accommodation to individuals with disabilities, their family members, employers, and professionals. They offer disability-specific strategies for worksite accommodations. The Web site also includes resources such as accommodation possibilities listed by disability categories (www.jan.wvu.edu/media/atoz.htm) and the "Employees' Practical Guide to Requesting and Negotiating Reasonable Accommodations Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)" (www.jan.wvu.edu/EeGuide/IIINegotiating.htm).

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth

Web site: www.ncwd-youth.info/index.html

Phone: 877-871-0744 (toll free)

This group provides a variety of disability-related information, including "The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities," Washington, DC; Institute for Educational Leadership, (2005). It's available online at [www.ncwd-youth.info/resources & Publications/411.html](http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&Publications/411.html).

U.S Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy

Web site: www.dol.gov/odep/

Phone: 866-633-7365 (toll free)

The federal Department of Labor has some online resources, including "The Why, When, What, and How of Disclosure in an Academic Setting, after High School" (www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/wwwwh.html) and "Youth, Disclosure, and the Workplace: Why, When, What, and How" (www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/ydw.htm). Article Reprinted, Pacer Center <http://www.pacer.org/parent/php/php-c165.pdf> retrived 8/10/2013