



Organising a Job Interview

For applicants, being offered a job interview can be exciting and at the same time nerve wracking. The offer of a job interview provides an opportunity to prepare in advance for the interview, in areas such as:

- reviewing the job criteria and duty statements
- practicing answering likely questions
- preparing personal documents and transcripts
- further researching the organisation
- preparing questions to be presented to the interview panel.

Applicants who have a disability may also need to consider their options about disclosing a disability when an interview offer has been made.

Should Disclosure Occur?

For people with an obvious disability, the personal choice to be made is whether to disclose a disability prior to the interview or during the interview. For people with a hidden disability, the personal choice to disclose a disability can be made prior to the interview, at the interview, when a job offer has been made, when employed in the position or not at all.

The offer of a job interview is an opportunity for applicants with a disability to prepare in advance if, how and when to disclose their disability. Investigation of legislative rights, responsibilities, experiences of other employees and employers with disabilities, and disability services and support networks can assist applicants in composing a plan that outlines effective disclosure strategies.

If an applicant chooses to disclose their disability at the point of being offered an interview, it is important to disclose **AFTER** the interview has been arranged. This ensures that the interview has been secured before any discussions or negotiation of any adjustments to the interview process is made.

Why Applicants May Choose To Disclose

Troy has received notification that he has been chosen to attend an interview for a position for which he recently applied. Because Troy requires an accessible venue for the interview he has decided to mention his disability and his needs at this stage.

An applicant may choose to disclose their disability when an interview offer is made to:

- organise or discuss interview related adjustments. Adjustments may include organising an accessible venue, providing any written material in alternative formats and/or organising a sign language interpreter
- prepare the interview panel to eliminate any unnecessary stresses or obstacles that may affect the interview process. This is particularly relevant for applicants who have an obvious disability
- evaluate whether the employer and/or workplace is supportive in working with people with disabilities.

Why Applicants May Choose NOT To Disclose

When Megan was contacted by phone about an interview for a position she had applied for, she decided not to disclose her disability at this time, having previously determined that she did not require any job interview related adjustments during this process. She is unsure if she will ever need to disclose her disability, but would rather consider her options a little later.

An applicant may choose NOT to disclose their disability when an interview offer is made because:

- they have a hidden disability and would prefer to disclose when an offer of employment is made, once in a position of employment or not at all
- the disability has no effect or impact on the applicant's ability to do the job
- the prospective employer and/or interview panel may focus on the applicants disability, not on their abilities which may negatively impact on the interview
- they fear that the information may be perceived in a negative or discriminatory manner which may disadvantage the applicant in the interview
- they fear that they may be treated differently or may not have the same opportunity to compete for the position as other applicants.

What To Disclose

Applicants need to be prepared about how they would like to disclose their disability prior to attending the job interview. It is important that the information presented is clear and concise and relevant to the interview process. It is not essential to disclose in-depth medical or personal information about a disability unless there are specific requirements that need to be addressed for the interview.

The type of information presented to the appropriate person may include:

- what the disability is
- why the applicant has chosen to disclose their disability
- the type of adjustments that would be required for the interview.

To Whom Should Applicants Disclose

If an applicant chooses to disclose their disability at the point of being offered an interview, it is important to disclose **AFTER** the interview has been arranged. It is also important for the applicant to identify the right person to disclose to. The most appropriate person to disclose a disability to is the convener of the interview panel or a member of the interview panel, not the person responsible for organising the interview.

The applicant may need to ask who the members of the interview panel are. Inquiries should be made **AFTER** the job interview has been arranged.

The Purpose Of Disclosing

It is essential that applicants state their purpose in disclosing to the prospective employer, convener of the interview panel or a member of the interview panel. This ensures that the disclosure can achieve a beneficial outcome.

Disclosure is most effective when the applicant is "...knowledgeable about their disability and (is) able to articulate both their disability-related needs and their unique (skills)." (1)

It is generally not necessary to provide a detailed account of the disability or medical condition, but what is most helpful is the ability to provide a clear statement of how the disability may impact on the applicants ability to attend and/or perform in the interview and the specific support required to equally compete for the prospective position of employment.

Applicants: Rights And Responsibilities When Organising A Job Interview

Applicants have a right to:

- have information about their disability treated confidentially and respectfully
- appropriate interview related adjustments and support in relation to their disability, to enable them to effectively demonstrate their skills and abilities in the interview.

Responsibilities:

- applicants should discuss with the prospective employer, convener of the interview panel or a member of the interview panel any disability specific requirements needed for the interview
- applicants should inform the manager/convener/panel in a timely manner about the need for appropriate interview adjustments
- applicants need to identify appropriate and reasonable adjustments for the interview.

Employers: Role And Responsibilities When An Applicant Discloses Their Disability When Organising A Job Interview

Employers under Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S), Disability Discrimination legislation, and ethical practices, particularly if a person has disclosed a disability prior to interview, should:

- review the organisation's location and office structures on an ongoing basis to ensure it is accessible and appropriate for **ALL** applicants
- provide all applicants in advance, including applicants with a disability, with the names of the interview panel members and other staff who are available for assistance
- provide any written information that is to be presented at the interview in a range of formats such as electronic, enlarged print or audio formats. If an applicant requires the information in these formats, make sure the information is sent in advance to all applicants to ensure fair and equitable practices.
- be non intrusive and respectful of the applicant when they have disclosed their disability
- discuss with the applicant the type of adjustments that may be required for the job interview. Discussions may include obtaining information from the applicant about how to organise the most appropriate services, particularly if the employer is unfamiliar with the process e.g. obtaining information from an applicant who is deaf about interpreter services
- organise the adjustments required for the interview. If this task is to be delegated to a staff member, it is the role of the manager to ensure that the information is relayed in an accurate, non-discriminatory manner and that the task is followed through
- provide accurate and precise information about the interview arrangements to the applicant e.g. when giving directions to an applicant in a wheelchair, ensure that the instructions direct the applicant to accessible pathways (ramps, lifts and flat surfaces) that lead to the interview room

It is the responsibility of the Convener or their delegated officer to:

- inform the interview panel about the applicants disability in a favorable and non-discriminatory manner
- ensure that the venue for the interview is in an accessible location. If the venue is not accessible, consider relocating to an accessible area for **all** the interviews
- ensure that the interview related adjustments requested by the applicant are organised. If the requested adjustments cannot be met, it is important to negotiate alternative arrangements with the applicant. Ensure that advice is sought from external services before advising that the interview adjustments could not be met for the interview. External services may include the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Information Hotline: 1300 656 419

Footnotes

(1) Scholl & Mooney, Undated Draft Document, Disclosure in work based learning programs
<http://www.cew.wisc.edu/ya/pdf/files/brief3.pdf>