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WHAT EMPLOYERS CAN AND CANNOT ASK YOU
IN AN INTERVIEW



Many of you will be going to college...

But many of you may have decided that college is not necessary, and you are entering the workforce immediately after high school. Regardless of your decision, whether you are going to stock shelves or be an administrative assistant, you will have to go through an interview. There are several teens and young adults who have expressed concern about going through an interview and having to answer questions about your health.

Past conferences have had lawyers give advice that it is necessary for you to be honest about your health situation, but the fact of the matter is that employers are not allowed to discriminate against a potential candidate regardless of race, religion, age, citizenship, gender, and even health and physical disability or ability.

Nationality

Certainly, employers want to make sure their candidates can legally work for them, but they are not allowed to ask you your citizenship status. They can ask you if you are legally authorized to work in the U.S. Be aware that you will be asked to provide proof on your first day of employment, so it is best to answer the question honestly.

Additionally, employers cannot ask you whether English is your native language, however, they can ask if you speak, read, or write in any other languages in addition to English.

Religion

Religion is something that should be trodden on lightly at the office and even more so in an interview. A potential employer cannot ask your religion or denomination. The question may instead be: What days are you able to work. After all, that is all that should really matter to them. Asking what religious holidays, you observe is taboo but asking whether you can work the required schedule is completely acceptable.

A blatant question about clubs or organizations you belong to is not allowed, but employers may ask whether there are any professional groups that you belong to that are beneficial to the industry.

Other topics that are off limits are age, marital status, and gender. Potential employers may ask whether you can work overtime on short notice, are you able to travel, what are your long-term career goals, have you ever worked with a specific age group, and why are you interested in our industry? Your answer will provide them with what they need.

For instance, if you answer I really have a hard time when I work with older adults, I can't work much over 5:00 PM, and I would only like to work for a couple of years to gain some experience will let them know your young and not looking to build a career, or daycare might close at 5:00 PM.

Probably the most important issue to a person with a congenital heart defect is health and physical ability questions. A potential employer is not permitted to ask how many sick days you took with your last employer or discriminate against you because of your short stature. An employer may not ask how much you weigh. It is not pertinent to the job, but an employer needs to have an employee that can handle the job. They may ask if you are able to perform all the job duties required. If so, turn the question around and ask them what a typical day is like. They are perfectly within their right to ask if you can reach items on shelves that are normally 6'00" high. Can you lift packages that weigh as much as 50 pounds, repeatedly? An employer may ask if you had a lot of absenteeism? From there they may draw conclusions.

The bottom line is that you want to be comfortable in your new job. You want to be a good employee. You need to judge, based on your day to day stamina and your overall health whether you can do a good job. A certain level of honesty may be necessary. Don't tell an employer you can lift 50 pounds when you have never had to lift that much. The last thing you want is to get the job and not be able to perform.

Above all, talk your career aspirations over with your family and with your cardiologist. It is a bitter pill to swallow to aspire to be a baseball player when you can't run 90 feet between bases or never hit a ball out of the infield. There is no sense in wanting to be a UPS worker if you can't lift heavy items or be on your feet all day.

If it is your dream to be involved in baseball maybe think about going to college for sports management. If your lifelong dream is to work for UPS, go to school for logistics or take some night courses if you cannot afford, or physically handle full-time schooling and be a logistics specialist for UPS. Bottom line: you can be involved in the things you love, it may just be in a different capacity.