Transitions to Work: Self-Identification of DisAbility and Accommodations in the Workplace

Accessible Learning Centre and Career Development Centre
2014 – 2015
Today’s Learning Objectives

• To learn about employment rights and responsibilities of workers with disabilities
• To increase awareness of workplace accommodations/adjustments
• Understand key questions for determining whether to self-identify, and if so, at what time
• Learn about further resources about disability in the workplace and accommodations
From University to Work...

Key Questions to Ask:

What strategies/adjustments are you using right now at Laurier that are working well?

What kind of support do you need to be successful on the job?

How can you transfer what is working for you now into the workplace?
Your Rights and Responsibilities

**Ontario Human Rights Code** and **Canadian Human Rights Act** protects workers from discrimination

- Employers have a legal ‘Duty to Accommodate’ to the point of ‘**undue hardship**’ as long as the employee is capable of performing the essential duties of the role

- **Be your own advocate.** The ‘Duty to Accommodate’ exists when an employee makes a needs request

**Both employees and employers** have responsibilities in this process
What is a Reasonable Accommodation?

A modification in the way work is performed; not a change in the nature of the work itself.

- Employees need to be able to effectively perform key functions of the job
- Accommodations levels the ‘playing field’ and enables the employee to do the work tasks differently but with the same outcome
- Most accommodations are very straightforward and easy to implement and often cost nothing/very little

Not everyone needs a formal accommodation. May just be an ‘informal adjustment’.
Accommodation Examples

Hard:
- Adaptive Technology; furniture; accessories

Soft:
- Flexible hours; environment change; flexible breaks

Know what kind of support (if any) you need to be successful in the day to day tasks of the job
Accommodation Costs

“Over 2/3 of job accommodations cost under $500; many cost nothing at all”
(Ontario Human Rights Commission)

- Costs are employer’s responsibility
- Funding options for employers vary, i.e., Human Resources and Skills Development, Ontario Disability Support Program
Deciding If and When to Disclose: Key Considerations

- A personal choice depending on what you need
- Understand the core requirements of the job and your ability to do them

- **Research the company.** What is the employer’s track record?
  - Is it an Employment Equity employer? Employment Equity Act requires elimination of employment barriers. (Government at all levels, regulated industries, such as banking, communications, mining, etc.)
  - Look for equity statements on job postings
Deciding If/When to Self-Identify: Key Considerations

- Consider that you may just need an adjusted part of your job, perhaps informally.

- You don’t need to disclose unless you need an accommodation, but if performance is going to be affected by disability, it is advisable to identify before that occurs.
7 Options: Timing of Self-Identification

1. Never
2. At the time of job application
3. When offered an interview
4. During the interview
5. At the time of job offer - acceptance
6. After you start working
7. After a change in the job/problem on the job
7 Options: Timing of Self-Identification

1. **Never**
   • If you do not need any accommodations on the job

2. **At the time of job application**
   • Only if it is an employment equity employer or a disability-specific job program, i.e., Lime Connect, Ability Edge internships
Options: Timing of Self-Identification

3. When offered an interview

• If you need accommodations for the interview
  – Find out what the interview will entail, (i.e., testing component, written assignment)
  – Often interviewers will ask you if you need any accommodations
Options: Timing of Self-Identification

4. During the Interview
   • Be confident about your strengths and why they should hire you
   • If you will need accommodations on the job, it could give you a chance to explain, but timing may be limited
   • If an employer may notice a disability-related issue, consider addressing unspoken concerns
Options: Timing of Self-Identification

5. At the time of job offer/acceptance
   • If you know that you will need adjustments to do the job
   • Allows the employer to put into place any accommodations needed before you start work
   • Talk about your needs in person or over the phone and be prepared to discuss concerns
Options: Timing of Self-Identification

6. After you start work
   • Requests can be made anytime if you realize that you need accommodations to do the job tasks
   • Connect with your supervisor/HR to discuss your needs
   • Continually re-assess your needs

7. After a change in the job/Problem on the job
   • Re-assess your needs
   • Highly recommend disclosure BEFORE a problem arises if an issue you are having is disability-related
Prepare in Advance

Decide with whom will you speak (HR, supervisor, etc.)

Mention the nature of the disability briefly. You don’t need to give details or name your disability, but clearly explain how your disability may impact your ability to do the work.

Prepare in advance. Anticipate questions or concerns the employer may have and how you will address them.

Research:
• Know what the job entails
• Know what you need and be willing to discuss a variety of options
• If it’s a physical adaptation - where can you get it and costs (if any)
What Could You Say?

1. Decide how you will describe the disability briefly and in simple terms.
2. Explain briefly how the disability has not interfered with the quality of your work in past experiences.
3. Describe any functional limitations caused by your disability that may impact your performance.
4. Be positive. Always focus on your strengths and qualifications.
5. Identify the type of adjustment/accommodations you may need, and be open to the employer’s suggestions as well.

“I have a medical condition that makes it sometimes difficult to ______. I have managed it very well throughout other work and school when accommodated; in fact, I think it’s helped me develop _____ skills. In this setting, I foresee I would need __(describe type of accommodation)__ and I am open to any suggestions you have as well.”
Always keep focused on your work abilities, skills and experience!
Additional Resources

Job Accommodation Network (JAN) -
• A free consulting service that provides information about disability-specific accommodations. The site is based in the US, be aware that legislation will differ. Also, see the sample of a letter requesting accommodation.

http://askjan.org/media/atoz.htm

Ontario Human Rights: Disability and Duty to Accommodate

Laurier Career Centre Resources for Students with Disabilities

Alumni Career Profiles
Final Tips

• Be an advocate for yourself
• Be an expert about your abilities
• Talk with trusted people (ALC consultant, career consultant, mentors, etc.)
• Learn from your successes and your mistakes and move forward
Other Great Resources

Mental Health Works
www.mentalhealthworks.ca

Learning Disability Association of Ontario
Connect With Us!

519.884.0710 x4495
careercentre@wlu.ca
wlu.ca/career

facebook.com/lauriercareercentre
lauriercareercentre.wordpress.com
linkedin.com (Laurier Career Centre group)