

Interviewing Candidates with Disabilities

[Tweet](#)

Job interviews play a critical role in the hiring process, allowing employers the opportunity to identify the individual who possesses the best mix of knowledge, skills and abilities for the position available.

When interviewing a candidate with a disability, some employers find themselves nervous or uncertain about how to act and what they can ask. Below is guidance on navigating the interview process with candidates with disabilities.

Preparing for the Interview

Before ever conducting an interview, it is important to ensure that your organization's processes provide for equal job opportunities for applicants with disabilities:

1. Ensure that your company's application and interviewing procedures comply with the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) (ADA), which prohibits asking disability-related questions before a job offer is made. However, [federal contractors](#) are required to *request* that applicants *voluntarily* identify a disability in order comply with regulations related to [Section 503](#) of the Rehabilitation Act.
2. Check that application forms, employment offices and interviewing locations are [accessible](#) to persons with a variety of disabilities.
3. Inform applicants ahead of time if they will be required to take a test to demonstrate their ability to perform actual or simulated tasks. This allows applicants the time and opportunity to request [a reasonable accommodation](#), such as a different format for a written test, if necessary. (Such tests are permitted under the ADA as long as they are uniformly given to all applicants.)
4. Provide the opportunity for all applicants to request reasonable accommodations to enable them to participate in the interview and be prepared to respond to these requests. This should involve explaining the interview process ahead of time to allow applicants the opportunity to identify their needs. For example:
 - Applicants with visual impairments may request assistance in completing paper forms.
 - Applicants that are deaf may request a sign language interpreter to facilitate communication.
 - Applicants with cognitive impairments may request specific instructions on portions of the interview process in advance.

Conducting the Interview

Conducting an interview with a candidate with a disability is essentially the same as it is with any candidate. Below are some tips for interviewing candidates with disabilities:

- Relax and make the applicant feel relaxed. If the applicant has a visible disability or reveals a disability during the interview, concentrate on the job qualifications and not the disability.
- Treat the individual with the same respect you would afford any other candidate.
- Hold individuals with disabilities to the same standards as all applicants.
- Ask only job-related questions that are relevant to the functions of the job for which the applicant is applying.
- Concentrate on the applicant's technical and professional knowledge, skills, abilities, experiences and interests.
- Do not try to imagine how you would perform a specific job if you had the applicant's disability. He or she has mastered alternate ways of living and working. If the applicant has a known disability, either because it is obvious or was revealed, you may ask him or her to describe how he or she would perform the job.
- Do not conduct an employment test unless all employees in the same job category need to take

ASKEARN RESOURCES

[Success Story - Microsoft](#)

RELATED TOPICS

- [Candidate Selection](#)
- [Creating an Inclusive Work Environment](#)
- [Disability Etiquette](#)
- [Encouraging Disability Disclosure](#)

[Ask us a question about this topic](#)

- one.
- DO NOT request a medical examination prior to making a job offer (these are prohibited under the [ADA](#).) If, however, all employees entering similar jobs are also required to have a medical examination as a condition of hire, it is allowable to require individuals with disabilities to have an exam. If, after the medical examination, the employer decides not to hire an individual because of a disability, the employer must simply demonstrate that this decision is related to the job functions and is consistent with business necessity.

When interviewing, employers should adhere to the same [disability etiquette](#) as in other interactions with people with disabilities. Below are some basic do's and don'ts for keeping a job interview focused on the applicants' qualifications:

DON'T:	DO:
Ask questions about the disability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happened to you? • How will you get to work? • What sort of treatment do you need? 	Ask job-related questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you perform this particular task?
Ask questions framed in terms of the disability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have a mental condition that would preclude you from qualifying for this position? 	
Ask about the amount or type of leave they expect to take to get treatment for their condition.	State the organization's attendance requirements and ask if the applicant can meet them.
Focus on the candidate's disability.	Focus on whether the candidate is qualified for the job.
Ask about accommodations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will you need accommodations? • What kind of accommodations will you need? 	Wait until the candidate requests or mentions an accommodation before discussing this topic (it is the candidate's responsibility to make the request for accommodation).

Other Resources

[Focus on Ability: Interviewing Applicants with Disabilities](http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/focus.htm) <http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/focus.htm> [Recommended by EARN staff]
 This Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy resource outlines considerations for employers in preparing and conducting effective interviews with people with disabilities.

[Employer Tips on Interviewing Applicants with Disabilities](http://www.onestops.info/article.php?article_id=2)

<http://www.onestops.info/article.php?article_id=2>

This guide from the National Center on Workforce and Disability provides information for employers on interviewing candidates with disabilities.

Page last updated on Monday, February 17, 2014

Employer Assistance & Resource Network is a service of the [National Employer Technical Assistance Center](#)
 © 2014 Cornell University. All Rights Reserved. | [About EARN](#) | [Privacy Statement](#) | [Disclaimer](#)