

Career **EMPOWERMENT** Curriculum

**Taking Control of
Your Career**

***Sharing Information and
Communicating
throughout the
Job Search and at Work***



Sharing Information and Communicating

Introduction

Welcome!

This module was created to help you communicate responsibly throughout the job search process.

Intended Outcomes

This workshop is designed so that you will leave being able to:

- Know your rights
- Find more information specific to your state laws
- Handle tricky questions in an interview
- Negotiate the job offer effectively
- Understand what information to disclose
- Resolve issues proactively at work

What other information do you want to get?

Ground Rules

The following ground rules create the environment for an effective workshop:

- Everything will be kept confidential in this group.
- You will be encouraged to participate, but not called upon in class.
- Your questions are valid and if they cannot be addressed in class, we will put you in touch with the right resources after class.

What other ground rules would you like to include?

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Know Your Rights

You Have Rights!

You might feel nervous, self-conscious, fearful, or embarrassed when asked questions throughout a job search and at work that relate to your past or your personal situation. It is helpful to be clear about your basic rights so that you can feel more comfortable and confident.

The general definition of a “right” is something you are entitled to based on the law, moral principles, etc. During your job search, you have rights designed to provide you with just and equal treatment.

Briefly review the Federal Laws listed on page 17 in the Appendix.

What are Federal Rights and why are they important?

Read what’s written about State Law on page 18 in the Appendix.

What’s important to know about State Rights?

Read about Workplace Policy on page 18 in the Appendix.

What’s important to know about your Workplace Rights?

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Handle Tricky Questions on an Interview

Questions that may seem inappropriate

Employers who have enough employees to be subject to federal law (see the Appendix) are prohibited from various forms of discrimination based on:

- Race
- Color
- National Origin
- Sex
- Religion
- Age
- Disability
- Genetic information
- Citizenship

It might be inappropriate to ask questions leading to discrimination in the above areas.

Yet, it is common to get asked inappropriate questions. Examples of specific questions that you might get asked that are inappropriate are listed below along with sample answers. You want to be polite and professional if asked these types of questions, so it's good to practice responding in advance. **Practicing helps you avoid the pitfalls!**

The basic guidelines are:

- Answer briefly, in an appropriate way without being rude.
- Answer in a way that relates to your ability to do the job.
- Smile and say you like to keep your personal life personal.

Inappropriate Question	Suggested Response
Are you a U.S. citizen?	I'm authorized to work in the U.S.
Do you have children?	That's not something I usually discuss during an interview. I would prefer to focus on getting you the job-relevant information for this wonderful opportunity with your organization.
Will your children be in daycare?	I won't have any issues meeting the work schedule.
Who is your closest relative we can contact in an emergency?	If hired, I'll provide my emergency contact's information.
How many sick days did you take?	I followed the policy at my last job and will do so also at this one.
Do you any disabilities or illnesses?	I'm fully able to do the job as described.
How far is your drive? Do you live close?	This location is convenient for me.
Have you ever been arrested?	I don't have background issues that would prevent me from performing this job.
Have you ever undergone a psychiatric evaluation?	I don't have any medical history that would keep me from fulfilling the job responsibilities.
What is your maiden name?	The name on my resume is my legal name.
Are you married or dating anyone?	That's not something I usually discuss during an interview. I would prefer to focus on getting you the job-relevant information for this wonderful opportunity with your organization.

-- Partner Practice --

Sharing Information and Communicating ***Handle Tricky Questions on an Interview***

Legal Questions You Should Be Prepared to Answer

The following are typical job search questions that you should answer directly. Take notes on your answers before you are “interviewed” by your partner.

- Are you legally authorized to work in the U.S.?
- What is your current address or phone number?
- Do you have alternate locations where you can be reached?
- Are you able to perform the duties in the job description?
- Are you a member of any professional or trade organizations in our industry?
- What was your pay rate at your previous position?
- Have you been convicted of [something related to the job]?
- Why should we hire you for this position?
- What are your long-term career goals?
- Are you available to work overtime?
- Can you travel?
- Are you available to work our required schedule?
- Are you over the age of 18?
- Is any additional information, like a different name, needed to check references?

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Handle Tricky Questions on an Interview

Explaining Your Past

You've never worked before outside the home.

IDEA: Share the relevant experience you've had in the home, community, church, or volunteering.

You have gaps in your work history.

IDEA: Answer honestly but without too much detail. Share what you did during those years that's relevant to the job qualifications. For example: I focused on raising kids during that time. I managed the schedules, transportation, finances, and other logistics for 5 years.

You are overqualified.

IDEA: Be gracious then clear about your desire for the job.

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Handle Tricky Questions on an Interview

Explaining Your Past (continued)

You've been arrested or convicted of a crime not related to the job.

IDEA: You don't have to bring up arrests or discuss irrelevant convictions. However, these might appear on your background check so you want to be up front about anything that your employer might discover. Make sure you know what is on your background check.

What situations are you most afraid to discuss on an interview?

IDEAS from your partner and from class include:

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Negotiate the Job Offer Effectively

Understanding Your Job Offer

Congratulations! You had a great interview and got the offer. Now what?

First, ask for your offer in writing and take time to review it. It is expected and acceptable to take a day to review a job offer, ask questions, negotiate changes, and finalize the opportunity. When reviewing an offer, pay attention to all these elements.

Pay

- Understand your basic pay including your hourly rate or salary.
- Know how often you'll be paid, and how you'll be paid.
- Understand the opportunities for overtime or bonus pay.

Benefits

- Understand the basic structure of the health insurance (i.e., What is the employer contribution portion? What is the employee portion?)
- Learn about any unique benefits the employer offers such as an Employee Assistance Program, tuition reimbursement, retirement benefits, etc.

Vacation, Personal, and Sick Time

- Understand the number of days and the policy for using them.
- Understand how this will change based on your years of experience.
- Communicate any known days off immediately.

Work Schedule

- Be clear on start time, stop time, and days of the week.
- Understand overtime expectations.
- Understand when or how the schedule will change or be communicated.

Safety Requirements

- Ask to review the Employee Handbook or Workplace Policies in advance.
- Ask any specific questions you need to know regarding the environment.
- Practice commuting to ensure you feel safe in the process.

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Negotiate the Job Offer Effectively

Job Offer Checklist

	YES	NO
Am I qualified to do the work?	_____	_____
Does the pay meet my requirements?	_____	_____
Does the schedule work for me?	_____	_____
Does the time off policy work for me?	_____	_____
Is the location and commute safe?	_____	_____
Does it include the benefits I need?	_____	_____

What are my concerns?

What questions do I need to have answered to make a choice?

What would make the offer better for me?

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Negotiate the Job Offer Effectively

Job Negotiation Frequently Asked Questions

Let's discuss frequently asked negotiation questions as a group ... before we practice!

1. What is negotiable in the job offer?
2. When do you negotiate the job offer?
3. How do you ask for something you want?
4. Can you negotiate multiple parts of the offer?
5. What happens if they say no?
6. Can they withdraw the offer during this process?

Overall:

- ✓ Consider the type of industry
- ✓ Consider the level of the position
- ✓ Pick what is most important to you

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Role Play Interview and Job Negotiation Scenarios

Role Play Exercise #1

You are in an interview with a talkative interviewer who keeps asking you questions about your personal life. You think it's well-intentioned and meant to create a connection, but you are feeling uncomfortable. What do you do?

Role Play Exercise #2

The job description says the shift is from 9 – 6 and you need to pick up your children from daycare by 6 p.m. When do you bring up this subject? What do you say? What do you do if the response is negative?

Role Play Exercise #3

You are offered the minimum wage of \$8.50 an hour for a job where you bring extra experience and qualifications. You would like \$9.25 an hour and will not take a job for less than \$9.00 per hour because of your budget needs.

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Understand What Information to Disclose

Disclosure Frequently Asked Questions

Let's discuss frequently asked disclosure questions as a group.

What are we worried about disclosing?

What do we legally have to disclose?

Why might we disclose something we don't have to?

When is the right time to disclose an issue?

You have essentially 5 opportunities to disclose an issue. Let's discuss the obligations, pros, and cons of disclosing issues during each window of time.

Opportunity	Obligation
The Job Application	Anything on your criminal record, such as convictions whether related to job or not.
The Interview	Anything related to your ability to do your job, such as your ability to type the desired words per minute. Anything they might find on a background check, such as convictions.
After the Job Offer	Anything that might endanger you or co-workers. Anything you need to clarify about the work schedule, pay, or benefits.
After Starting Job	Anything that relates to your ability to do that job, such as adhering to work policies.
Problem Occurs	Using your resources, resolve any issues, such as no longer being able to meet the work schedule or having a conflict with a co-worker.

You might be thinking...

What would be the **PROs** to disclosing issues?

- Being and appearing honest and trustworthy
- Putting your mind at ease
- Making sure there are no surprises when you begin working
- Being responsible and proactive

What would be the **CONs** to disclosing issues?

- Being concerned about your credibility
- Sharing too much too soon might impact their opinion
- Revealing personal information feels risky

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Resolve Issues Proactively at Work

If Problems Occur

Now that you have negotiated a great offer and started working, there are issues that might come up. In the following situations below, work in your Discussion Groups to determine the actions that demonstrate the **Four Principles of Problem Solving**:

Personal Responsibility

Are you taking an active role in solving the problem?

Proactive Communication

Are you discussing the issue as soon as you can without waiting for it to escalate?

Proper Use of Resources

Are you using your resources outside of work as your first line of support to help you understand what you can handle on your own and how to work with your employer?

Professionalism

Are you demonstrating your commitment to performing your job well? Are you dressing in an appropriate way? Are you developing good working relationships with your colleagues?

Practice In Partners

Scenario 1: You find yourself feeling teased by another co-worker in a way that reminds you of your past relationship.

Scenario 2: Your past abuser has found out where you work and you are concerned that he might be stalking you or cause a disturbance.

Scenario 3: You are now being asked to meet regularly with lawyers for issues related to your personal history and this impacts your agreed-upon work schedule.

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Applying the Learning

This module covered the following topics:

- Know your rights
- Handle tricky questions in an interview
- Negotiate the job offer effectively
- Role play interview and job offer scenarios
- Understand what information to disclose
- Resolve issues proactively at work

What was the most valuable part of this module for me?

What will I do differently as a result of this training?

What is my trickiest communication or disclosure issue and how will I handle it?

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Resources

The Allstate Foundation

www.allstate.com/foundation

The foundation provides practical, proven programs for individuals and families to help them overcome personal challenges and uncertainties - leading to better, safer lives.

Legal Momentum

www.legalmomentum.org

The Women's legal and defense fund. Information about workplace rights and gender bias at work.

National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV)

www.nnedv.org

202-543-5566

A social change organization, is dedicated to creating a social, political and economic environment in which violence against women no longer exists. Public policy information.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

Call to receive anonymous and confidential help.

NOLO: Law for All

www.nolo.com

Employment law definitions.

Occupational Handbook from the Department of Labor

www.bls.gov/oco/

For hundreds of different types of jobs, the Occupational Outlook Handbook tells you the training and education needed, earnings, expected job prospects, what workers do on the job, and working conditions.

www.salary.com

View free salary information organized by position and location.

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Appendix

You have the right to be treated fairly during a job search and to not be discriminated against because of being a survivor as well as age, race, gender, religion, marital status, disability, or illness. Employers must focus their hiring process on who can fulfill the job accountabilities the best.

After getting your new job, you also have rights around working in a safe environment and getting time off for issues related to being a survivor of domestic violence. Each state and workplace has different policies and benefits that address these issues.

The first step is being aware of basic information regarding your rights.

Employment Law Definitions

(from www.nolo.com)

Discrimination:

To treat similarly situated people differently on the basis of a protected characteristic, such as race, gender, or disability.

Retaliation

Punishment of an employee by an employer for engaging in legally protected activity such as making a complaint of harassment or participating in workplace investigations. Retaliation can include any negative job action, such as demotion, discipline, firing, salary reduction, or job or shift reassignment.

Employment At Will Doctrine

An employment arrangement in which the employee may quit at any time, and the employer may fire the employee for any reason that is not illegal. For example, an employer may fire an at-will employee for poor performance, to cut costs, or because the employer simply doesn't like the employee, but may not fire an at-will employee for discriminatory reasons, to retaliate against the employee for reporting harassment, or because the employee exercised a legal right.

Equal Employment Opportunity Council (EEOC)

The federal agency responsible for interpreting and enforcing laws that prohibit employment discrimination, such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

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Appendix

Federal Law

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. (applies to employers of 15 or more employees)

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. §§ 2000e and following) prohibits employers from discriminating against applicants and employees on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin (including membership in a Native American tribe).

Age Discrimination in Employment Act. (applies to employers of 20 or more employees)

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) can be found at 29 U.S.C. §§ 621-634. It prohibits discrimination based on age against employees who are at least 40 years old.

Americans With Disabilities Act. (applies to employees of 15 or more employees)

The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) can be found at 42 U.S.C. §§ 12101-12213. It prohibits employers from discriminating against people with disabilities in any aspect of employment, including applications, interviews, testing, hiring, job assignments, evaluations, compensation, leave, benefits, discipline, training, promotions, medical exams, layoffs, and firing.

Equal Pay Act. (applies to all employers)

The Equal Pay Act (29 U.S.C. § 206(d)) requires employers to give men and women equal pay for equal work. Employees do equal work when they perform, under similar working conditions, jobs that require equal skill, effort, and responsibility. Two jobs may be equal even if they have different job titles. For example, a hotel may not pay its janitors, who are primarily men, more than its housekeepers, who are primarily women, if they are doing the same work.

Immigration Reform and Control Act. (applies to employers of 4 or more employees)

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) can be found at 8 U.S.C. § 1324. IRCA prohibits employers from discriminating against applicants and employees on the basis of their citizenship or national origin. IRCA's prohibition on discrimination applies to all terms, conditions, and privileges of employment, including hiring, firing, compensation, benefits, job assignments, promotions, and discipline. This antidiscrimination provision applies to federal, state, and local governments and to private employers with at least four employees.

Civil Rights Act of 1866 (Section 1981). (applies to all employers)

The Civil Rights Act of 1866 (commonly referred to as Section 1981 because of its location in the United States Code) declares African Americans to be citizens, entitled to a series of rights previously reserved to white men. The law confers a number of rights, including the right to sue or be sued in court, to give evidence in a lawsuit, and to purchase property. It also confers the right to make and enforce contracts, which courts have found prohibits racial discrimination in the employment relationship.

Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act. (applies to employers of 15 or more employees)

The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA) can be found at 42 U.S.C. § 200 and following. This 2008 law prohibits employers from using an applicant's or employee's genetic information as the basis for employment decisions and requires employers to keep genetic information confidential.

Family Medical Leave Act (applies to employees of 50 or more employees)

A federal law that requires qualifying employers to provide eligible employees with 12 weeks of unpaid leave during a 12-month period to bond with a new child, care for a family member with a serious medical condition, or recover from a serious medical condition. At the end of the leave, the employer must allow the employee to return to the same or an equivalent position to that held before taking the leave.

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Appendix

State Law

State Law is different for each state and constantly changing. You can review state specific laws at either:

NOLO: Law for All

www.nolo.com

Legal Momentum: The women's legal defense fund

www.legalmomentum.org

Workplace Policy

Each workplace has their own policies that protect employees against discrimination and violence and keep them safe. Model Workplace Policies recommend including the following components. Make sure to understand the policies in your workplace so that you can leverage them effectively.

- Prohibiting discrimination
- Establishing confidentiality and privacy
- Posting safety information visibly
- Establishing Workplace Restraining Orders if applicable and available in that state
- Increasing the safety and security of the work environment
- Ensuring non-discrimination in health insurance
- Adjusting work schedules (including paid and unpaid time off) for legal assistance and other support