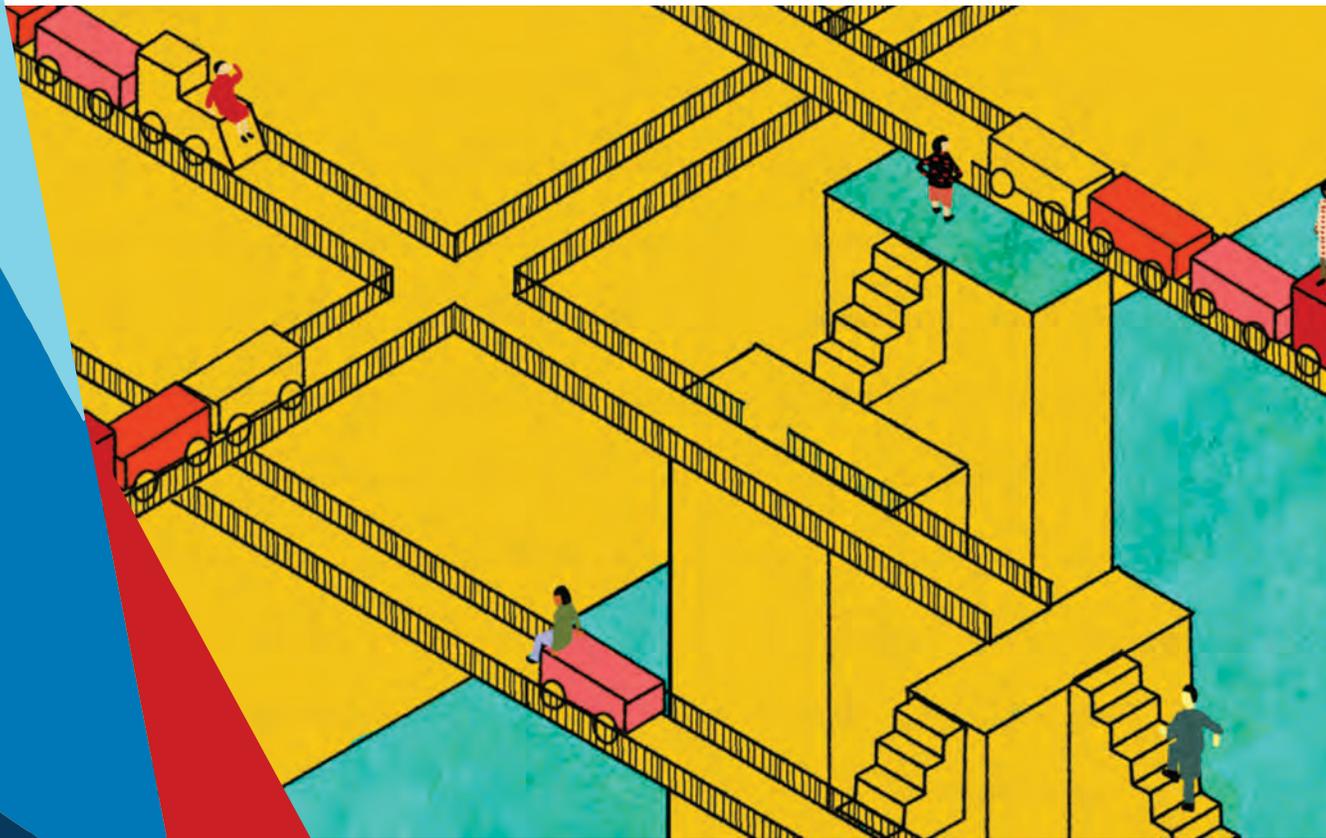




**DISABILITY LAW**  
COLORADO™



## **Employment Transition**

Finding the Right Job and Succeeding

# Employment:

## Finding the Right Job and Succeeding

*This handbook does not constitute legal advice. This handbook attempts to summarize existing policies or laws without stating the opinion of Disability Law Colorado. If you have a legal problem, please contact an attorney or advocate.*

One of the best ways you can live independently and achieve your goals is by finding a job or career. Employment can teach you valuable skills and earn you money to pay for what you need. However, it can be difficult to find the right job or career path if you don't know where to start.

### **What resources can help prepare me for the job I want?**

If you aren't sure how to find a job you want, or if you think you need help getting a job, there are many organizations that can help. Each of the resources below offer different kinds of assistance, but they can all provide way for you to get the job you want.

**The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**, or "DVR" for short, provides employment assistance for people with disabilities. In other words, they can help you when you are:

- Preparing for getting a job;
- Actively trying to get a job;
- Trying to advance in your job; and
- Trying to keep the job you already have.

Before you can receive help from DVR, you must apply and qualify for their services. For more information, check out their website (link above) and these links:

- [Contact Us | Division of Vocational Rehabilitation \(colorado.gov\)](#)
- [DVR Interest Form \(google.com\)](#)

DVR will work with you to figure out what kind of job you want, and then a plan will be created for you to reach that goal.

#### THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT DVR:

- To be eligible for DVR's services, you must:
  - Have a physical or mental impairment that constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment; and

- Require VR services to prepare for, secure, retain, advance in, or regain employment.
- In other words, you must (1) have a disability, and (2) need help preparing for getting a job, actively trying to get a job, trying to advance in your job, or trying to keep the job you already have.
- A student ages 15-21 who receives special education or related services is eligible for Transition Services from DVR. See our Transition Services Guidebook for more information.  
<https://disabilitylawco.org/sites/default/files/uploads/Transition%20to%20Adulthood%20Series%20-%20The%20Transition%20Process%20Guidebook%20reduced%20file%20size.pdf>
- If you receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits, then you are automatically eligible for VR services.
  - You will be ineligible if DVR finds you won't benefit from VR services. Put another way, if you are successful in a job and don't need help, or if you will not be able to work even if you receive help, then you may not be eligible.

#### Examples of VR services

- An assessment for determining eligibility and VR needs by qualified personnel, including, if appropriate, an assessment by personnel skilled in rehabilitation technology;
- Counseling and guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice;
- Referral and other services to secure needed services from other agencies through agreements developed, if such services are not available under the VR program;
- Job-related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services;
- Transition services for students with disabilities, that facilitate the transition from school to postsecondary life, such as achievement of an employment outcome in competitive integrated employment, or pre-employment transition services for students;
- Supported employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities; and;
- Services to the family of an individual with a disability necessary to assist the individual to achieve an employment outcome.

**Workforce Centers** can help you with many kinds of job assistance. They typically offer services for free, and you can reach out to them when you are looking for a job. [Workforce Centers | Department of Labor & Employment \(colorado.gov\)](#)

Here are a few examples of services that Workforce Centers provide:

- Job listings
- Computer and internet access
- Career counseling and training for job seekers
- Recruitment of workers, pre-screening, and referral services
- And more!

**Centers for Independent Living** provide general help for people with disabilities. They provide information, resources, and support on how you can succeed in your community. These services help you live, learn, work, play, and participate in whatever you're interested in.

[Colorado Centers for Independent Living - ColoradoSilc](#)

While you should contact your local CIL if you have questions about their services, here are a few examples of what they can sometimes provide:

- Home healthcare assistance
- Classes to help you learn skills
- Support groups
- Advocates to help you with problems
- Help with finding a place to live
- Help with finding a job
- Help with benefits questions
- And more!

**Benefits counseling** can help you to make money without losing your Social Security benefits. If you get money from the government because of your disability, finding the right job can be difficult. Benefits like this, usually called Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), can affect how much you should work and how you should manage your money.

Because this can be a confusing topic, it helps to ask any caseworkers or helpers you have about your benefits. One organization called Ability Connection Colorado can also provide counseling services about planning for your job and your benefits. [Social Security Work Incentive Planning and Assistance \(WIPA\) | Ability Connection Colorado](#)

Another resource that can help explain your benefits is Disability Benefits 101. This online resource helps calculate how working would affect your benefits, and it can provide helpful information about benefits generally. [DB101 Colorado - Home](#)

## How to succeed at your job

Whether you're going in for your first job interview or applying for a promotion, there are a lot of ways you can set yourself up for success. There are some basic skills and tips that can help you throughout the job process, but there are also laws that protect people with disabilities in the workplace.

### What should I do when I'm applying for a job?

**Show why you are a great candidate.** When you are applying for a job, it helps to stand out from the other people applying for the same job. A great way to do this is by describing your abilities and experiences that make you a good employee. If you have worked a job that taught you things in the past, you can bring that up—if you've never had a job before, then you can talk about the things you are good at that would help you in the job. Usually, the best way to do this is in a 1-page letter, sometimes called a "Cover Letter."

Some employers might ask you for references. A reference is someone who knows you and can talk about whether you would be good at the job you are applying for. If you have ever had a job before, then a reference can be someone you used to work with who will talk about your good qualities. If you have not ever had a job, then you might not know who to use as a reference. Most employers prefer that you do not use family members as references, so it might be hard to think of other people who could be a reference. Here are a few ideas for references:

- A friend who has known you for a long time
- Someone who you spend time with doing community activities, like a sports teammate, a member of your church, or someone you regularly do things with
- A teacher that has worked with you in the past

**Learn about the job.** Most companies have websites or social media like Facebook and Instagram. You can look at these things to help you with learning about the company. If something sticks out to you, or if you have an interest in a part of the job or company, mentioning it in your cover letter or interview can help.

**Be professional.** When you are writing an application or cover letter, it helps to keep it professional. This means avoiding contractions like "can't" or "should've," and you should avoid using slang or profanity. If you need someone to help you with this or proofread your writing, you should reach out to a trusted friend, family member, or service provider—if you're working with DVR or a CIL, they can help!

## **What should I do when I'm interviewing for a job?**

**Answering and asking questions.** Most job interviews will require you to answer questions about yourself and how you would do the job. You should try to think of some questions that might come up during the interview, and maybe even practice answering these questions with a friend or family member. Also, you should think of a few questions to ask in your interview.

**Dress for the interview, not the job.** It's always a good idea to dress nicely for a job interview. Most of the time, you should plan to at least wear clothes as formal as your job interviewer. However, if you really want to make a good impression, you should wear nice clothes for your interview. If you have a caseworker or a DVR counselor, they can sometimes assist you with purchasing clothes or deciding how formal to dress.

**Plan how to get to your workplace.** Most employers expect that you can get to your job on time every day. If you are not able to drive yourself to work, then it is important to plan ahead for traveling to the job.

If a close family member can drive you to the job, that can be great; however, you should also figure out ways to get to your job in case your family member cannot drive you every day. Most cities have public transportation, such as buses, that can take you to a destination close to your workplace. If you have never used public transportation, you should talk to your family or someone like a caseworker about using public transportation. Also, you might be able to use other types of transportation options, like ride-sharing services, disability transportation, or others. Most locations have different options, so it is important to see what your town offers.

While there are many solutions to make sure you have transportation to work, the most important thing is to make sure you have a reliable way to get to your job. It is almost as important to know what you can do if your reliable transportation is not available on your workday. If you get to a point where you will not be able to make it to work on time, you should let your employer know as soon as you can.

## **What does the law say about disabilities and employment?**

The law protects people with disabilities when applying for a job or working. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), employers that have 15 or more employees must provide you with an equal opportunity to get a job. Once you have a job, you are entitled to equal benefits of employment. But what does that mean for you?

- You get to choose how much you want to tell your employer about your disability

This is also called “disclosing” your disability. Your disability is a private, confidential topic. You get to decide how much information you want to share with anyone at your job. Some people choose to share their disability because it’s part of who they are. Other people prefer to keep those details private. You get to make the choice for yourself.

- When would I want to share my disability?
  - You want to request something because of your disability
    - This is known as a “Reasonable Accommodation” request.
  - You want someone at your job to understand more about you
  - You feel like it’s important to share the information
  - Check out this website for more information: [Youth, Disclosure, and the Workplace Why, When, What, and How | U.S. Department of Labor \(dol.gov\)](https://www.dol.gov/eopd/youth-disclosure-and-the-workplace-why-when-what-and-how)

- You can ask for a Reasonable Accommodation

- What’s a “Reasonable Accommodation”?

A reasonable accommodation is a change to your job that allows you have equal employment opportunities. In other words, if you need something to be different so that you can apply for a job, do your job duties, or get the same benefits as other employees, you can ask for it as a reasonable accommodation.

- How do I request a reasonable accommodation?

The best way to make a reasonable accommodation request is to ask for it in writing. But, your employer still has to consider requests that aren’t in writing. See our Employment Law Packet for an example of letter requesting a reasonable accommodation.

[https://disabilitylawco.org/sites/default/files/uploads/DLC%20Employment%20Packet%202018%20FINAL .pdf](https://disabilitylawco.org/sites/default/files/uploads/DLC%20Employment%20Packet%202018%20FINAL.pdf)

If you need an accommodation during the application process, you should make the request as soon as you realize you need it. If you need an accommodation after being hired, you should try to ask for it before you are having problems. In most situations, your employer can ask for information showing that you have a disability and need the accommodation. But, if your disability is easy to see and understand—in other words, if it’s obvious—then your employer should not need more information.

Sometimes, you might not know what kind of accommodation to request. If you ever wonder whether you need an accommodation, or if you know that you need something but aren’t sure what it is, check out [JAN - Job Accommodation Network \(askjan.org\)](http://askjan.org). JAN has many ideas for accommodations, and you can even look up accommodations by what disability or work-related issue you have.

- Can my boss ever say “no” to my accommodation request?

Most of the time, you should not be told “no” if you are asking for a reasonable accommodation. This is because your employer has to first decide if they can provide either (1) what you asked for, or (2) something that is just as effective.

Even if your employer cannot give you what you want, your employer should work with you to figure out if there’s another way that you can be accommodated. If you and your employer find out that there is no way to provide an accommodation, and you aren’t able to do your job because of this, then your employer should still consider a transfer. If there is another open job that’s similar or lower than your job, your employer should allow you to transfer.

Your employer can only say “no” to your accommodation request after every one of those steps has been taken.

- You should get an “equal opportunity” to work without discrimination

Laws like the ADA make sure people with disabilities are not treated worse because of a disability. Sometimes you might need to be treated differently than other employees to make sure you have the same chance to succeed. Asking for a reasonable accommodation is an example of this.

If you ever are treated poorly because of your disability, or if you are not given the same opportunities or benefits as other employees, this might be discrimination. If you think you are being discriminated against, you should let someone know—sometimes, your Employee Handbook might have a way for you to report discrimination.

You can also contact the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ([Home | U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(eoc.gov\)](#)) or the Colorado Civil Rights Division ([Home | Colorado Civil Rights Division](#)) to file a charge of discrimination. This is a formal complaint that will start an investigation into your situation. You can also contact us at Disability Law Colorado to see if we can help. <https://disabilitylawco.org/we-may-be-able-help-you>

## Checklists for Self-Advocacy

### ***Requesting a Reasonable Accommodation***

- Do I need an accommodation to apply for a job or perform a job?
  
- YES:
  - o Decide what will solve the disability-related issue you are having
    - Check [JAN - Job Accommodation Network \(askjan.org\)](#) for ideas!
  - o In writing—ask for the accommodation
    - Mention that you need it because of a disability
    - Explain how your accommodation request would solve the disability-related issue
    - If you aren't comfortable disclosing your disability, you don't have to
      - But remember—the employer might ask for more information if they need it to decide on your request
  
- o Talk to the employer about whether or not they can provide the accommodation
  
- NO:
  - o If you don't need an accommodation, you should do what other people typically do in the situation
  - o This also means that you do not need to disclose that you have a disability
    - However, if you want to disclose your disability, it is your choice to do so.



**DISABILITY LAW**  
COLORADO™

**Denver Office**

455 Sherman St. #130  
Denver, CO 80203-4403  
303.722.0300 TEL  
303.722.0720 FAX  
1.800.288.1376 V/TTY  
dlcmail@disabilitylawco.org

**Grand Junction Office**

322 North 8th St.  
Grand Junction, CO 81501-3406  
970.241.6371 TEL  
970.241.5324 FAX  
1.800.531.2105 V/TTY  
dlcmail.disabilitylawco.org