Disclosing your Disability

WHAT IS DISCLOSURE?
Disclosure is the process of informing a potential employer that you have a disability. This resource is designed to provide you with information on how, when and what to disclose.

DO I HAVE TO TELL POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS ABOUT MY DISABILITY?
You are not required to tell potential employers about your disability, and they cannot ask you about your condition. Disclosure is a personal choice dependent upon type of disability, how the disability will affect your work and your personal feelings. Explaining your disability and how it will affect your work is recommended, as most potential employers feel positively towards those applicants whom they feel have been completely honest. Disclosing your disability also protects you under the Americans with Disabilities Act. These protections include all aspects of employment such as the application process, hiring, wages, benefits, workstations and/or equipment.

WHEN SHOULD I DISCLOSE MY DISABILITY?
There are several appropriate times to disclose your disability to a potential employer. You should decide when you would feel the most comfortable making this disclosure.

1. Resume - If you have had work experience (paid or volunteer) that is related to your disability, be sure to include it on your resume.
2. Cover Letter - Disclosing in a cover letter is appropriate, especially if your work experience clearly indicates that you have a disability, or if you are applying to a job or internship through an organization focused on connecting people with disabilities to employment opportunities. (See example). If you choose to disclose in your cover letter, you may want to staple the letter to the back of your resume so that the employer reads about your abilities before learning the specifics about your disability. Be aware that disclosing in a cover letter may lessen your chances of being granted an interview in some cases.
3. Interview Confirmation - Many people choose to disclose at this point. It would be very difficult for the employer to back out of the interview at this late time. Employers tend to react more favorably to this type of disclosure. When you call to confirm your interview, be sure to talk directly to the person who will be interviewing you. (See example).
4. Job Commencement – Despite ADA protections, some people are still hesitant to disclose their disability until they’ve been hired. If you choose to wait until you’ve accepted the position, there are key points to keep in mind. When disclosing, explain to the person what your disability is and why you’re choosing to disclose it. Discuss how your disability may impact you in the workplace and provide your employer with some options or suggestions for workplace adjustment. Lastly, remind your employer of your skills, abilities and ways to manage your disability in the workplace.

Present your disability by indicating the strengths of your candidacy. Discuss the following:
1. Disclose your disability - you do not need to go into extensive detail.
2. Describe your skills, strengths and experiences, addressing how you can/will do the job.
3. Show that you are aware of attitudinal barriers that you may encounter in an office, and be prepared to discuss how you make others feel more comfortable around you.
4. The most important aspect of disclosing your disability is presenting yourself as a problem-solver. You are someone who can do the job and help work towards greater productivity. Above all, you can compete on equal terms with people who do not have disabilities.

DISCLOSING DURING THE INTERVIEW CONFIRMATION (SAMPLE)
1. Call to confirm the interview. Make sure to ask to speak directly with the person who will be conducting the interview.
2. Confirm the date, time, and location of the interview.
3. Disclose your disability. Example: "I want to be frank with you. I use a wheelchair because my legs are paralyzed as a result of an accident. However, I assure you that my disability will not affect my ability to work or my attendance record. I wanted to let you know about my disability in advance to avoid catching you off guard at the interview. Please feel free during the course of the interview to address any questions or concerns about how my disability might affect my work performance."
4. Close the conversation positively. "Thank you for your time. I am looking forward to meeting with you and discussing the possibilities for employment.

ONCE I’M HIRED, SHOULD I DISCLOSE MY DISABILITY?
Similar to a potential employer, you are not required to disclose your disability to your new or current employer, and they cannot ask you about your condition. However, it is your responsibility to disclose your disability if you need any work-related reasonable accommodations. Keep in mind, disclosing your disability is on a need-to-know basis and should be addressed with the person who has the ability to facilitate your request for accommodations. This may be someone in Human Resources or your immediate supervisor who is responsible for hiring, promoting, and/or firing of employees. Also, it may not be required, but it is recommended to have your request in writing and to keep a copy for yourself.