

INTERVIEWING APPLICANTS WITH DISABILITIES

Accommodations for Interviews

Grand Valley State University must provide an accommodation, if needed, to enable an applicant to have equal opportunity in the interview process. Hiring departments may find it helpful to state in an initial job notice that applicants who need accommodation for an interview should request this in advance. Needed accommodations for interviews may include:

- An accessible location for people with mobility impairments.
- A sign interpreter for a deaf person.
- A reader for a blind person.

Interviewing Applicants with Disabilities

The job interview should focus on the ability of an applicant to perform the job, not on the disability. Search committees may ask:

- Whether a job task can be performed with or without accommodation.
- How the individual would perform the tasks and with what accommodations.
- The applicant to demonstrate how certain job functions would be performed, but only if every applicant for the job is required to do so, regardless of the disability. If an applicant has a known disability that could interfere with a job task, the employer may ask that he or she show how the task would be performed, even if others were not required to do so.
- Whether the individual can meet the job's work-hour requirements, provided the hours truly apply to the job.

Search committees may not ask job applicants:

- "Have you ever had any of the following conditions or diseases?"
- "Please list any conditions or diseases for which you have been treated in the past five years."
- "Have you ever been hospitalized?"
- "Have you ever been treated by a psychiatrist or psychologist?"
- "Would any health-related reason prevent you from doing the type of work for which you are applying?"
- "Have you had any major illness in the last five years?"
- "Do you have any physical conditions that would prevent you from performing certain kinds of work?"
- "How many days were you absent from work last year because of illness?"
- "Are you taking any prescribed drugs?"
- "Have you ever been treated for drug addiction or alcoholism?"
- "Have you ever filed for workers' compensation?"
- "Do you expect to need time off for medical treatment?"

In addition, the search committee should not ask questions that are not directly related to the essential job functions and that might provide information about an applicant's disabilities, such as:

- "Do you have a driver's license?" (unless driving is an essential job function).
- "Can you read at an average rate and comprehension level?" (unless reading is an essential job function).

Interviewing Etiquette for Disabled Applicants

General guidelines for interviewing an applicant with a disability are:

- View the applicant who has the disability as a person, not as a disability.
- Don't "talk down" to the applicant. Avoid responding to persons with disabilities out of "gratefulness" for not having a disability yourself.
- Speak directly to the applicant who has a disability, not to a companion or an interpreter.
- Treat adults as adults. Don't use first names unless that familiarity is extended to all applicants.
- Be considerate. It might take extra time for the person with a disability to say or do things.
- Relax, and don't worry about using common expressions, such as, "See you later" or "I've got to be running along" when talking to persons with visual or physical disabilities.

Contact Information

Disability Support Resources

- Website: www.gvsu.edu/dsr
- Phone: 616.331.2490