

Cornell University
ILR School
Employment and Disability Institute

Research and Practice for Promoting Disability Disclosure

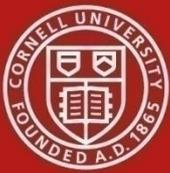
Findings and implications from a survey by the Employment and Disability Institute (EDI) at Cornell University and the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)

Sarah von Schrader, Ph.D.
Erin Sember-Chase, M.A.

October 11, 2012

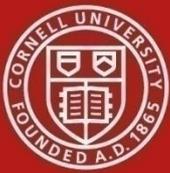
EARN

Employer Assistance and Resource Network



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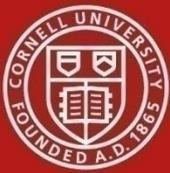
Presenters



Sarah von Schrader, Ph.D.
Assistant Director of Research
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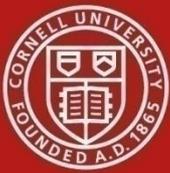
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Presentation Overview

- Why understanding disability disclosure issues is important for employers
- Perspectives of individuals with disabilities on disclosure decision
- Implications for employers

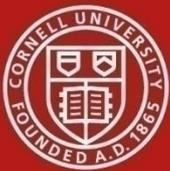
Emerging Employment Issues for People with Disabilities: Disability Disclosure, Leave as a Reasonable Accommodation, Use of Job Applicant Screeners by Sarah von Schrader, Valerie Malzer, William Erickson, Susanne Bruyère. <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/edicollect/1288>



Importance of Disclosure Issue for Employers

- Federal Executive Order 13548 -- Increasing Federal Employment of Individuals with Disabilities
- Proposed Rule to revise Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act
- Improved measures of workforce diversity representation; measure success in recruitment, hiring, retention and advancement
- Increase awareness of where accommodations may improve employee productivity
- Indicator of employee comfort level with sharing personal information

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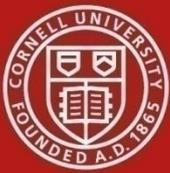


Percent who rated each inhibiting factor as “very important” in a disclosure decision

Respondents with a disability
(N=598)

Risk of being fired/not hired	73.0
Employer may focus on disability	62.0
Risk of losing health care	61.5
Fear of limited opportunities	61.1
Supervisor may not be supportive	60.1
Risk being treated differently	57.8
Risk being viewed differently	53.8
No impact on job ability	44.0
Desire for privacy	27.9

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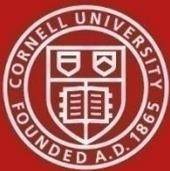


Percent who rated each facilitating factor as “very important” in a disclosure decision

Respondents with a disability
(N=598)

Need for accommodation	68.2
Supportive supervisor relationship	63.5
Disability friendly workplace	56.8
Active disability recruiting	50.5
Knowing of other successes	49.9
Disability in diversity statement	48.9
Belief in new opportunities	40.7

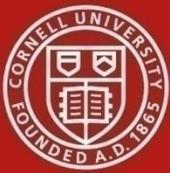
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Deciding to Disclose in the Future

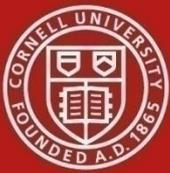
- Most respondents (about 80%) disclosed their disability to their current or most recent employer.
- Among individuals who had a non-apparent or somewhat apparent disability who disclosed
 - 10% had a negative immediate consequence
 - 25% experienced a negative longer term consequence.
- Open-ended question: “If presented with a similar situation in the future, would you disclose? Please explain”

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Themes that we found in responses

1. Timing of disclosure
2. Supportive workplaces
3. “Disability is part of who I am”
 - Gauging employer acceptance
 - Desire for honesty
 - Educating others
4. Concern about disparate treatment
 - Not being hired or being fired
 - Workplace harassment and bullying
 - Losing promotion opportunities

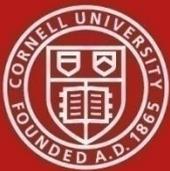


1. Balancing the need for accommodation with timing of disclosure

Many respondents reported that they preferred to wait until hired to disclose.

- “I tended to let employers see my work before letting them know that I am hard of hearing.”
- “I need accommodations to do the job so I have to disclose. I have multiple disabilities and one is very apparent. I might not disclose all of my disabilities until hired or necessary but the apparent one would be disclosed at the interviewing process.”

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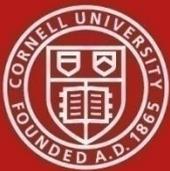


2. Supportive workplaces

Supervisor and workplace climate are critical, and progressive policies are not enough.

- “My boss respected me and understood the difficulties I have.”
- “It depends of the responsiveness of co-workers, supervisors, and general work environment.”
- “Company policies are worthless if discriminatory behaviors are not curbed and the disabled are seen as too unreliable and costly.”

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3. “Disability is part of who I am”

Gauging Employer Acceptance

- “I prefer to disclose my disability, then I would be able to detect any body languages, reactions, or type of vibe by the interviewers or supervisors. It gave me the idea of what kind of environment that I would be risking myself if I got hired...”

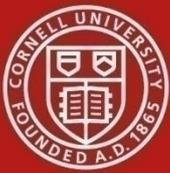
Desire for Honesty

- “It is certainly less stressful to have it out in the open than to be concerned about hiding it and not wanting anyone to find out.”

Educating Others

- “Disclosing allows me to serve as an example of successful employment and promotions.”

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4. Concern about disparate treatment

Not Being Hired or Being Fired

- “Disability is still being treated like acute disease. Until this changes, there is still too high a risk of losing one's job if you disclose.”

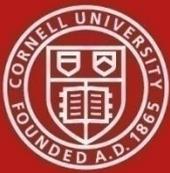
Workplace Harassment and Bullying

- “I had a particularly bad experience with a supervisor who ... [made] various disparaging statements in private to me (such as: that I was a 'cripple', broken person, dysfunctional, useless, etc.), while making unreasonable demands/work assignments, and various attempts to get me in trouble with others.”

Losing Promotion Opportunities

- “I found that having to disclose my disability with the last company I worked at, there wasn't a direct negative response. However, I did get the feeling that I was held back from promotional opportunities when I was fully capable to handle the responsibilities.”

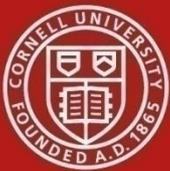
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Conclusions and Implications

- Important for employers to understand issues and concerns for individuals with disabilities around disclosure
- Employers can play an important role in creating an environment where individuals are comfortable sharing they have a disability

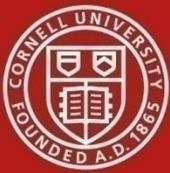
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How can I Create an Environment that Encourages Disclosure?

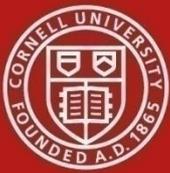
- Include disability in your diversity statement
- Conduct disability diversity training for staff
- Extend recruitment efforts to target jobseekers with disabilities
 - Post positions on online job boards seen by people with disabilities
 - Partner with local agencies and employment service providers who assist jobseekers with disabilities
 - Invite applicants with disabilities to apply on your recruitment materials

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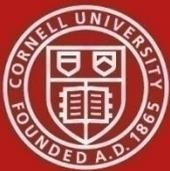
How can I Create an Environment that Encourages Disclosure?

- Create accessible workplaces, spaces, processes, and opportunities
- Invite employees to disclose via voluntary surveys
- Enact flexible workplace policies



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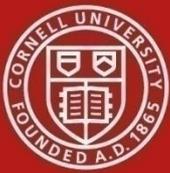
- Implement professional development programs for employees with disabilities (i.e. mentoring programs, disability employee resource group)
- Design, implement, and communicate fair systems to address issues or complaints
- Foster supportive supervisor-staff relationships



What Should I Avoid Doing?

- Focusing solely on disability
- Holding employees with disabilities to different (either higher or lower) standards in relation to:
 - Skill and performance requisites
 - Attendance requirements
 - Interpersonal interactions
 - Opportunities for advancement
 - Performance reviews
 - Hiring/termination

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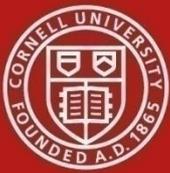
Access to Full Text of the Report

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Resources for Employers

- Employer Resource and Assistance Network (EARN) – askearn.org
- Job Accommodation Network (JAN) – askjan.org
- National ADA Network Centers – adata.org
- HR Tips – hrtips.org
- Employment and Disability Institute (EDI) – www.ilr.cornell.edu/edi

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