



National Disability Coordination Officer Program  
AN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

## How can I share information constructively about an employee's disability in the workplace?

This Information Sheet is designed for employers, managers and supervisors. The Information Sheet also includes advice for educators and employment-related service providers who place people with disabilities in workplace settings.

The points below aim to help guide practices when information about a person's disability needs to be shared with others within workplace settings.

This information should be considered a guide only and not legal advice.

### **Things to do when sharing information about an employee with disability:**

- Situations where it may be appropriate to share details about a person's disability in a workplace setting include:
  - to develop, plan and/or implement workplace adjustments;
  - during a disciplinary process; and/or
  - to meet safety requirements, such as organising assistance during emergency evacuations.
- Share information about a person's disability only with those that need to know.
- Share only the details about an employee's disability that are necessary for this particular situation. There may be things about this employee's disability and personal life that you know but don't need to share with the others.
- Explain to the employee the reasons that others will need to know; who will need to know; what they will (and will not) need to know; and when the other/s will be told.
- Tell the employee that others receiving information are also obliged to treat the information confidentially and respectfully.
- Seek consent from the employee to disclose information about their disability to others. Collect the consent in writing.
- Take extra care to make sure the details you share about the person's disability and the effects on them at work are correct and accurate.
- Concentrate on the details of how the person's disability affects them at work. Giving just a description of the type of disability is often unhelpful because others may not understand the disability and/or have their own misperceptions about the affects of disability.

- Focus less on the person's diagnosis and the medical definition of their disability: this is usually irrelevant to the support needs of the person with disability.

**Where you are placing a person with disability in a work-placement, here are some additional things to do:**

- Give details of how the disability affects the person in the particular situation.
- Listen for any misunderstandings from those in the workplace about the person having a disability and, where appropriate, offer accurate details of how this person's disability affects them.
- Suggest and guide possible supports that can be put in place to allow the person to perform the tasks required of them.
- Remember that Work Health & Safety requirements are not usually adequate reasons for automatic exclusion of a person based on their disability and perceived risk. The WHS and Anti-discrimination legislation require a proper assessment of the real risks and a balance of risk management with the right of the person with disability to participate.

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