



To Disclose or Not to Disclose

Contributed by Upbound At Work

While attending school, an individual with a disability receives the protections, modifications, and accommodations outlined in their Individual Education Plan (IEP) as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The disclosure of a disability has already been made; the needed accommodations and modifications are delineated in the IEP. The unfortunate reality for many individuals and families is that, once an individual leaves school and enters adult life, the security of an IEP no longer exists. The student now has to self-advocate for his or her rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Title 1 of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) "... is designed to help people with disabilities access the same employment opportunities and benefits available to people without disabilities."

The ADA goes on to note that "Employers must provide reasonable accommodations to qualified applicants or employees. A reasonable accommodation is any modification or adjustment to a job or the work environment that will enable an applicant or employee with a disability to participate in the application process or to perform essential job functions."

Every day, millions of Americans with disabilities wrestle with disclosing their disability.

cont.

The decision to disclose one's disability is a very personal decision. Often, if someone has a disability that is visible, the disclosure is self-evident; however, for those with disabilities that are not per se visible, like with autism, they have to determine if the benefits of disclosing outweigh the risks.

Why disclose a disability: Disclosing a disability may appear to be a frightening and uncomfortable task, but programs like the Autism Alliance of Michigan and the Job Accommodations Network can help guide you (for free!). Additionally, according to the ADA, only people who disclose their disability (or whose disability is suspected/self-evident) are protected from discrimination. The rationale is that an employer cannot discriminate against you if it knows that you have a disability. Disclosure is also necessary to request reasonable accommodations from your employer (or prospective employer).

The company has an obligation to reasonably accommodate people with disabilities so they can succeed at work - but it is only required to do so for people it knows have a disability.

What to disclose: It is important to know that you do not need to be overly specific when disclosing your disability. A recommended best practice is to highlight the positive and negative effects that the disability may have on job performance, and any accommodations that might help you perform at your best.

When to disclose: There is no right, wrong, or even best time to disclose. However, when disclosing, it is recommended that you select a private space. As you disclose information regarding the disability, do not dwell on what is difficult. Emphasize what functions can be performed along with strengths. Also, expect the employer to ask questions.

Possible disclosure times could include:

- On the application, resume, or in a cover letter with an application.
- During the interview.
- Before any drug testing.
- After receipt of a job offer.
- During the course of employment.
- Never disclose – this is a personal choice

Who to disclose to: You can disclose to as many or as few people as you would like. That said, it is generally recommended that, if you choose to disclose your disability, you do so to your supervisor or someone in Human Resources. These are the individuals who are most likely able to implement the accommodations you need.

How to disclose: As you prepare to disclose, reflect on what it means to be a person with a disability. Educate yourself about your disability and how it impacts your daily life. Research the company and their attitude towards individuals with disabilities. Prepare for any questions the employer may ask. Seek advice from other individuals with disabilities who have been successful in finding and maintaining employment. Remember that the disclosure of a disability is to be treated confidentially.



Katie Oswald, Adult Advocacy Consultant for the Autism Alliance of Michigan, weighs in on this topic with her thoughts and recommendations for those considering disclosure. Katie brings a unique perspective as a person on the autism spectrum:

“I have mixed feelings about disclosure in the workplace. It depends a lot on the person and the job type. Disclosure comes with some risks, including potentially being bullied by co-workers or losing your job. Although in theory, the ADA protects you from being fired because of your disability, in reality, employers can find ways around it. That said, it is often worth the risk, and I would encourage people to disclose for three reasons”:

1. In cases where the ADA can protect you, you will be covered. You are not covered under ADA unless you disclose.
2. You will no longer need to mask your autism. Prolonged masking is associated with mental health challenges. Being comfortable being your true self is best for you.
3. You provide an opportunity for neurotypical co-workers to learn about autism which will make things better for the next generation entering the job market.”

Need more assistance with disability disclosure? Please contact AAoM’s employment program, Upbound at Work! upboundatwork.com | Upbound@aaomi.org | 877.463.2266



MICHIGAN'S DIRECT CARE WORKERS NEED YOUR HELP!

Over this past year, we've made progress, but we still have a ways to go! We know that families and providers have been stretched to their limit as they try to coordinate care for their loved ones and consumers whose needs aren't going away, even though the workers who help them are. Our state's lawmakers have a critical responsibility to protect—and increase—Direct Care Workers' pay! Join us in asking for their help. The need has never been greater.

Let your state Senator and state Representative know that you expect them to make the Direct Care Worker pay increase **permanent** by taking a second to click the link below to connect with your lawmakers.

ACT NOW!



JULY 20, 2021 1P-3P

Virtual Book Club

TO REGISTER VISIT AAOMI.ORG/TRAININGS
TO PURCHASE THE BOOK GO TO MARVELOUSMEBOOKS.COM



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Date	Event
July 5 - August 19	Hired in Michigan- Youth Social Media Business Marketing Program- Summer Career Camp
July 6 - July 17	OUCARES Pee Wee Camp (Ages 3-6 years)
July 6 - August 19	The Speech Language Learning Center Summer Say & Play 2021
July 6 - July 15	Free Virtual Caregiver Bootcamp Morning Series
July 12 - July 16	Team GUTS Fun & Fitness Camp
July 12 - July 16	Summer Fun Day Camp
July 13	CMHLS – Autism Spectrum Disorder Learning Series
July 13	Watch Me Grow
July 13	IEP: A Closer Look
July 14	Evidence-based practices (EBP) in Vocational Rehabilitation
July 14	Virtual Sensory-Friendly “Makers” Program
July 14	Parent Connect Call-Topic: discussing Disability Rights Michigan
July 15	Watch Me Grow
July 15	Zoom Summer Dance Party!
July 15	Professional Connect Call : Children with Special Needs (CSN) Fund
July 15	Clinton Township Inclusive Playground Drive-In Movie Fundraiser
July 16	Writing Quality and Comprehensive Behavior Support Plans VIRTUAL
July 19 - July 30	OUCARES Summer Day Camp (Ages 7-12 years)
July 20	PBS Parent Training Series- The Big Three: Potty Training, Sleeping and Eating
July 20 - July 22	Parent Mentor Training
July 21	Watch Me Grow
July 21	Summer Fun Kayaking & Paddle Boarding
July 25	2021 Autism Hero Walk
July 26	Watch Me Grow
July 27	Financial Literacy Series
July 28	Skills for Effective Parent Advocacy
July 29	Watch Me Grow
July 31	Journey of Hope

Autism Alliance of Michigan

AUTISM HERO WALK

SUNDAY JULY 25, 2021

900 WALKERS WILL GAIN ACCESS TO THE DETROIT ZOO

REMAINING FUNDRAISERS WILL RECEIVE A ZOO TICKET VOUCHER

PRESENTED BY DTE Foundation

REGISTER AT AACMWALK.COM



MiPAAC

MICHIGAN PARENT, ADVOCATE & ATTORNEY COALITION

Michigan Parent, Advocate & Attorney Coalition (MiPAAC) is a newly formed statewide group focused on student-centered advocacy.

MiPAAC aims to educate families of children with special education needs on topics relevant to their advocacy efforts.

To join – complete the [MiPAAC membership form!](#)

<https://mipaac.org/>

