



**We are**  
shaping an inclusive workforce.



*The Commonwealth: Working to be a Model Employer*

# FAQs

## Frequently Asked Questions for Self Identification of a Disability

Here are some commonly asked questions regarding self-identification of a disability for employment within the Executive Branch of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

### How do you define disability for the purpose of self-identification?

A disability means a physical or mental impairment, which substantially limits one or more major life activities. Major life activities include but is not limited to functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working.

### What is self-identification?

Self-identification is a voluntary and confidential reporting of one's disability status to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator within one's department for the purpose of identifying and tracking diversity within the workplace. To self-identify, employees complete a self-identification form indicating that they have a disability, providing limited additional information and signing it. If you self-identify by completing this form, no further disclosure of your disability to anyone else is needed.

### What is the difference between self-identification and self-disclosure?

Self-identification and self disclosure are separate and distinct. Self-identification is the process of completing and submitting the self-identification form through a confidential process to an ADA coordinator. Self-disclosure is the written or verbal, voluntary disclosure of a disability by an employee to others in the workplace. Self-disclosure may occur formally with a manager or ADA Coordinator in order to request an accommodation or informally, at the desire of the employee. The employee may voluntarily share the fact that he or she has a disability for many reasons including:

- To receive an accommodation to improve the employee's ability to remain productive or increase productivity in his or her work environment with regard to the essential function of their job;
- To receive assistance in an emergency or as part of emergency preparedness planning;
- To willingly communicate with others about circumstances (such as prolonged absence or changes in work space) that result from the person's disability;

• Because of a desire to express an aspect of his or her personal experience.

The employee is never required to disclose, except when seeking accommodations. In all cases, the employee who self-discloses does not need to self-identify.

### If I have a disability, am I required to self-identify?

No, self-identification is always voluntary. Self-identification is for affirmative action purposes.

Self-identification is also useful to the Commonwealth in developing a better understanding of the composition of the workforce. The Commonwealth, as an employer, is interested in ensuring that our workforce is reflective of the population of the state and obtaining information through voluntary self-identification will help further that goal.

### What happens with this information?

The information you provide on the self-identification form is confidential and will be maintained by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator for the employee's agency. This information is maintained separately from the employee's personnel file.

### Once I self-identify, will I be asked to submit additional information?

As a general rule, agencies may not ask employees to verify their disability. Under special and unique circumstances, an employee may be asked to complete a confidential verification form. Verification of a disability by a competent medical authority or designated agency will only be required when both of the following criteria are present:

- A. The individual's status as a person with a disability is potentially relevant, as a beneficial factor, in connection with a pending employment decision, such as being hired or promoted, or being spared a lay-off; and
- B. The individual's status as a person with a disability is not obvious.

Your ADA coordinator will tell you if a verification of disability form is required. In the rare case that you need to submit a confidential verification of disability form, the ADA Coordinator

of your agency will review it and send you a confirmation of disability status.

### Will my manager see the self-identification form?

No. Your supervisor or manager will not have access to the self-identification form. If your manager is also the ADA coordinator for your agency, you can elect to self-identify with your Secretariat ADA Coordinator or directly with the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity at the Human Resources Division.

### How will this information be kept confidential?

The ADA coordinator in your agency will be the only person who has access to the information on your self-identification form. The ADA coordinator will keep it in a locked file cabinet separate from personnel files. The ADA coordinator may need to share the information with the agency head if disability verification is required. (See explanation of verification above.)

### Who will have access to this information?

The ADA coordinator will collect information from the self-identification form and may need to share the information with the agency head if disability verification is required. Your manager will not have access to this information. There may be a need to provide limited information to the manager based on a need to know. (In the event that your manager is the agency head, you can work with your ADA coordinator to ensure confidentiality.)

### If I change my mind later, can I change my status?

Yes. You can contact your ADA coordinator to change your identification so you are no longer self-identified as a person with a disability.

### When can I self-identify?

One can self-identify at any time, beginning when you apply for a job. In addition, there are certain specific opportunities when people are periodically invited to self-identify. The ADA coordinator for your agency will provide information to all employees of the agency to ask them if they would like to self-identify. In addition to the designated times, you can also contact your ADA coordinator at any time and ask to complete the form.

### What is the difference between completing a self-identification form and requesting a reasonable accommodation?

Self-identification is for affirmative action purposes and does not relate to reasonable accommodations provided under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Under the ADA, an individual with a disability can request a reasonable accommodation to ensure they have an equal employment opportunity. To receive an accommodation, an employee needs to self-disclose the fact that they have a disability, unless the disability is obvious. Again, this process is different than self-identifying. An accommodation can be provided

- During the job application process to enable a qualified applicant with a disability to be considered for the position
- In the work environment, to enable a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of that position; or
- To enable an employee with a disability to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment in the same way as employees without disabilities.

An employee or applicant does not need to complete the self-identification form to be eligible for a reasonable accommodation.

### Who can help me if I need an accommodation to better perform my job?

The ADA coordinator for your agency can assist you in identifying and requesting a reasonable accommodation.

### If I have already completed the self-identification form, do I need to complete it again?

No, once you have completed a self-identification form it remains on file until you leave employment with the Commonwealth or request to change your self-identification status.

### How can I find out who the ADA coordinator is for my agency?

If you need to find the ADA coordinator for your agency, you may access [WWW.Mass.Gov/MOD](http://WWW.Mass.Gov/MOD) for a complete list.


# Completing the form

This document provides information on the affirmative action data record, also referred to as the self-identification form, and offers guidance to assist you in completing it.

As part of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' commitment to inclusiveness and workplace diversity, the Human Resource Division tracks its efforts to hire and retain people with disabilities. When you complete the affirmative action data record, you help us better understand our workforce and whether we have been successful in our efforts to achieve an inclusive workplace.

The affirmative action data record contains important background information at the top of the form. Match the numbers below to the numbers on the affirmative action data form to learn more information about how completing the form can improve workplace diversity:

- 1 All employees should receive the same consideration when applying for a job or promotion with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, regardless of disability status.
  - 2 The Human Resource Division and hiring managers in departments across the Executive Branch of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have been asked to take deliberate action to hire and promote people with disabilities and members of other protected groups (veterans, under-represented minority groups, and women, for example) who qualify for positions.
  - 3 By completing this form, you are providing your department's ADA coordinator with information that lets them know whether they are succeeding in recruiting and employing people with disabilities for available positions.
  - 4 Employees complete the affirmative action data record when they choose to report whether they have a disability. Employees complete this form confidentially. The employee delivers the form directly to the appropriate Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Coordinator who uses it for tracking purposes. The data from the form does not go into the employee's personnel file. The ADA Coordinator compiles this information and only reports the number, not the names, of employees who have self-identified through this process.
- If you choose to complete the Affirmative Action Data Record, follow the steps below:
- 5 Fill in your name, using your first name, middle initial, and last name in the box provided.
  - 6 Fill in your home address in the box provided.
  - 7 Fill in a telephone number (work, home, or cell) where it is easiest to reach you.

 **THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION  
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION DATA RECORD  
(SELF-IDENTIFICATION FORM)**

**THIS IS A CONFIDENTIAL INSERT  
APPLICANTS ARE ENCOURAGED BUT NOT REQUIRED TO COMPLETE**

1 The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is committed in spirit as well as in action, to abide by all laws dealing with equal employment opportunity. It is our policy to guarantee equal employment opportunities for all qualified persons without regard to their disability which can be reasonably accommodated.

2 Further, the Commonwealth will act in good faith, to affirmatively recruit and consider for promotion individuals in protected categories. Disability is not a factor in employment, promotion, transfer, compensation, lay-off, disciplining and termination.

3 In order to effectively monitor the success of our recruitment and employment efforts, it is requested that you provide the following information. *Please submit your form directly to [name and address of agency ADA coordinator].*

The completion of this Data Record is optional. If you choose to volunteer the requested information please note that all Affirmative Action Data Records are kept in a confidential file and are not a part of your application for employment or your personnel file. Your cooperation is voluntary. Inclusion or exclusion of your affirmative action data will not jeopardize or adversely affect any employment decision.

4

(PLEASE PRINT)

5 Name (First) (Middle) (Last)

6 Address (Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

7 Telephone Number (a)

8 Check if the following is applicable:

☐ Person with a disability\*

A disability means a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities; a record of such impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment. ("Major Life Activities" includes but is not limited to functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working. Information on disability is maintained by the ADA Coordinator and is not shared with Human Resources.)

9 \* If you wish to obtain Affirmative Action Status as a Person with a Disability after you have been employed by this agency you may need to submit self-identification and verification of such with the ADA Coordinator if your disability is not obvious. Appropriate forms are available at this agency's Diversity Office.

10 Applicant Signature

Date

11

Revised 4/2/09

*The Commonwealth: Working to be a Model Employer*

- 8 Mark an "X" or a • in the box if you have a disability as described in the paragraph.
- 9 Contact your ADA Coordinator if you are already working for an agency and want to apply for Affirmative Action Status. If you do not know who your ADA coordinator is, visit [www.mass.gov/MOD](http://www.mass.gov/MOD). Recognized members of minority groups (Blacks, Hispanics, Asians or Pacific Islanders, American Indians or Alaskan Natives), females, individuals with disabilities, and Vietnam Era Veterans, are automatically assigned protected class status by law. However, to apply for affirmative action status as a Person with Disabilities an individual must self-identify and complete a self-identification or certification process.
- 10 Sign your name on the line for applicant signature.
- 11 Enter the date you completed the form on the date line.



**THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION  
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION DATA RECORD  
(SELF-IDENTIFICATION FORM)**

**THIS IS A CONFIDENTIAL INSERT**  
**APPLICANTS ARE ENCOURAGED BUT NOT REQUIRED TO COMPLETE**

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is committed in spirit as well as in action, to abide by all laws dealing with equal employment opportunity. It is our policy to guarantee equal employment opportunities for all qualified persons without regard to their disability which can be reasonably accommodated.

Further, the Commonwealth will act in good faith, to affirmatively recruit and consider for promotion individuals in protected categories. Disability is not a factor in employment, promotion, transfer, compensation, lay-off, disciplining and termination.

In order to effectively monitor the success of our recruitment and employment efforts, it is requested that you provide the following information. *Please submit your form directly to [name and address if agency ADA coordinator].*

**The completion of this Data Record is optional. If you choose to volunteer the requested information please note that all Affirmative Action Data Records are kept in a confidential file and are not a part of your application for employment or your personnel file. Your cooperation is voluntary. Inclusion or exclusion of any affirmative action data will not jeopardize or adversely affect any employment decision.**

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

<u>Name</u> <u>(First)</u> <u>(Middle)</u> <u>(Last)</u>				
<u>Address</u> <u>(Street)</u> <u>(City)</u> <u>(State)</u> <u>(Zip)</u>				
<u>Telephone Number (s)</u>				

Check if the following is applicable:

☐ Person with a disability\*

A disability means a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities; a record of such impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment. ("Major Life Activities" includes but is not limited to functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working. Information on disability is maintained by the ADA Coordinator and is not shared with Human Resources.)

\* If you wish to obtain Affirmative Action Status as a Person with a Disability after you have been employed by this agency you may need to submit self-identification and verification of such with the ADA Coordinator if your disability is not obvious. Appropriate forms are available at this agency's Diversity Office.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date