

DISCLOSURE IN A COMMUNITY SETTING



TIP SHEET

When accommodations are needed for you to have meaningful participation in a community setting, you may want to disclose your disability. Deciding to disclose in any environment should be an informed decision. It is important to understand the purpose in disclosing, know how much to disclose, when to disclose, and be comfortable with talking about your disability to others.

If you are a parent disclosing on behalf of your child, it is important to include them as much as possible in the process. Disclosure is both a way to empower a person with a disability and to educate others about how to support the individual's needs. For children, this is often a skill that has to be taught and practiced in a safe environment. When a person with a disability understands their strengths and needs and is able to disclose them, this will lead to better self-advocacy skills.

Disclosure should also be limited to information about how the disability impacts your involvement in community activities. Keeping in mind how you talk to someone who facilitates an art class will be much different than what you disclose to a close personal friend. During the disclosure process, you still have the right to your privacy and to only provide information that is necessary in helping them to understand and support your needs.





ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES FOR DISABILITY DISCLOSURE IN THE COMMUNITY

Advantages of Disclosure

- Takes the fear out of the unknown
- Leads to reasonable accommodations
- Breaks down barriers to participation
- Builds program's capacity to support a diverse population
- Leads to meaningful inclusion
- Creates meaningful participation
- Opportunity to educate others in the program
- Reduces stress around keeping it a secret
- Creates honesty and open communication
- Opens up a dialogue about how to make the program more accessible
- Creates opportunity for friendships

Disadvantages of Disclosure

- Relive bad past experiences
- Being viewed differently than others
- Being over supportive which could lead to learned helplessness
- Not presuming competency
- Different treatment from others
- Unfairly judged
- Viewed as difficult or needy