

Disability & The Workplace

The **University of Southern California** is dedicated to ensuring that **all students with disabilities** obtain equal access, whether it be in the classroom or achieving their life-long goals. We hope to enhance employability by providing tips, resources, and services that may benefit all individuals, regardless of ability. You can also find career management information 24/7 on [connectSC](#) or [careers.usc.edu](#).

Rights and Responsibilities

→ The definition of disability

According to the ***Americans with Disabilities Act as Amended (ADAAA 2008)***, an individual with a disability is someone who experiences or lives with an impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

→ Rights in the workplace

The **ADAAA** protects qualified individuals with disabilities. To be “qualified” for a position, you must be able to perform the “essential functions” of the job, with or without reasonable accommodations. The law requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified applicants and employees with disabilities.

→ Reasonable accommodations

An accommodation is any change in the work environment or in the way things are customarily done that enables an individual with a disability to enjoy equal employment opportunities.

Examples of workplace accommodations:

Accessible parking / facilities	
Modified work schedules	
Assistive technology	
Service animals	
Modified equipment	

An accommodation is no longer reasonable if it imposes an “undue hardship” to the operation of the employer’s business. This may include financial hardship or the nature and structure of the business operation.

Disclosing Disability

→ Deciding when and if to disclose

Choosing to disclose your disability is your personal decision and taking the time to prepare is in your best interest. The timing is up to you.

Consider the following stages:



→ Knowing to whom to disclose

You will most likely correspond with Human Resources. HR may ask for documentation to confirm your status, but all information is confidential.

→ Clear Communication

Applicants and employees will be the ones to initiate the interactive process, and responsiveness will be expected of the employer. Through this process, both parties will jointly determine the best course of action and reasonable accommodations.

During your conversation, you may want to discuss (1) previous accommodations that have worked for you in the past and (2) potential accommodations that you anticipate on needing in the workplace.

Before engaging with your employer, it may be beneficial to practice with a friend or family member.

Outside Resources

Here's some resources to get you started:

Lime Connect: This organization assists student with scholarships, professional development webinars along with information about internships and full-time job opportunities. Sign up for their newsletter to get the latest updates on upcoming application deadlines!

Job Accommodation Network (JAN): JAN is the leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues. Have a question about workplace accommodations? They are here to help!

AbilityJOBS: A career website dedicated to employment of people with disabilities. Host of the largest resume bank with tens of thousands of job seekers with disabilities, from entry level candidates to PhD.