

Harvard University
Invitation to Employees to Voluntarily Self-Identify for Disability Status

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The following FAQ was created to assist the University community in completing the voluntary self-identification for disability status under the government mandated protocol required by the U.S. Department of Labor. If you have any further questions about the invitation to self-identify, please contact hhr_affirmative_action@harvard.edu

Why is the University asking employees to designate their disability status? Harvard University is a federal government contractor, so is subject to laws regarding Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity. These federal laws include Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, which bans discrimination and requires Federal contractors and subcontractors to take affirmative action to ensure that all individuals have an equal opportunity for employment without regard to disability status. As part of these obligations, Harvard is required to provide reports to the government regarding the composition of its workforce, including its employees with disabilities, and to assess its affirmative action efforts.

Do I have to self-identify? The Self Identification form is voluntary, but encouraged. As a Harvard community member, your input helps strengthen and focus our diversity and inclusion efforts by helping Harvard evaluate and improve our recruiting, hiring, and retention efforts.

Where does this information go, and who has access to it? This information is confidential employee information, securely stored in the Peoplesoft system, and is accessible only to limited authorized personnel. It will not be considered or used as the basis for any employment decision(s) affecting you. The data are periodically aggregated and reported to the Director of Affirmative Action and Diversity Analytics for analysis and federal reporting purposes, which will also assist Harvard in identifying potential barriers to equal employment opportunity.

Can my disability information be used in making employment decisions?

No. This information is collected for affirmative action reporting requirements only. This information is confidential and does not become part of an employee's personnel file.

What if I don't have a disability or I wish to decline to provide this information? You may respond "no" regarding having one or more disabilities or may indicate that you do not wish to respond. As a federal contractor, Harvard must demonstrate its good faith efforts to collect this data, to assess its affirmative action efforts, but employees decide for themselves how to respond to the questions.

The option "I don't wish to answer" is provided since submission of this information is voluntary. Declining to provide it will not subject you to any adverse treatment.

We hope that employees who do not wish to share this information will still login to Peoplesoft and designate this choice, because doing so still helps the Harvard comply with reporting requirements.

What if I've already provided this information before – either as an applicant or as an employee? And what if I need to change my status?

Even if you've provided this information before either as an applicant or new hire, please review and designate your current status to ensure that Harvard has your most current information. Because disability status can change at any time, your participation at this time helps ensure that the data measured is up-to-date and accurate. You may also change your status at any time in Peoplesoft if your status changes.

How do I know if I have a disability, and how did the examples of disabilities on the federal form come about? The definition of “disability” is defined by federal employment law. You are considered to have a disability if you have a physical or mental impairment or medical condition that substantially limits a major life activity, or if you have a history or record of such an impairment or medical condition. The federal government has broadened conditions that may be considered a disability. The online form in Peoplesoft includes a broad list of physical and mental conditions that may be considered a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The wording and definitions listed on the “Voluntary Self-Identification of Disability” form were determined by the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP), and approved by the Office of Management and Budget. Harvard had no role in developing this form, or the definitions therein. Harvard is required to present the “Voluntary Self-Identification of Disability” form exactly as written.

If I self-identify as disabled, do I have to provide medical information or documentation to verify that I have a disability?

No, the self-identification form does not require employees to specify the type of disability or provide documentation of a disability. You will not be contacted to discuss your self-identification response.

What is the process for requesting a workplace accommodation(s) at Harvard if I have a disability? Staff and faculty with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits her/his ability to perform the essential functions of her/his job position may request to explore possible coverage under the ADA and associated reasonable accommodation(s). For information on requesting workplace accommodations at Harvard, contact your local Human Resources office to initiate the process of exploring possible reasonable accommodations. Additionally, University Disability Resources (UDR) serves as a central resource on disability related information. UDR is located in Smith Campus Center Suite 662. UDR can also be contacted at disabilityresources@harvard.edu, 617-495-1859, or <https://accessibility.harvard.edu/workplace-accommodations>