



## **ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES AND THE WORKPLACE**

Adults with learning disabilities (LD) often face unique challenges in the workplace. Individuals with LD can overcome these challenges and sustain rewarding and fulfilling employment.

### **Before the Job Search Begins**

Searching for employment can be a long and difficult process. Success in the workplace begins with careful decision-making.

- Match your interests with job prospects; look for openings in lines of work that will sustain your attention and keep you motivated.
- Identify tasks that you would find rewarding (research, physical labor, interacting with the public); look for positions that tap these areas.
- Identify any skills (typing, filing, managing, supervising, organizing) that can contribute to your success.
- Consider your personality traits (outgoing, warm, shy) when choosing work; evaluate if the work setting is conducive to your needs.
- Be sensitive to your work values (working hard, helping others, maximizing free time) and be sure they coincide with the job requirements and are consistent with those of co-workers.
- Role-play the job interview process as a way to decrease anxiety and to build self-confidence.

### **Beginning the Job Search**

Interviews, resumes, and applications are perhaps the most important elements in searching for a job. Potential employers often rely upon initial impressions when evaluating candidates.

- Avoid common mistakes on resumes and applications; read instructions carefully; be sure that all letters, resumes, and applications are thoroughly proofread; submit only materials that are neat and easy to read; sign and date forms as requested; answer the questions!
- Be prompt to appointments; allow for unexpected delays in travel.
- Dress appropriately; as a general rule, formal business attire is recommended.
- Bring copies of materials with you; the person conducting the interview may not have seen your application file, and you may wish to refer to a document during your meeting.
- Be realistic about salary level and benefits; provide information about prior employment and speak openly about successes and frustrations.
- Seek information about potential employers before an interview; try to speak with someone who works for the firm or in the same industry.
- During the interview, be sure to emphasize your strengths as potential assets on the job.

## Disclosing a Disability

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a qualified job candidate is someone who can perform essential work functions. Job applicants with disabilities may not be disqualified or subjected to discrimination by virtue of their need for reasonable accommodations. Information about the disability must be kept confidential and must not be disclosed without your explicit (written) consent.

## Seeking Accommodations

The ADA requires that reasonable accommodations be provided to individuals with disabilities. Such accommodations include job modifications, changes in the physical environment, or access to equipment that facilitates successful job performance. Once you have explained to your employer how a disability may affect your performance of required job duties, you may request accommodations that will allow you to successfully perform those essential functions.

The employer is not required to provide accommodations if doing so would cause undue hardship (considering the overall financial and personnel resources of the firm).

Examples of accommodations include:

- modifying work schedules,
- acquiring or modifying equipment,
- providing auxiliary aids and services,
- restructuring job tasks,
- modifying examinations,
- providing additional or alternative training.

For more information on state resources for literacy and learning disabilities, see the website at <http://novel.nifl.gov>. For information on the Americans with Disabilities Act, see the website at [www.usdoj.gov](http://www.usdoj.gov) or call the toll free ADA Information Line at (800) 514-0301 (voice) or (800) 514-0383 (TDD).

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