

PLAN FOR APPROACHING EMPLOYERS (Disclosure of a Disability at the Workplace)

Some people ask their employment specialist to talk to employers on their behalf. For instance, if a person was interested in factory jobs, the employment specialist might meet managers of factories to learn more about those jobs and to advocate for the job seeker. When employment specialists talk to employers, they usually say that they help job seekers who have disabilities or that they help job seekers who have had mental health issues. The reasons that a person might want the employment specialist to talk to employers could include:

- Extra help with a job search. Employment specialists can describe the job seeker's strengths as a worker, learn about available jobs, and request interviews.
- Extra feedback about work performance. Employment specialists can keep in touch with employers after a person is hired to ask for feedback about how the person is performing the job, and to help if there is a problem. Some people benefit from a change in work hours, work duties, or help learning a job.

Other people do not give employment specialists permission to talk to employers on their behalf. Instead, the employment specialist helps with finding job leads, filling out applications, practicing interviewing skills, and other job seeking activities. The reasons that some people would not want to disclose that they use supported employment services might include:

- Concern that employers will not hire a person with a disability. It is true that there is stigma about mental health problems and some employers probably do discriminate. But it is also true that many employers are interested in working with programs like IPS supported employment.
- Some people do not mind if their supervisor knows they are working with an employment program, but they would not want their co-workers to find out. Your employment specialist cannot guarantee that co-workers will not find out that you receive help from a supported employment program.
- Some people do not feel that this type of help is necessary.

Either option is fine. You should pick the strategy that feels most comfortable to you. It is also okay to change your mind during the job search, or after you are hired.

You probably have your own personal feelings about disclosure. Try working on the table below with your employment specialist.

Possible Advantages of Disclosure	Possible Disadvantages of Disclosure

When employment specialists talk to employers, it is usually possible for them to keep some things private. For example, some people do not want their employment specialist to share information like diagnosis or medications. Talk this over with your employment specialist and write down the things that you would not want the specialist to share with an employer.

If you might want your employment specialist to speak with employers, you can let the specialist know what information is okay to share, and what he or she should not say. You and your employment specialist should **stop here** and discuss what might be said to employers.

For now, what is your preference about approaching employers?

- I do not want my employment specialist to talk to employers.
- I am not sure right now and I would like some more time to think about this and receive some more information.
- I do not want my employment specialist to share information about me with employers. However, if my employment specialist is talking to an employer who has the type of jobs that I like and s/he hears about a good job lead, I would like to hear about that. Maybe I will decide to disclose to that employer.
- It is fine with me if my employment specialist talks to employers on my behalf.

Job Seeker

Date

Employment Specialist

Date