

From: "Taking Care of Business, Guide to Employment Lifestyles" handbook from DBS

TCB-Gel Book

<http://darsnetmossx.dars.txnet.state.tx.us/en/organization/dbs/programs/vr/Teacher%20Blind%20Skills/Pages/TCBGELDownload.aspx>

5.5 Creating a Disclosure Statement

Should I disclose I am blind or visually impaired when applying for a job? There is no single answer that fits everyone. This is an important question and should be discussed with your VR Counselor and VR Teacher. In the end, it will be your decision and will depend on your circumstances. The ADA does not require that you disclose a disability prior to accepting a job. To help you make an informed decision, the following is provided as "food for thought."

1. If I tell someone about my disability in advance, will they still consider me for the job? Or will they make a polite excuse for not interviewing me?

Possible positive consequences:

- The employer may believe that a blind or visually impaired person can do the job. They are not put off by your revelation and will consider you assertive.
- The employer will think you are confident and well-adjusted to your disability.

Possible negative consequences:

- The employer may have no experience with blindness and will find an excuse not to interview you.
- The employer is afraid that you may sue under the ADA. They will interview you, but will not hire you.
- The employer had a bad experience with another blind or visually impaired employee. They may assume you are the same and not interview you.

2. What if I reveal my blindness by going to the job site and picking up an application? Will the employer still interview me?

Possible positive consequences:

- The employer may ask the office or personnel clerk how you seemed. Were you competent, pleasant, and assertive? They will decide to interview you based on their observations, rather than speculation.

- The employer has an open mind. They will assume that you are competent and interview you.
- The employer may have experience with competent blind people. They will give you an interview based on their experience.

Possible negative consequences:

- Someone in the personnel office may be prejudiced towards blind people. They may prevent you from getting an interview.
- The employer may have no experience with blindness and will find an excuse not to interview you.
- The employer is afraid that you may sue under the ADA. They will interview you, but will not hire you.
- The employer had a bad experience with another blind or visually impaired employee. They may assume you are the same and not interview you.

3. If I wait until I get to the interview to reveal my visual impairment, will I still get the job?

Possible positive consequences:

- Some employers don't mind the surprise. You can address their concerns, if any, at the interview.
- Your application and/or resume proved you are qualified and should be interviewed. Now you can demonstrate your competence in person.
- The employer doesn't have preconceived notions of what blind people can do. You can demonstrate your competence in person.

Possible negative consequences:

- The employer may not like being surprised. They may wonder if you have failed to mention other things.
- Some employers may feel they are being set up or that this is a warm-up for a lawsuit if you're not hired.
- Some employers may be uncomfortable and distracted by your disability. They may pay more attention to your blindness than who you are and what you have to offer.

4. I have pretty good vision. Maybe I can get away with not revealing it? Won't I have a better chance of getting the job?

Possible positive consequences:

- The employer won't notice and will hire you, assuming you have no disability.
- Your co-workers may not notice once you're on the job.

Possible negative consequences:

- The employer will notice something is different. They will feel uncomfortable and not hire you.
- The employer is not required to make ADA accommodations for a disability if they don't know about it.
- If you are hired and have not disclosed, you may not be protected under the ADA.
- Your employer or co-workers will notice that you have trouble with printed materials. They may assume that you have a learning or cognitive impairment.

So, what to do? Only you can decide. Discuss this with your VR Counselor and VR Teacher before making a decision.