

# Quick Reference

## *Disability Disclosure for Returning Citizens with Disabilities*

American Job Centers (AJC) can play a crucial role in helping returning citizens with disabilities find and retain employment. This role begins when AJC staff provide returning citizens an opportunity to self-disclose a disability in order to receive the resources and reasonable accommodations they need for success.

This quick reference guide is one of three resources created to help you and other partners effectively serve returning citizens with disabilities.

### Why is this important?

[Over 600,000 people are released](#) from state and federal prisons each year and [about 4.4 million](#) in the U.S. are on probation or parole. Many of these returning citizens may not consider themselves to be “disabled” despite having a condition that qualifies as a disability. To effectively assist returning citizens, it is important that [AJC](#) staff understand the prevalence of disability among this population.

- ▶ [CDC data](#) shows that one in four adults in the U.S. live with some type of disability.
- ▶ The [Bureau of Justice Statistics](#) indicates the disability rate is significantly higher among those who have been incarcerated. For example, 32% of inmates in state and federal prisons and 40% of inmates in the US jail system are reported to have at least one disability.
- ▶ According to the [Bureau of Justice Statistics](#), over half of this group are also reported to have a co-occurring chronic condition.
- ▶ The [most common disabilities](#) reported by inmates are cognitive, which are primarily nonvisible.

To learn more about how AJC staff can assist returning citizens with disabilities, access the quick reference guides titled **Leveraging Partners to Serve Returning Citizens with Disabilities** and **Reasonable Accommodations for Returning Citizens with Disabilities**.

## How can I improve disability disclosure?

Returning citizens with disabilities may not be aware of the need to disclose a disability, or they may be reluctant to disclose a disability when seeking AJC services. This may be due to a fear of being stigmatized or concern that the information will be shared with employers without permission. The following strategies can help AJC staff encourage self-disclosure among returning citizens.

- ▶ **Provide multiple opportunities for returning citizens to disclose a disability.**
  - Include a check box on applications.
  - Invite a returning citizen to disclose at intake.
  - Include information about disclosing a disability in AJC marketing materials. Consider a flyer like [this one](#) from Sacramento's Employment & Training Agency.
- ▶ **Create an open and safe environment to disclose.**
  - Prominently display messages and images of your AJC being inclusive of people with apparent disabilities. Include these messages and images in marketing materials.
  - Share how your AJC can serve someone with a disability at orientation or during workshops.
  - Ensure privacy is maintained for customers. Let returning citizens know this information will not be shared with anyone else without explicit permission.
  - Remember: Disclosure is always voluntary and should not be insisted upon.
- ▶ **Help returning citizens understand what is considered a disability and the benefits of disclosing.**
  - Share the [ADA's definition of disability](#).
  - Explain that disclosing a disability opens the door to receiving [reasonable accommodations](#) that will help them reach their educational and employment goals.
- ▶ **Inform businesses of the many advantages of having an inclusive workforce that employs people with disabilities.** Offer guidance and assistance that will help businesses provide reasonable accommodations for returning citizens with disabilities who seek employment.

## What are some questions I can ask?

Don't just ask, "Do you have a disability?" Help an individual understand the context of why you are asking these questions and how you plan to use this information to find ways to support them.

- ▶ Do you have any health-related challenges that might affect your employment?
- ▶ Do you know of any accommodations that might help you here or in the workplace?
- ▶ Would you like to learn more about [reasonable accommodations](#) and how they can help you succeed in your goals?

## Where can I learn more?

Visit the following resources to learn more about disability disclosure for returning citizens with disabilities.

- ▶ [Do Ask Do Tell: Encouraging Employees with Disabilities to Self-Identify](#) – The Conference Board has created this comprehensive guide to assist businesses with improving self-disclosure of current and/or prospective employees.
- ▶ [Job Accommodation Network: Disability Disclosure](#) – This section of the AskJan website provides information for both job seekers and employers to consider when it comes to disclosure. Situations and solutions are also included.
- ▶ [Reasonable Accommodations Flyer: Virginia Career Works](#) – This poster, available in both English and [Spanish](#), can help start a conversation on disclosure and reasonable accommodations.
- ▶ [Serving Individuals with Disabilities: A Day in the Life of an American Job Center](#) – This self-paced *Serving Individuals with Disabilities* eLearning module provides scenarios and language for AJC staff to discuss disclosure with customers along with their rights surrounding confidentiality. The module also includes examples of ways AJCs across the country address disability disclosure.
- ▶ [WorkforceGPS](#): Access the [Disability and Employment Community](#) and the [Reentry Employment Opportunities Community](#) for news, tools, and resources for supporting returning citizens with disabilities.