

Should I Disclose My Disability? Some Things to Consider

When preparing to go to college or university students with disabilities may need to decide whether to disclose their disability to staff and faculty of the college.

When you tell someone something that they don't already know, you are practicing disclosure. Disclosure is a form of the word "disclose," which means to open up, to reveal, or to tell.

The decision to disclose a disability belongs only to the person with the disability. Disclosure is a very personal choice and should be done only after careful thought. If you have a disability, there are no requirements that you disclose your disability to anyone at any time, but in order to receive accommodations at work or in college, you must disclose.

When you disclose, you are intentionally releasing personal information about yourself for a specific purpose. Some personal information-such as identification numbers, financial records, or health information may be important to keep private. It is important to keep in mind that your decision to disclose is personal and doing so should help you in some way.

You are not required to share personal information about your disability. However, if you are requesting reasonable accommodations you will need to disclose: (1) information about how your disability affects your ability to learn and perform effectively; (2) what kind of support, services and environment you will need in order to access, and participate in your studies or job, and in the community.

It is up to you to decide how much of this sensitive information is necessary to reveal in order to get the accommodations you need.

Circumstances in which you may choose to disclose a disability include:

- ✓ To a potential employer when requesting job accommodations
- ✓ To new friends who have invited you to a concert because you need accessible seating close to the stage in order to see
- ✓ To your coach because your math tutoring sessions overlap with team practice after school
- ✓ To a benefits counselor if you are applying for financial benefits

Adapted from The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/411-on-disability-disclosure>