

RESOURCES

Epilepsy Foundation of Virginia

Charlottesville	434-924-8669
Richmond	434-924-8669
Tidewater	757-904-3209

www.epilepsyva.com

Epilepsy Foundation 800-332-1000

Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitation Services

Virginia Department for Aging
and Rehabilitation Services 804-662-7000
800-552-5019

The Disability Law Center of Virginia

The Disability Law center of Virginia
800-552-3962

Virginia Board of People with Disabilities

Virginia Board for People with Disabilities
804-786-0016
800-846-4464

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Equal Employment Opportunity
Commission 800-669-4000

Epilepsy and Employment: What You Should Know

FACTS ABOUT EPILEPSY

- According to conservative estimates 84,800 people in Virginia have epilepsy.
- Epilepsy is not a disease. It is a symptom of a disorder of the brain.
- Epilepsy can affect anyone, anytime.
- The psychological and social consequences of epilepsy--rejection by family or friends, inability to get or keep a job, stress, anger, and frustration, are often more difficult problems than the seizures themselves.
- Over half the people with epilepsy are unemployed or underemployed.
- Many existing job clubs and other ADA initiatives in Virginia concentrate on people with physical or mental disabilities.
- Despite extensive scientific evidence to the contrary, employers still equate epilepsy with absenteeism and high job-related injury rates.
- Studies by the Department of Labor show that people with epilepsy have better job safety records than people without epilepsy.
- The fact that a person has epilepsy may provide a strong motivation to prove that he or she is fully able to work well and safely.

- Only 25% of working people with disabilities and 40% of those who want to work say they need special equipment or technology.

- 49% of working people with disabilities use a computer at work.

- Employment issues are responsible for 85% of the cost of epilepsy on society. The unemployment rate for people with epilepsy has been reported to be between 25% and 69%. The high school graduation rate has been reported at 64%, compared with an overall national average of 82%.

- Many employers are reluctant to hire a person they know has epilepsy, even if the seizures are controlled by medication. If the employee has a seizure while at work, they could harm themselves (but rarely others, contrary to popular belief) depending on the nature of the work. Employers are often unwilling to bear any financial costs that may come from employing a person with epilepsy, i.e. insurance costs, paid sick leave etc. Many people whose seizures are successfully controlled by a medication experience a variety of side effects, most notably drowsiness, which may affect job performance. Many laws prohibit or restrict people with epilepsy from performing certain duties, most notably driving or operating dangerous machinery, thereby lowering the pool of jobs available to people with epilepsy. People with epilepsy are also prohibited from joining the armed forces, though they may work in certain civilian military positions.

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INTRODUCTION

Looking for work can be a long and difficult process. People with epilepsy face a particular challenge because of the many myths, misconceptions, and fears associated with their condition.

This booklet will guide people with epilepsy through the process of defining a career goal and finding a job that meets that goal. The employment needs, rights, and obligations of and owed to the person with a disability are emphasized.

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THE EPILEPSY FOUNDATION OF VIRGINIA

The Epilepsy Foundation of Virginia (EFVA) began in 1978 as the Virginia affiliate of the Epilepsy Foundation of America. Over the years, EFVA has developed a wide range of programs and services to meet the varied needs of people with epilepsy, their families, friends, co-workers, and employers.

The EFVA Board of Directors represents people from throughout Virginia who strongly support the goals of EFVA. The EFVA Professional Advisory Board provides support for medical and legal issues.

The EFVA is closely aligned with the University of Medical Centers in Charlottesville, Norfolk, and Richmond through staff advisors, the Board of Directors, and the Professional Advisory Board. EFVA is closely associated with the University of Virginia's Comprehensive Epilepsy Program, one of the world's leading epilepsy medical centers.

The EFVA is an independently incorporated not for profit 501(c)(3) organization. It is affiliated with the national epilepsy foundation. Most of its funds come from individual and corporate donations and grants for special projects. The remaining income comes from Online Giving Campaigns and special events.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Information and Referral Services

EFVA staff is ready to address and answer any questions about epilepsy. Typical questions range from employment opportunities to driving privileges.

Public Information and Education

EFVA helps dispel the myths associated with epilepsy through its webpage, Facebook, educational events, distribution of literature and training sessions.

Professional Education

EFVA provides in-service training to professionals such as law enforcement officers, fire fighters, rescue personnel and employers. The "Take Another Look" program for police officers has been a huge success.

Speaker's Bureau

Qualified people are available to speak on a variety of topics related to epilepsy through the EFVA Project

EPED

EFVA educates teachers, students, and school personnel on epilepsy to improve the school environment for children with epilepsy through a coordinated program of training sessions, manuals, videos, and literature. The Kids on the Block puppet show teaches younger children about epilepsy. The program has been offered to 250 schools in Southwest Virginia and the Richmond, Charlottesville, and Tidewater areas.

Medication Assistance Program

Limited funds are available for the emergency one-time purchase of anti-convulsant medications for individuals in a financial crisis.

Paint nights

EFVA holds paint nights on Tuesdays from 6-7 pm

Network and Peer Counseling

EFVA helps individuals set up autonomous epilepsy support groups and telephone networks throughout Virginia.

<http://www.epilexyva.com>

The EFVA webpage has on-line books and pamphlets, contacts, lists of events related to epilepsy and the EFVA. Also included are the names and addresses of our Volunteer Network members and a growing list of doctors. Our e-mail address is srb3m@virginia.edu

DISABILITY AND THE LAW

What follows is general information and not meant to be used as legal advice.

You are being discriminated against if you are treated differently from any other person solely because you have a disability.

Discrimination in employment is prohibited by comprehensive state and federal laws. These laws specifically prohibit a wide range of discrimination against people with disabilities.

In Virginia, people with disabilities are protected by the Virginians with Disabilities Act. This act strengthens and makes specific the provisions of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act.

The U.S. Rehabilitation Act of 1973 forbids discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities by any entity, activity, or program that receives federal funds. This includes schools, corporations, governments, and private employers providing goods or services to the federal government.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1992 is more comprehensive and protects individuals with disabilities from discrimination by all employers with fifteen or more employees.

What Employers are covered by the ADA?

Job discrimination against people with disabilities is illegal if it is practiced by:

- Private employers, state and local governments, employment agencies, labor organizations, and labor management committees.

The ADA is enforced by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) and the U.S. Department of Justice. Enforcement is coordinated by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Are You Protected by the ADA?

If you are qualified to do the work, the ADA can protect you from discrimination because of a disability. Under the ADA, you have a disability if you have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. The ADA also protects you if you have a history of such a disability, or if an employer thinks that you have such a disability, even if you do not.

To be protected by the ADA, you must have, have a record of, or be regarded as having a substantial impairment. That is, a disability which restricts a major life activity such as hearing, speaking, walking, breathing, performing manual tasks, caring for yourself, learning, or working.

It is important to remember that you must be qualified to carry out the duties of the job, with or without a reasonable accommodation, in order to be protected by the ADA. This means that, first, you must meet the employer's qualifications for the job, and, second, you must be able to perform the essential functions of the job with or without reasonable accommodations. Essential functions are the basic job duties you must perform on your own or with the help of reasonable accommodation. An employer cannot refuse to hire you because a disability prevents you from doing things that are not essential to the job.

What is Reasonable Accommodation?

Reasonable accommodation may include:

providing or modifying equipment or devices; job restructuring; part time or modified work schedules; reassignment to a vacant position; adjusting or modifying examinations, materials, or policies; providing readers or interpreters; and, making the workplace accessible to and usable by people with disabilities.

An employer must provide reasonable accommodation to a qualified applicant or employee with a disability unless it would demand an unreasonable expense or difficulty.

The IRS allows up to \$15,000 a year to be deducted for "qualified architectural and transportation barrier removal expenses." Expenditures to make a facility or public transportation vehicle owned or leased in connection with a business more accessible to, and usable by, individuals who are handicapped are eligible for the deduction.

Accommodations and Adjustments

Many employers feared that accommodating employees with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act would be expensive. Initial reports indicate that many companies have adjusted more easily than they expected. A study at Sears, Roebuck, and Co., reported that accommodating the average worker with a disability cost only \$121 and that 69 percent of the accommodations cost nothing at all.

EFVA can arrange to have a training session at the work place, sometimes these educational programs for co-workers are enough to make everyone comfortable with epilepsy.

The stories below show how some people deal with their epilepsy at work.

A travel agent with epilepsy did not have a driver's license. Instead, she asked a friend at work to pick her up and car pool to work. She paid for her share of the gas.

A lawyer counts to ten if he is becoming stressed. He says this prevents seizures.

A professor tended to have her seizures at night. Her solution was to get up as late as possible. Many persons with night time seizures may benefit from a change in shift, or a change in working hours. Instead of starting work at 9:00, perhaps the person could start at 10:00 and stay an hour later.

A shoe salesman who could tell when he was about to have a seizure would calmly explain what was about to happen to his customers.

A construction worker who had seizures at night stopped listening to heavy metal rock music at night. He says this has reduced the number of his seizures.

Memory Accommodations

Memory loss can be a problem after a seizure. The story below illustrates the problem and one solution.

A box packer would have absence seizures while packing boxes and forget what she was doing. She made a checklist of each step of her job. Now when she has a seizure, she simply looks at the checklist to see what steps she has completed.

Other memory boosters include:

Organizing the workplace so it can cue the person to where he or she is in a task.

Using a journal or diary to organize and date things.

Keeping an information card listing critical information.

Keeping cue cards with information you need but may not always remember.

Tape recording important classes or meetings.

Carrying an appointment book or pocket diary or updating your cell phone calendar to remind you when to take medicine or keep an appointment.

Car finders/ cellphones to help find your car in a parking lot.

Using your telephone answering machine to tape reminders.

Using a key finder.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ADA

What Employment Practices Are Covered?

The ADA bans discrimination in all employment practices by employers with more than fifteen employees. It is illegal for an employer to retaliate against you for claiming your rights under the ADA. The ADA also protects you from discrimination because of any association with an individual with a disability.

What Can An Employer Ask About a Disability?

A potential employer cannot ask about the nature or severity of a disability. He or she cannot even ask if you have a disability. An employer can ask if you can carry out the duties of the job with or without reasonable accommodation. A potential employer can also ask you to show how you will carry out the duties of the job.

A potential employer cannot require a medical examination before you are offered a job.

After the offer is made, you may be required to have a physical examination only if all new entering employees for that job have to have a physical. You cannot be rejected because of the results of the physical unless the reasons for the rejection are specifically related to the job or are necessary for the conduct of the employer's business. If you can do the essential work of the job, you cannot be turned down because of a disability.

Once you have the job, the employer cannot ask you to have a physical or ask questions about your disability unless they are related to your job and necessary for the conduct of the business. Your employer can conduct voluntary medical examinations as part of employee health programs, and can provide medical information to state agencies as required by worker's compensation laws.

The results of all medical examinations must be kept confidential and kept in separate medical files.

What Do I Do if I Think I'm Being Discriminated Against?

Contact the EEOC, the Epilepsy Foundation of Virginia, the Department of Rehabilitative Services, or Department for Rights of Virginians with Disabilities. A charge must usually be filed within 180 days of the alleged discrimination. To protect your rights, contact the EEOC promptly.

Complaints may be filed by contacting any EEOC office. If you have been discriminated against, you may be eligible for being hired, promoted, reinstatement, back pay, reasonable accommodation, or reassignment. Many disputes result from misunderstandings and can be settled quickly by informal negotiations and mediation. Accordingly, the EEOC encourages all methods to resolve the problem, providing that the individual is not deprived of his or her rights.

Is an employer required to provide reasonable accommodation when I apply for a job?

Yes, in a firm with more than fifteen employees. Applicants and employees are entitled to reasonable accommodations.

Should I tell my employer I have a disability?

If you think you will need reasonable accommodation to apply for, or do the job, you should tell the employer. Employers do not need to accommodate a disability they are unaware of. Generally, it is the responsibility of the employee, or potential employee, to tell the employer that an accommodation is required.

Do I have to pay for reasonable accommodation?

No. The employer must provide the accommodation unless it would cause an undue hardship. If the cost of the accommodation would be an undue hardship, the employee must be given the choice of providing the accommodation or paying for the part of the cost that causes the undue hardship.

Can an employer lower my salary or pay me less than other employees doing the same job because I need a reasonable accommodation?

No.

Does an employer have to provide accessibility to non-work areas (cafeterias, lounges, etc.) or employer-provided transportation to people with disabilities?

Yes, unless this or similar access would be an undue hardship.

If there are several qualified candidates, is the employer required to hire the candidate with a disability?

No. The employer is under no obligation to give preference to the person with a disability.

Can an employer refuse to hire me because he or she thinks it would be dangerous for me to work with certain machinery necessary to perform the essential functions of the job?

Yes, but only if there is a real danger. You cannot be discriminated against because of a vague fear of risk. The employer must also consider whether a risk can be eliminated or significantly reduced through a reasonable accommodation.

Can an employer offer health insurance that excludes coverage for preexisting conditions?

Yes. This may change when and if there is a reform of the health care system. Virginia law prohibits an insurer from denying or limiting coverage or charging a higher rate solely because of

an individual's disability. It is legal if the exclusion, limitation, or higher cost is based on actuarial principles or experience. Call the Epilepsy Foundation of Virginia for insurance information and referrals.

If the health insurance does not cover all my medical expenses, does the employer have to provide additional coverage for me?

No. The employer is only required to provide equal access to insurance coverage offered to other employees.

I think I was discriminated against because my husband is disabled. Is this legal?

No.

What about drug tests?

People using illegal drugs may be denied employment or fired. The ADA does not prevent tests for illegal drugs applied as a part of a stated company policy.

Epilepsy medication can make you test positive for illegal drugs. Tell the tester what medications you are taking and give him or her the name of your doctor. Ask for a confirmatory test. If you know that the company performs random drug tests, you may want to disclose your epilepsy before the testing.

DEPARTMENT FOR RIGHTS OF VIRGINIANS WITH DISABILITIES

The DRVD is the state protection and advocacy agency for people with disabilities.

The DRVD can help if you or your child face discrimination because of a disability or illness, or are illegally denied a service by an agency or program, or are physically or psychologically harmed (abused) and/or are not given proper care (neglected).

If you or your child have a disability, the DRVD can explain your rights and responsibilities, relevant laws and regulations, and explain any benefits available to you. DRVD will investigate abuse and neglect, rights violations, and denial of services and will provide representation if you have been denied services or if the services have been inappropriate.

What to do

Call DRVD if you or your child have been denied opportunities because of a disability in:

Employment or promotion	Housing
Transportation	Education or training; or, the use of public places.

EPILEPSY IN THE WORKPLACE

Having a job brings financial independence, self-esteem, and social and recreational opportunities. People with epilepsy work in almost every kind of job. Frequent seizures can make it hard to keep a job, but most people with seizure disorders can and do work. Though there may be some restrictions, it is a mistake to think that epilepsy by itself can limit opportunities to live a productive and rewarding life. With proper education and training, people with epilepsy can be as successful as anyone else in the workplace.

Remember that work is stressful for everyone and that stress can be a factor in the frequency of a person's seizures. People with epilepsy (and everyone else) should try to avoid overly stressful work environments.

What Limits Does Epilepsy Place on Career Planning?

People with epilepsy can work in almost any occupation. Some restrictions that currently apply are being modified as medications improve the control of seizures. While people with epilepsy are excluded from few occupations, it is a good idea to find out if there are specific restrictions on the work you want to do.

Safety concerns may limit your opportunities. In areas such as public transportation, trades involving dangerous machinery, police, military, or firefighting, safety is a primary concern. Limitations in these areas often depend upon how well the seizures are controlled and the person's individual qualifications.

Can an Employer Refuse to Hire Me Because I Have Epilepsy?

No. Unless there is a specific and valid reason, you cannot be discriminated against because of epilepsy. Be honest with yourself. Will your seizures interfere with your ability to safely do the job? Be ready to talk about job safety and what you would do in case of a seizure. If you are turned down because of safety concerns, you must decide whether or not you will challenge that decision.

If you do not get the job, it may not be because of your epilepsy. Remember that most people apply for many jobs before they are finally hired. You do have a right to know why you were not given the job, and asking can help you in your next job interview.

If you think that you were discriminated against, contact the EFVA, VADARS, DRVD, or the EEOC, for advice. The EFVA can recommend a counselor or refer you to another agency for follow-up. You may decide to file a complaint with the EEOC or the Department for Rights of Virginians with Disabilities. After the complaint has been filed, it will be investigated. If you have been discriminated against, you will get help in negotiating with the employer and advice on what to do if the negotiations fail. This can be a slow process. It is a good idea to get advice from the EFVA if you are thinking about filing a complaint.

Remember that employees can be fired for just cause. Excessive absences, poor job performance, and insubordination, are just a few valid reasons for termination.

What Should I Say About Epilepsy When I Apply for a Job?

It can be difficult to decide what and when to tell a potential employer. There are many factors to consider. The nature and extent of disclosure will probably depend upon your particular circumstances. Remember, there are laws governing what an employer can ask about disabilities

in a job interview. The laws are explained in another section of this publication. They are also available from the EFVA

It can be bad idea to conceal a disability from a potential employer. Deliberately lying on a job application is usually grounds for dismissal. The dishonest application also gives the potential employer a valid reason for not hiring the applicant. This can keep a qualified person with a disability from getting a job even if the disability would not have interfered with the work.

Read the job application carefully. Study each question relating to disabilities to decide what response would be complete and accurate. Usually all you have to do is accurately and honestly answer the questions asked. If your epilepsy will not interfere with the job, your answer is simple.

If you decide to talk about your epilepsy during the job interview think carefully about questions that might come up and how you will answer them. Remember that the employer's concern is job performance and safety. Show the employer that you are a normal, capable person. Focus first on your qualifications for the job. Establish the fact that you can do the work, and do it well.

Then talk about epilepsy. Stress the fact that Department of Labor studies have shown that workers with epilepsy have better than average safety records. Explain how you cope with the possibility of having a seizure. Facts are the best way to overcome a potential employer's fear. Explain the facts about your seizures, whether they come at certain times of day, how long they last, how long it takes to recover from them, and whether or not you have any warning. Explain how you would prevent them from interfering with your work. Also say that there are thousands of people with epilepsy work in almost every type of job. In fact, their epilepsy may give them a very high motivation to do the job well to prove their ability.

Again, employers are primarily concerned with your ability to do the job. Their interest in your epilepsy will be related to the safe performance of your job. References can swing the balance in your favor. References should come from people who know you, who can vouch for your skills, and who can explain the way you cope with your epilepsy. References can come from former employers, teachers, coaches, local business people, or a clergyman. The interviewer may ask if he or she can contact your doctor. Be prepared for this. Tell your doctor what kind of job you are looking for and how your epilepsy may affect your performance. If the doctor thinks you will have no problems, he or she can write a letter of reference, and answer any questions that a prospective employer may have.

The Epilepsy Foundation of Virginia has a number of in-service programs for employers and will work with any employer who asks for information or assistance.

What Should I Tell My Co-workers?

It all depends upon the type of work you do, how often you have seizures, and how comfortable you are talking about epilepsy. Have your neurologist fill out an epilepsy action plan. Talk to your supervisor or a friend at work to work out a plan you are both comfortable with. Go over what may happen if you have a seizure. Focus on situations that might be dangerous and try to resolve them. Make sure that your supervisor and co-workers know what type of seizure you might have and what, if anything, they should do to ensure your safety.

If you work closely with other people, you are much better off if they know what to do if you have a seizure. The most reassuring thing most people find out about epilepsy is that they really do not have to do very much. You can also keep yourself from getting hurt by people poking things in your mouth.

If you are likely to have a seizure during working hours, your co-workers should know what is happening, and what they should do. They will be less frightened and more likely to respond correctly. They will know what to expect and what to do. You will also have reduced your own fears about having a seizure at work. This cannot help but make you more comfortable and more relaxed at work.

If you do have a seizure at work, talk about it. Ask what happened during the seizure. Ask what people saw and how they responded. Ask if they have any questions or concerns. If someone helped you during the seizure, thank them. If the help was unnecessary or inappropriate, thank them anyway. Then explain exactly what they should do if you have another seizure. Everyone, including you, will be more comfortable after you have explained what happened and relieved the concerns of your co-workers. [More information](#)

Adapted from "Epilepsy in the Workplace," by Judy L. Antonello, M.S.W. and Doug G. Heck, M.S.W. in *Living Well With Epilepsy*, by Robert J. Gummit, M.D., Demos Publications, Inc.

EPILEPSY DISCLOSURE CHART

Time of Disclosure	Advantages	Disadvantages	Issues
On the job application.	Honesty/peace of mind. Let the employer decide if epilepsy is an issue.	Potential discrimination. You may be rejected before you have a chance to present your qualifications.	You may have a harder time finding work, but usually will have no epilepsy related problems when you do.
During the interview	Honesty/peace of mind. Opportunity to respond briefly, positively and in person to questions. Discrimination is less likely face to face.	Puts responsibility on you to handle the issue in a clear, non-threatening way. Too much emphasis on the issue indicates a possible problem. You may not be judged on your abilities.	How comfortable are you talking about your condition? Are you too preoccupied with epilepsy?
When the job is offered.	Honesty/peace of mind. If disclosure changes the hiring decision, you may have legal recourse.	Employer may feel you should have told him/her before the hiring decision was made. This may lead to distrust.	You need to evaluate your condition honestly, and show clearly that epilepsy will not interfere with your performance or your safety.

After you start.	Opportunity to prove yourself on the job. Allows you to respond to questions about epilepsy from co-workers. If disclosure affects your job status, you may have legal protection.	Nervousness about having a seizure at work. Possible accusation of lying on the job application. Possibility of receiving inappropriate first aid from co-workers.	The longer you put off disclosure, the harder it will be.
After a seizure on the job.	Opportunity to prove that you can do the job before disclosure. If the seizure affects your job status, but not your ability to do the job safely, you may have legal protection.	Possible accusation of falsifying job application. Possibility that co-workers will not know how to react to your seizure. Can perpetuate misunderstandings about epilepsy.	Relationships with coworkers may be hurt if they feel you have been keeping a secret.
Never	Employer cannot react to your epilepsy unless you have a seizure.	If epilepsy is discovered, you may be fired. You may be hurt by inappropriate first aid.	If you have not had a seizure in a long time (over two years) this issue becomes less critical.

GETTING READY TO LOOK FOR WORK

The only thing harder than looking for a job is getting ready to look for a job. Some people think the whole process is challenging and fun. Most do not. The hardest part is deciding what you want, defining your goal.

What are your skills? What do you want? What is important to you? Do you want to work inside or outside? With people or with things? In a store or in an office? Do you want security or challenge? A hard job or an easy one?

These are all things you have to think about. Then you have to decide what will get you to that goal. After that comes getting the qualifications for the job, finding out if the jobs are available, if they are already filled, who is hiring, getting an interview, and finally beating the other applicants. Then, and only then, do you go to work.

The process is not so bad if you break it into painless stages and work through them with the help and support of friends and counselors.

Working at Home

Newspapers and magazines are full of "Earn Money at Home" advertisements. The ads promise huge rewards for everything from raising chinchillas to stuffing envelopes.

Remember the old saying, "If it sounds too good to be true it probably is." If you answer an ad promising huge profits, no experience necessary, spare time work at home, you can bet on losing money.

Some schemes are clever. In response to an ad to make money at home, you are likely to get, for \$5.00 or \$10.00, advice to put an ad in the paper telling people that, for \$5.00 or \$10.00 you will tell them how to make money at home.

If you contact one of these advertisers read the information carefully. Before you decide to make your fortune raising rabbits or chinchillas, try to remember the last time you bought a rabbit or saw a chinchilla coat. Beware of these schemes.

Fraudulent homework promoters will:

Never offer regular salaried employment.

Promise huge profits for part time work.

Ask for money for instructions or merchandise before telling you how the plan works.

Say that no experience is necessary.

Take your money and give you nothing in return.

There is work that can be done at home, but you will not find it in a suspicious advertisement. Take the initiative. If you can type, ask local businesses if they have typing you can do at home, or put an ad in the paper for your service. Many medical and legal transcriptionists work at home. The work is regular and the pay is reasonable. Telephone sales can be done at home. If you have a home workshop, consider making wooden toys or birdhouses for local businesses. But first research the market, be sure that somebody will buy what you make. Try get orders in advance.

Setting a Job Goal

This simply means choosing the job you want. There are short term goals and long term goals. Long term goals take years to achieve. Short term goals can lead up to them through promotions. For example, if you want to be a store manager, you first have to apply for and get a job in a store. Then you have to work your way up, or use the experience you gain to get better jobs in other stores. Remember, nobody starts as a supervisor or manager. Do not be too proud to accept a low or minimum wage job. Once you have a foot in the door, you can advance.

Base your job goal on the things that you like doing and the skills that you have. Evaluate yourself, think about what is important to you, the qualifications you have, what you want in a job, and what you want in an employer.

SELF EVALUATION WORKSHEETS

What are the things you do best? Are they related to people, data, or things?

_____ Related to

_____ Related to

Do you express yourself well and easily?

Orally: Yes _____ No _____

Written: Yes _____ No _____

Do you see yourself as a leader of a group or team? Yes ___ No ___

Do you see yourself as an active member of a group or team? Yes ___ No ___

Do you prefer to work on your own? Yes ___ No ___

Do you work well under supervision? Yes ___ No ___

What situations do you find stressful?

How well do you handle stress?

Is it difficult for you to work under pressure? Yes ___ No ___

Do you seek responsibility? Yes ___ No ___

Do you prefer to follow directions? Yes ___ No ___

Do you like new ideas, situations, and challenges? Yes ___ No ___

Do you prefer the known routines? Yes ___ No ___

What is more important to you? Working for a salary ____, working for a commission ____, working for a combination of both ____

Do you want to work a regular schedule (9:00 - 5:00)? Yes ___ No ___

Are you willing to travel in your work? Yes ___ No ___

What kind of environment do you want?

Inside ___ outside ___

Clean ___ Dirty ___

Urban ___ Rural ___

Do you want to work for a large organization or a small one?

Are you free to move? Yes ___ No ___

WHAT ARE YOUR FINANCIAL NEEDS?

How much money do you need every month? Add up all of your regular expenses, remember to include things like insurance, transportation, and credit card payments. When you have a total of your monthly financial needs, add 20 percent for the taxes and Social Security payments that will be withheld. The total will be the amount of money you will need in take home pay every month to meet your needs.

Monthly Expenses

Housing (rent or mortgage)	\$
Utilities	\$
Telephone	\$
Transportation	\$
Car Payments (include gas, repairs, and insurance)	\$
Insurance	\$
Medical Bills	\$
Credit Card Payments	\$

Food	\$
Clothing	\$
Child Care	\$
Entertainment	\$
Savings	\$
Other	\$
Total	\$

TRANSPORTATION and DRIVING

In Virginia, the general policy of the DMV is that a person must be seizure free for six months in order to drive. During that time, the person's license is suspended. Suspensions may be appealed. Appeals are heard by a Medical Advisory Board and are determined on a case by case basis. Periodic medical updates may be required at the discretion of the DMV. A person who has been seizure free and off medications for two years can drive without any restriction or review. The nocturnal seizures are the exception: a person who only has nocturnal seizures can continue to drive subject to review every three months.

Remember transportation costs. If you drive, think about the condition of your car. How much do you spend on car maintenance and repair? Consider the age and condition of your car. Will you need to replace it in the next year six months? What will you do if the car breaks down? How much is bus fare? Have a backup plan in case of emergency. You can take a taxi in an emergency, but they are too expensive to rely on regularly. If you go in a car pool or with a friend or family member, you will be expected to help pay for gas.

Find out how you can get to work and estimate the cost. Be sure to add the cost to your monthly expenses.

	<u>Available</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Bus	_____	_____
Subway	_____	_____
Taxi	_____	_____
Car	_____	_____
Car Pool	_____	_____
Walking	_____	_____
Special Service	_____	_____
Family Member	_____	_____

Before you decide on a way to get to work, there are some things you need to know about your transportation:

- Available every day?
- Where do you catch it?
- Where does it drop you off?
- How reliable is it?

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR EPILEPSY

Think about the job you want. What are the duties of the job? What qualifications will you need to get it? Consider carefully how epilepsy may affect your job performance. If it does, what reasonable accommodations can be made to reduce or eliminate their impact? Remember, these questions may come up in a job interview or after you are hired.

If you cannot drive, how will you get to work?

What kind of seizures do you have?

How often do you have them?

What happens when you have a seizure?

How do you feel after a seizure?

How long does it take you to recover from a seizure?

Are you satisfied with your seizure control?

Do you have a warning before your seizure?

How often do you take medication?

Do you take your medications as prescribed?

Do you have any side effects from the medications?

Do your medications affect your memory?

Do you have a regular doctor?

How often do you see your doctor?

Does your doctor support your job goal?

What, if anything, is likely to bring on your seizures?

Do you have more frequent seizures if you are under stress?

Who knows that you have epilepsy?

Will your epilepsy have an impact on your ability to do any essential part of the job? If so, are there reasonable accommodations which can be made to reduce or eliminate the impact?

EFVA has information on employment, driving, transportation, and other issues related to work available on the www.epilepsyva.com. We also give reimbursements for electric bicycles and helmets.

POTENTIAL ISSUES ABOUT EPILEPSY

Work Absences

The odds are that most people with epilepsy will never have a seizure on the job. Others may have predictable seizures that occur outside working hours. The few people who do have frequent seizures may be more than willing to make up for any lost time.

Ability to Drive

In Virginia people who have been free of tonic-clonic seizures for six months to a year can be given a driver's license. Periodic medical updates may be required. There may be exceptions to the rules for those whose seizures occur during sleep. Difficult cases are referred to the Medical Advisory Board for review and recommendations. Their decision can be appealed.

Side Effects of Medications

Regular use of medications is the standard treatment for epilepsy. Many people have no side effects at all. For those who do, they are often mild and occur at the beginning of therapy. The most common side effects include drowsiness, nausea, rash, irritability, and clumsiness. Some drugs may cause emotional changes. Even people who have these side effects can learn to work around them.

Working with Dangerous Equipment

People with epilepsy have all kinds of jobs. Some work perfectly well with heavy equipment, machinery, hot grills, on rooftops, and with cutting tools. There are many kinds of seizures, those with simple partial seizures never lose consciousness, and others have a predictable warning before a seizure. Still others have seizures only at night. A letter from your doctor will answer any questions an employer might have about your seizures

FINDING A JOB OPENING

Now that you have a definite job goal, you need to find job openings. If you do not know how, help is available. Do not base all your hopes on the help wanted ads in the newspaper. They can be helpful, but you have many resources you may not have considered. These include people that you know (former employers, friends, family members, teachers, etc.) state and private employment agencies, job and rehabilitation counselors, service organizations (such as the EFVA, the YMCA), libraries, bulletin boards at the grocery store and laundromat, store windows, the Chamber of Commerce, even the yellow pages in the telephone book.

The people you know can be your best resources. Tell your friends, family, and relatives what kind of job you are looking for, ask if they know of any jobs, or know anyone who can help. Keep a list of the people you contact and anybody they refer you to.

There will always be resources to consider in your local area:

The Virginia Department of Rehabilitation Services can help find employment and training.

The Virginia Employment Commission (vec.state.va.us) is the state employment agency. The number can be found in the Government Listings in the telephone book.

If you need information on Welfare, Social Security benefits, or Supplemental Security Income, contact the Social Services Department and the Social Security Administration. Their telephone numbers are in the Government Listings as well.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) can provide information and assistance on starting your own business. See Government Listings in the telephone book.

[Virginia Board of People with Disabilities](#) 804-786-0016
800-846-4464

[Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#) 800-669-4000

Strategies to consider in seeking employment:

Use personal contacts to find out about possible job opportunities. Personal contacts could be friends, family, former co-workers or employers, members of your religious organization, local community members such as doctors, physical therapists, counselors, members of professional organizations or social clubs, etc.

Use a direct approach by going from one employer to another. You will have to visit or telephone many employers to find present and future job openings. .

If you attend or have graduated from a college, university or vocational-technical school, use their placement office.

The public library may be able to provide you with employment information.

Classified ads in the newspaper, local bulletin boards, or professional magazines may be help, but do not count too much on them.

Advocacy and support groups may provide employment assistance.

Public and private employment agencies will hold your resume and keep you in mind for jobs that may be appropriate for you like Craig's List and LinkedIn but watch out for scammers!

Use the Internet to find employment opportunities. On-line job banks provide similar services to private employment agencies but job banks are typically nationwide listings of jobs. If you have your own computer equipment, you can do it at home. If not, many libraries have computers that you can use to access the Internet. The Job Accommodation Network is a good place to start. Also contact disability boards.

JOB LEADS AND RESOURCES LIST

Friends and Relatives

Newspaper Ads

Bulletin Boards

The Library

Telephone Book Yellow Pages

Government Employers: Federal, State, and County Civil Services

Department of Rehabilitative Services

Virginia Employment Commission

Private Employment Services

Service Clubs (Lions, Kiwanis, Business and Professional Women)

School Counselors and Teachers

Chamber of Commerce

Department of Labor, Neighborhood Youth Corps, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Department of Rehabilitative Services.

Religious Organizations

Unions

Known Employers of People with Disabilities

Other People Looking for Work

Direct Employer Contacts

Television and Radio

Professional Journals

School Placement Offices

THE DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitation Services (VADARS) offers assistance to persons with physical, mental, and emotional disabilities so that they may become self-supporting and as independent as possible. Through the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, persons with disabilities are prepared for suitable jobs and placed in gainful employment. VADARS offers comprehensive training and placement services.

VADARS has developed broad contacts with employers and can refer clients to them. It will also arrange appointments and set up interviews.

VADARS works with businesses, organizations, communities and other groups to accommodate persons with disabilities and integrate them into the mainstream of society.

Persons with disabilities may receive assistance from VADARS if it is determined that employment is probable after rehabilitation. Independent living training is available regardless of employment potential.

Every applicant's case is studied by a trained professional. Once it is determined that services may be provided, a counselor and the person with the disability plan a rehabilitation program specifically tailored to the person's specific needs.

There is no charge for VADARS services. Once it has been determined that a person is eligible for services, they may be asked to contribute to the cost of their services if they are financially able. No one is denied services if they are unable to pay.

You may apply for services by calling, writing, or visiting the nearest VADARS office. On contact, the VADARS will schedule an appointment for an intake interview or, if necessary, arrange a home visit to determine your eligibility. Once your eligibility has been established, you will be assigned a counselor. If you are unhappy with your counselor, you may ask for another one.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

VADARS offers:

- Personal Assistance Services (PAS)

- Physical and psychological examinations

- Guidance counseling

- Vocational evaluation and training

- Employment services

Occupational licenses, tools, equipment, and supplies
 Job placement services, and Job follow-up services.

Specialized programs include:

Long term rehabilitation case management
 School-to-work transition programs
 Personal assistance services
 Supported employment programs, and
 Independent living services.

DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES

The Disability Determination Services division of DRS adjudicates claims for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for persons with disabilities. SSDI pays benefits to workers under 65 who have worked and paid Social Security taxes. Previous work is not necessary for SSI, but claimants must have limited income and assets. DRS also provides assistance for determining eligibility for Social Security work incentives.

HINTS FOR WORKING WITH THE VADARS

What to Do

Call and ask for an intake interview. You will be assigned a counselor after this interview. If your counselor is unfamiliar with epilepsy, ask him or her to contact EFVA. If you are unhappy with your counselor, you may ask for another one.

Remember that VADARS does not necessarily have jobs available. They do have wide contacts with employers and they can help find a job that meets your needs and talents.

Make sure that you are clear about what type of seizures you have and how they may affect your job performance.

Explain how your seizures may interfere with your ability to do particular jobs or job tasks.

Mention any side effects of medications that may interfere with your productivity.

Explain how epilepsy may have affected your employment status. (For example, termination or reduction of hours after a seizure on the job.)

Bring any current medical records you may have with you to your intake appointment. These can help speed up the eligibility determination process.

Make sure that your counselor has your current address and telephone number.

Communication works both ways. If you do not hear from your counselor, call him or her.

Advise your counselor of any change in your medical status (change in medication, increase or decrease of seizures, changes in other medical conditions, etc.).

Keep your appointments. If you cannot keep an appointment, call in advance and reschedule.

Document any important discussions about your vocational rehabilitation case and send them to your counselor. This will make them part of your permanent case record. This will also let your counselor know how you perceive your case.

INTERNSHIPS AND APPRENTICESHIPS

INTERNSHIPS

How to Get Work Experience

When You Can't Get a Job

Internships are a way to gain valuable work experience while learning more about work and a particular field of interest. Internships generally involve a relationship between the employer, students and an educational institution. Many internships offer credit for the experience, but may require some basic education or training, journal entries related to the job, and/or a term paper.

Some internships, but not many, provide a stipend to the student.

The best place to look for an internship is your high school or college guidance office. Most guidance departments have lists of internship opportunities available for students. Libraries are also a good resource. Read the information carefully to find out the requirements. When applying for an internship be as specific as possible about your knowledge, skills, abilities, and past work experience. This information will help the employer make the best match between students and internship opportunities.

There are internships available in almost every career field. If there are no opportunities available in your area of interest, you may need to make your own opportunity. Do some research about your career field and find the companies in your area that offer those jobs. You can approach these organizations directly with an idea for an internship or a special-project. If you are going to try this, you will need a good, organized approach and plan. School or employment counselors and teachers may be able to help you.

APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprenticeship is a practical, effective, and cost efficient approach to training. They provide a combination of on-the-job work experience and related classroom instruction. Apprenticeship is targeted to meet the needs of individual employers for employees with specific skills. Related instruction is specifically tailored to support the on-the-job training.

The mission of the Apprenticeship Program is to provide a statewide system of apprenticeship training to increase Virginia's skilled workforce.

Currently there are more than 15,500 apprentices in over 3,000 programs in Virginia.

For more information, call the Virginia department of Labor and Industry Apprenticeship Program Office at (804) 786-2381.

APPRENTICESHIP QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What is Registered Apprenticeship?

Registered Apprenticeship is a proven, industry-based approach to learning. It on-the-job training and classroom instruction.

What Does a "Typical" Apprentice Do?

As a full-fledged employee of the sponsoring company, a Registered Apprentice completes a minimum of 2,000 hours of supervised work in a specific occupation, and a recommended minimum of 144 hours a year of related instruction. The length of the Apprenticeship varies, but four years is the average. Successful completion of the Registered Apprenticeship Program earns the Apprentice nationally recognized state certification as a journey-level worker.

What Kinds of Jobs or Positions Can Qualify?

Virginia's Registered Apprenticeship Program currently represents more than 300 occupations. Apprenticeships are varied and often involve the use of technical, mechanical or manual skills and knowledge. On-the-job experience is organized and systematic. Related classroom instruction provides the theory and technical knowledge.

Do Apprenticeships Work?

Yes. More than 3,000 Virginia businesses in all economic sectors now have Registered Apprenticeships. Many of Virginia's largest employers use Apprenticeships, but most Registered Apprenticeship Programs are in small to medium sized businesses.

RESUMES

Now that you have a list of job leads, it is time to write your resume. A resume is a formal one or two page summary of your employment and educational background. A resume has one purpose: to get you an interview. Resumes should be short (usually no longer than one page) and clear. They should show your education or training, your skills, your ability to produce.

Even if you will not need a formal resume, it is a good idea to have a written summary of your background, education, interests, and references. Have it in front of you when you visit or call potential employers. If they ask about your job goal, experience, or education, you can answer quickly and confidently. Bring it with you when you go for an interview and use it when you fill out the job application. Job applications all ask for the same information. Your resume will provide it quickly and accurately.

A resume should be:

- typed on good paper with no mistakes, brief, and complete.

The resume should include your:

- name, address, phone number; career objective; work experience; skills; education; personal interests/activities/affiliations; and say that references are available on request.

Resumes are either chronological or functional. The chronological resume is a straightforward list of your job experience and education. This is the most common type of resume and the easiest to write.

The functional resume is good if you have had a variety of jobs not directly related to your career objective but which may have included similar skills or responsibilities. Organize the resume by the function performed (marketing, public relations, sales, etc.).

There are hundreds books available on how to write a resume, all have sample resumes in them. Go to a library, bookstore, or employment counselor and look at the various styles of resumes. Each book will tell you on how to write the resume that best suits your needs.

Chronological Resume

John David Alden

37 North Frederick St.

Portsmouth, Va. 23709

(804) 828-3143

Objective:

Entry or middle level managerial position in direct patient care, management, or administration

Education:

Bachelor of Health Services Administration

University of Massachusetts

Boston, Massachusetts

June 1994

Experience:

Direct Patient Care Management

Boston City Hospital, Boston, Ma.

July 1994 - December 1998

Supervised staff and facilities. Developed administrative procedures and policies, organized volunteers, trained lower level staff as needed, and served as unit quality assurance monitor.

Professional Affiliation:

American Hospital Association

References are available on request

Functional Resume

**Mary Ellen Peters 211
Jackson St.
Danville, Va. 23453 (804)
872-3100**

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Business Administration - Marketing
Florida International University
Miami, Florida
Anticipated Date of Graduation: April 1999
G.P.A. 3.40

SKILLS

Marketing

Maintained area accounts for large consumer goods manufacturer. Helped customers in selecting purchases, increased sales by 12%. Surveyed student enrollment to identify areas of interest for program development.

Public Relations

Promoted company image while helping customers and clients. Effectively resolved sales problems and complaints and reduced complaint files by 10%. Developed promotional material to advertise university programs. Worked with local media to promote special events.

WORK HISTORY

March 1998 -May 1998 Market Representative, Faxco, Inc., Miami, Fl.
June 1996-May 1997 Salesperson, Florida Services, Miami, Fl.

ACTIVITIES

American Marketing Association; Chairman, Student Government Association.
References are available on request.

THE JOB INTERVIEW

SETTING UP THE INTERVIEW

Telephone Calls

Most interviews start on the telephone. This is the easiest and most efficient way to make the first contact with a potential employer.

You will make two kinds of phone calls. The first call is to get information, to find out about the company, whether they are hiring or not, and who to talk to for an interview. In these calls, you are interviewing them. The second is in response to a job opening. In these calls, they will be interviewing you. **First Impressions**

First impressions are important, you want to make a good one. You want to present yourself as a person with confidence, skills, and abilities--a person they want to hire. Be prepared.

You will ask them questions and they will ask you question. If you are prepared for them, you will make a good impression. Keep a pencil and paper by the phone.

Know what you want to find out before you make the call. Have a written list of questions beside you when you call.

Be ready to answer questions about yourself. Have your resume in front of you.

Introduce yourself and ask the name of the person you are talking to.

Speak clearly and slowly.

Always say "Thank you."

Calling for Information

These are calls to find out if a company offers the job you are looking for and whether or not they are hiring. You may have gotten the name of the company from the yellow pages, from someone who said they might be hiring, or from a counselor. No matter how you got the name, you will want to talk to the person responsible for hiring. This may be the personnel or human resources department or a supervisor.

You want to do three things:

Tell the employer about yourself and your qualifications;

Find out about the employer; and,

Answer any questions the employer may have.

Introduce yourself when you call and ask for the name of the person responsible for hiring. Then ask to be transferred or call back and ask for that person. Develop a script for these calls and practice them with a friend or counselor.

Sample Script for an Informational Call

Hello, my name is _____. May I speak to Mr./Ms. _____? Hello, Mr./Ms.

, My name is _____. I am interested in _____ and have done/
have experience in/ am interested in (the job you want.) .

Do you hire people to do (the job you want.) in your company? Do you have any
openings?

What do I need to do to apply?

Can I meet with you to talk about my skills and your needs?

Thank you Mr./Ms. _____. I will see you on _____.

Be friendly. The person who answers the phone is the most important person in the company. If they do not like you, they may give you the wrong information, forget to pass on the message, or forget to make an appointment.

This is an optimistic script. You will often be told that they have no openings right now. If this happens ask when you can call back, thank them, and make a note to call back. Do not get discouraged and do not call back too often. Ask if you should check back in a week. Do not call more than once a week unless they ask you to. These can be difficult calls to make. Even if they do not lead to interviews, they often lead to referrals to people in other companies offering the same kind of jobs.

Calling in Response to an Advertisement

These are easier calls to make because you already know that there is a job. As with the informational call, introduce yourself and ask for the name of the person responsible for hiring. Your job is to make him or her interested enough in you to ask for an interview. Be prepared for questions about yourself and your background. Remember to be polite, friendly and confident.

Sample Script

Hello, my name is _____. I saw your advertisement in (the name of the paper)
and would like to apply for the job.

I am interested in the job and have done/experience in/interested in (the job you want.) .

Should I send in an application or come in for an interview?

Who should I send it to?

Thank you Mr./Ms. _____. I will see you on _____.

APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT		
Name:	Date:	Social Security Number:
Home Address:		
Home Phone:	Business Phone:	
Position Applying For		

Title:		Salary Desired:		
Referred By:		Date Available:		
Education				
High School (Name, City, State)				
Graduation Date:				
College/Technical/Trade School				
Dates Attended:		Degree/Major:		
References				
Physical Record				
Do you have any physical defects that would preclude you from performing any work for which you are being considered?				
Were you ever admitted to a hospital?		Give details:		
Have you any defects in Hearing?		Vision?	Speech?	
In case of emergency notify:				
Former Employers				
Date Month/ Year	Employer	Salary	Position	Reason for Leaving.
I authorize investigation of all statements contained in this application. I understand that misrepresentation or omission of facts called for is cause for dismissal, I further understand and agree that my employment is for no definite period and may, regardless of the date of payment of my wages and salary, be terminated at any time without previous notice.				
Date:		Signature:		
Date:		Interviewed by:		

Application Terms

These words and phrases will come up in interviews and on applications. Be sure that you understand them.

Present address -- where you live now

Permanent address -- the place you call home

Part time -- working less than 40 hours a week

Full time -- working 40 or more hours a week. Some full time workweeks are 35 hours

Education -- the schools you attended

References -- people who know you and can recommend you

Spouse -- your husband or wife

Dependents -- people you support (usually children)

Physical disabilities -- injuries, weaknesses, illnesses

Previous employment -- the work you have done in the past **Felony**

-- a serious crime for which you have been convicted

State of health -- your general health

Signature -- a person's name written by himself/herself

Skills -- things you do well

Previous address -- the last place you lived

Position -- the job you want

THE INTERVIEW

The first interview is the hardest. It will be easier if you have practiced with a friend or counselor. Go over the questions that will come up and rehearse your answers. Ask your helper to notice your attitude, posture, and gestures. Eye contact is particularly important.

Employers want to hire people who can do the job (or learn to do it), get along with their coworkers, and not cause problems. They nearly always prefer people who are neat, polite, listen well, and are easy to get along with.

Potential employers look for positive and negative qualities in the applicants. Your appearance will convey your attitude about yourself, the potential employer, and your interest in the job. Obviously a good appearance will not compensate for lack of experience, but it may make him or her remember you if there is another opening for which you are more qualified.

Your clothes should be neat and conservative, your shoes shined, and your hair combed. You should get there on time prepared for the interview. Remember to bring a copy of your resume and letters of reference. Never smoke or chew gum.

It is natural to be a little nervous, but try not to show it. You should seem friendly, relaxed, and optimistic.

At the end of the interview arrange a time to call back to learn the final decision. Thank the interviewer by name, smile, and shake his or her hand.

BE PREPARED FOR THE INTERVIEW

Learn as much as you can about the company and the job.

Have some questions written down.

Bring your resume or personal data sheet.

Bring a pen and paper.

Be sure to know the time and place for the interview.

Know how you are going to get there.

Know the interviewer's name.

Wear appropriate clothes.

Don't be late.

Go by yourself.

Though different employers have different standards, there are some general things to avoid. Among them are:

Unusual clothes

Bright nail polish

Very high heels

Mini-skirts

Odd or eccentric hairstyles

Smelly food

Chewing gum

Alcohol and tobacco

QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK

Questions about the job or company after you studied its webpage

Interviewers always ask if you have any questions. It is in your favor to ask

Write down and bring them with you to the interview

Be careful not to ask any questions that were answered in the interview

Will I be working alone or with other people?

Who will be my supervisor?

Can I see where I would work?

Will I need to buy any special clothes or equipment (uniforms and tools)?

What are the opportunities for training and promotions?

If you have no questions, you can say:

My main concerns were with working conditions (or training, hours, uniforms, etc.). I think you have covered that.

I think you have covered all the questions I have written down.

WHAT YOU SHOULD LEARN IN THE INTERVIEW

At the end of the interview you should know

- Whether or not you want the job.
- When they will contact you again.
- The specific duties of the job.
- When the job starts and the working hours.
- Whether overtime is available or required.
- Annual vacation and sick time.
- Medical and accident insurance coverage.
- When and where you will be paid.
- Chances of a raise or promotion.

ANSWERING

INTERVIEW

QUESTIONS

You will usually fill out an application form before the interview begins. Again, remember to bring a copy of your resume. Even if you do not need a formal resume, write down everything in advance. It will save you time, and the information will be complete and accurate. The application covers much of the same information that will come up in the interview.

Some interviewers will be friendly, some will try to intimidate you. Some will look bored, some will seem interested. Some will read your application, others will not even look at it. There are as many kinds of interviewers as there are kinds of people. Try to mirror the style and tone of the interviewer. If he or she is serious, be serious, if friendly, be friendly. Remember that you want this person to like you enough to give you the job.

Your job in an interview is to sell yourself. This demands confidence and self-assurance. Practice interviews with a friend or counselor, the more you practice, the more comfortable you will be in the real interview.

Tell Me about Yourself.

This is a chance to establish a friendly relationship with the interviewer. Try to keep your answers brief and related to the job or the skills necessary to do it. If you know anyone who works for the company, this is the time to mention it.

Have You Ever Done this Kind of Work Before?

Now is the time to talk about your experience and skills. If you have no direct experience with the work, talk about related experience, or why you want this job in this company.

Why Did You Leave Your Last Job?

The interviewer is trying to find out whether you had problems in your last job and whether you will cause problems in this one. Do not tell any outright lies, but remember that the way you phrase your answer can be the difference between getting the job and being rejected. Speak positively about your last job. Do not say you were fired or did not get along with your supervisor. There are many good reasons to leave a job. Some of the more acceptable ones include:

- You want a more challenging job
- There was no opportunity for advancement
- You were laid off
- The job was part time, temporary, or seasonal
- The job required too much travel
- The job interfered with childcare
- Hours conflicted with school
- Your family moved

Words and Phrases to Avoid like Poison:

Fired, quit, didn't like the boss, boss didn't like me, my co-workers were jerks, personality conflict, not enough money, couldn't do the job.

What Are Your Salary Requirements?

This can a hard question. The employer wants to pay as little as possible. You want as much as possible. You have already worked out your monthly expenses and should have some idea of the salary range the job offers. If you are offered the job, you may be able to negotiate a higher salary based on your skills or experience, or you may have to accept a lower wage to get the job. The first few months are often a trial period. If the pay is less than you expect, ask about the chances for raises and promotions. If you impress your employer as a willing and able employee you may get a raise sooner than you think.

Do You Have Any Health Problems That Will Interfere with Your Ability to Carry out the Essential Job Functions?

See the section on the Americans with Disabilities Act. If your epilepsy will not interfere with your job performance, the honest answer is "no." If you decide to disclose your epilepsy, talk openly and honestly about it in relation to the job for which you are applying.

When Can You Start?

This is the question you want to hear. If they do not want you, they won't ask. The best answer is "as soon as possible." If you already have a job, explain that you have to give notice to your current employer. Your potential employer will respect you for this and know that you will show him or her the same courtesy.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Write a short note to the interviewer as soon as possible. Restate your interest in the company and in the job and thank him or her again for their time and interest.

Wait the allotted time before you call back. Interviewers usually say you will hear from them within two weeks. Do not call before then.

If you still have not heard from them, call or write. Mention the specific job you applied for, the time, date, and place of the interview, and ask about the status of your application.

Learn something from each interview. Consider what questions were asked and how you answered them. Use what you learn to try to improve the next interview.

Post Interview Checklist

Employer:		
Arrived early.		
Dressed appropriately.		
Friendly with everyone.		
Introduced myself and shook hands with the interviewer.		
Spoke positively of my skills.		
Looked at interviewer while talking.		
Posture and attitude were good.		
Asked questions.		
Asked to call back.		
"Thanks" and a handshake at the end.		

KEEPING THE JOB

It is sometimes hard to remember that the point of the whole process is to have a job and not simply to look for one. Once you have the job, you have to keep it. That means getting there on time and ready to work. It means doing the job well. It also means getting along with your boss and co-workers. This is not always easy.

The list below gives the most frequently mentioned complaints of employers and supervisors. All of us are occasionally guilty of some of them. The point is that if you are guilty of them regularly you may be fired. If you are not fired, you may miss overtime, pay raises, and promotions. Remember, you will see more of your co-workers than you do of your family. Your life will be miserable if you cannot get along with them.

If you want to do well at your job and get along with your co-workers, do not let yourself be accused of these things:

Frequently missing work.

Habitual tardiness.

Being too friendly with the supervisor.

Being too aggressive with your supervisor or co-workers.

Talking to your supervisor or co-workers when they are busy.

Expressing anger when work is constructively criticized.

Letting your emotions influence your work.

Treating people unfairly.

Taking credit for a group effort.

Ignoring company policies and rules.

Always being the first one out the door at the end of the day.

Leaving early for lunch or breaks and coming back late.

Acting superior to your co-workers and boss.

Taking comments about your work personally.

Always trying to gain personal advantage.

Asking a lot of unnecessary questions.

Complaining to higher management before talking to your immediate supervisor.

Being extremely sensitive to comments made by co-workers or supervisors.

Always making excuses when there are problems.

Blaming others for your own mistakes.

Doing personal tasks during working hours, such as reading magazines or making personal phone calls.

Always complaining about your job, boss, or co-workers.

Trying to learn other people's jobs before you learn your own.

Constantly watching the clock.

Ignoring safety rules.

Everyone is late from time to time. Everyone gets mad at the boss from time to time. You are not expected to be perfect, or to always be punctual, cheerful, agreeable, polite, and cooperative. That would be inhuman. Remember, you will not always like everything about your job. That is why they call it work and that is why they pay you to be there.

DEALING WITH CRITICISM, ANGER, AND STRESS

All work will sometimes be stressful. You will occasionally or frequently be criticized for real or imagined shortcomings in your performance. If you take it too personally, it will lead to chronic stress which will only make things worse.

You may not like everyone at work. They may not all like you. This is a normal part of work. You will get angry with your co-workers and supervisor, they will get angry at you.

Acceptable ways to deal with criticism, anger, and stress will vary with the workplace and the personalities involved. Some supervisors see a bit of yelling and screaming as a perfectly natural way to deal with the inevitable conflict of the workplace. Others see a raised voice as insubordination and will fire you on the spot. The best approach in a new job is to watch and listen until you know the unwritten rules of your workplace. You will do best, and get the most satisfaction out of your job, if you become a member of the team.

Accepting Criticism

Listen carefully. Paraphrase the criticism. Be sure you understand exactly what it is that your supervisor or co-worker is criticizing.

Try to see your actions from the other person's perspective. If you can do this, you may understand the criticism.

Do not take criticism as a personal attack. You can learn from criticism that is what it is for. It takes time, skill, and patience to be a good critic. Many people, including some supervisors, are not very good at it. Give them the benefit of the doubt. Assume they have your best interests at heart.

Giving Criticism

Do not criticize someone when you are angry.

Try to see the situation from the receiver's perspective. You will be able to give useful criticism if you understand what the receiver is trying to do.

Speak for yourself. Do not say "Everybody thinks ...," or "Everybody but you..."

Explain what you are criticizing. Do not pass judgement on, or belittle the person. Simply describe the actions you are critical of.

Describe what makes the actions undesirable or ineffective. This can include a description of your reactions and their effect on your relations with the person you are criticizing.

Pay attention to how the person is taking your criticism.

Remember that recognizing and encouraging good performance is more effective than criticizing poor performance. Balance your criticism with praise for something done well.

Do not end on an angry note.

ANGER/CALM

- A** Anticipate signs of anger
- N** Never act in anger
- G** Go through the CALM sequence
- E** Evaluate what happened
- R** Remember how you dealt with it.

- C** Call someone for help
- A** Allow yourself to feel the anger
- L** Leave the situation
- M** Move around

Communicate Your Anger

Communication is the best way to deal with your anger and resolve it. Talking things over does work, but only if you keep your cool. If you are angry, think for a minute or go through the CALM sequence before you say or do anything you will regret.

Calm down before you talk about the issue. A shouting match will only make the situation worse.

Understand your motives before you express your anger. Are you trying to defeat the person, or are you trying to solve a problem? If your motive is negative, the results will be too.

Be assertive, not aggressive. Assertiveness means expressing yourself firmly and clearly without personal attack or insult. Assertive people know the importance of understanding and compromising to reach a solution.

Get help if you are having trouble communicating your anger constructively or are getting too angry too often. Talk with a friend or counselor about your problem.

Don't get personal by resorting to insults or name calling. These will only make the situation worse.

Don't avoid the issue by hiding what you really feel. Be direct and straightforward, but control yourself. If you feel like hitting the person, or throwing things, it is time to get out of the situation. Take a walk, call a friend or counselor, have a cup of coffee.

Don't say things that you will be sorry for later. Listen carefully to what the other person is saying before you come to any conclusions.

Don't sulk in silence. It will not resolve the situation and will only add to your stress.

Epilepsy and Stress

Physical and emotional stress do not, by themselves, cause seizures. What they can do is lower an individual's seizure threshold. When this happens, a seizure can occur. The seizure threshold is the susceptibility of a person to have seizures. It is thought that everyone inherits some sort of seizure threshold. It may be high, in which case there may be no seizures at all. Or it may be low, and the person will be more likely to have seizures.

Additional types of stress, also called "triggers" may lower a person's seizure threshold. These triggers include:

Lack of sleep

Drug toxicity (too much medication)

Drug abuse

Poor nutrition

Fever, colds, infections

Consumption of large amounts of fluid

Photosensitivity (blinking or flashing lights)

Menstruation

Emotional stress

Low blood sugar

Missed medication

Extreme exhaustion

Alcohol abuse

Hyperventilation

Being startled

Extreme heat or cold

Anxiety, fear, or embarrassment

ASKING FOR A RAISE

Starting pay is at the low end of the scale. The company does not want to invest too much in a stranger who might leave. Wait a few months to ask for a raise, three is enough..

When you and your supervisor know each other, and you feel that you have earned a raise, ask for one. The worst that can happen is you will not get it. Ask, do not demand. List the positive things you have done on the job (good job performance, extra work, punctuality, good work relations, etc.) Emphasize how much you have learned about the job and how much better you are doing it now. Be positive, assertive but not aggressive.

Good relations with your co-workers will not necessarily get you a raise, but poor relations will ruin your chances.

An hour or so before the end of the shift on Friday (or the last day of the work week) is the best day to ask for a raise. Good weather helps. People are in a good mood and looking forward to the weekend.

SOCIAL SECURITY WORK INCENTIVES

The federal and state governments have a wide range of programs and services for people with disabilities who need jobs or job training. These programs and services are summarized below.

Work incentives allow a person who is getting Social Security benefits for a disability to work and become self-sufficient without immediately losing their benefits. If you have get Social Security Insurance (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits and want to work, contact the Social Security Administration and ask about work incentives.

IMPAIRMENT-RELATED WORK EXPENSE (SSDI AND SSI)

What They Are

The costs of some items and services that the person needs in order to work are deducted from gross earnings. The deductions are allowed if:

- The person with the disability pays for the item or service and the person will not be reimbursed for the expense.

An IRWE can be used for a variety of expenses, including:

- Attendant care services
- Prosthetic devices
- Drugs and medical services
- Diagnostic procedures
- Residential modifications
- Routine drugs and medical services

An IRWE must contain four components:

- Proof that the expense is work related;
- Proof that the money has been paid;
- Records that the expenses were paid during employment; and,
- Indications that the expenses were reasonable.

Deducting the cost of an IRWE can reduce gross monthly earnings to meet SSI and SSDI application requirement and to maintain or increase SSDI and SSI benefits.

TRAIL WORK PERIOD (SSDI)

What it Does

A trial work period lets people try to work or run a business for at least nine months without losing their disability benefits.

EXTENDED PERIOD OF ELIGIBILITY FOR BENEFITS (SSDI)

What it Does

People who have completed the Trial Work Period may still need occasional cash benefits. This program provides those benefits, as necessary, for a 36 month period beginning the month after the Trial Work Period ends.

CONTINUATION OF MEDICARE ELIGIBILITY WHILE WORKING (SSDI)

What it Does

This allows SSDI beneficiaries to get at least 39 months of hospital and medical insurance after the Trial Work Period. Although the cash benefits may end at the end the Trial Work Period, this assures continued health insurance.

MEDICARE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES WHO WORK (SSDI)

What it Does

This allows some disabled people who have returned to work to buy Medicare coverage as long as they remain disabled.

People whose Medicare stopped because of work who continue to be disabled and who are not yet 65 may be eligible. Workers who are disabled should contact the Department of Rehabilitative Services for more information.

CONTINUED PAYMENT UNDER A VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM (SSDI)

What it Does

This applies to people receiving SSI or SSDI benefits whose medical condition improves to the point that they are no longer eligible for the benefit. SSDI and SSI benefits will continue if, at the time the disability ends:

- the person is in an approved vocational rehabilitation program, and
- completion is likely to lead to permanent work.

Payments and insurance continue until the rehabilitation services end.

EARNED INCOME EXCLUSION (SSI)

What it Does

This provision allows most of a person's earned income, including pay received in a sheltered workshop or work activities center, to be excluded when figuring the SSI payment amount. The Social Security Administration excludes the first \$65 of earnings in a month plus one-half of the

remainder. This means that less than one-half of a person's earnings are counted when figuring his/her SSI payment amount. This exclusion is applied in addition to the \$20 general income exclusion.

STUDENT EARNED INCOME EXCLUSION (SSI)

What it Does

It allows a person who is under age 22 and regularly attending school to exclude up to \$400 of earned income per month. The maximum annual exclusion is \$1,620.

"Regularly attending school" means that the person takes one or more courses of study and attends classes:

In a college or university for at least 8 hours a week; or

In grades 7-12 for at least 12 hours a week; or

In a training course to prepare for employment for at least 12 hours a week (15 hours a week if the course involves shop practice); or

For less time than indicated above for reasons beyond the student's control, such as illness.

A person who is home taught because of a disability may be "regularly attending school" by:

Studying a course or courses given by a school (grades 7-12), college, university or government agency; and

Having a home visitor or tutor who directs the study.

How it Is Applied

The student earned income exclusion is applied before the general income exclusion or the earned income exclusion.

PLAN FOR ACHIEVING SELF-SUPPORT (SSI)

What it Does

A Plan for Achieving Self-Support (**PASS**) lets a person with a disability set aside income and/or resources for a specified period of time for a work goal. For example, a person could set aside money for education, vocational training or starting a business. The plan can help a person establish or maintain SSI eligibility and can also increase the person's SSI payment amount.

A **PASS** does not affect a Substantial Gainful Activity (**SGA**)¹ determination for initial eligibility decisions. Income and resources that are set aside are excluded only under the SSI income and resources tests.

WHO CAN HAVE A PLAN

Any person who is blind or disabled who receives SSI or could qualify for SSI can have a plan. Remember that as earnings go up, the person who does not need a plan now may need one next month to remain eligible or to increase the SSI payment amount.

Requirements

The plan must:

- Be designed especially for the person;
- Be in writing;
- Have a specific work goal which the person is capable of performing;
- Have a specific time frame for reaching the goal;
- Show what money and other resources received will be used to reach the goal;
- Show how the money and resources will be used;
- Show how the money set aside will be kept identifiable from other funds;
- Be approved by the Social Security Administration; and
- Be reviewed periodically to assure compliance.

Who May Help Set up a Plan

Anyone may help the person with the plan -- vocational counselors, social workers or employers. The Social Security Administration evaluates the plan and determines its acceptability. The Social Security Administration also helps people put their plans in writing.

How a plan is used to figure SSI eligibility and/or payment amount

Resources and or income set aside under a plan do not count as part of the \$2,000 resource limit.

PROPERTY ESSENTIAL TO SELF-SUPPORT (SSI)

What it Does

This allows the exclusion of certain resources which are essential to the person's means of self-support.

How it Works

Property which is used in a trade or business or used by a person for work as an employee is totally excluded. For example, the value of tools or equipment which a person needs for work is totally excluded.

Up to \$6,000 of equity value of non-business property which is used to produce goods or services essential to daily activities is excluded (e.g., land used to produce vegetables or livestock solely for consumption by the person's own household).

Also, up to \$6,000 of equity value of non-business income-producing property is excluded provided that the property yields an annual rate of return of at least 6 percent.

SECTION 1619 WORK INCENTIVES

SPECIAL SSI PAYMENTS FOR PEOPLE WHO WORK (SECTION 1619(A))

What it Does

This allows SSI beneficiaries to receive SSI cash payments even when earned income (gross wages and/or net earnings from self-employment) exceeds the SGA level.

Requirements to Qualify

To qualify for this incentive, the person must:

- Be eligible for an SSI payment for at least one month before he/she begins working at the SGA level;
- Still be disabled; and
- Meet all other eligibility rules, including the income and resource test.

How it Applies

People who have earnings above the SGA level can continue to receive SSI cash payments as long as they are disabled and meet all other eligibility requirements. The person will remain eligible for Medicaid.

CONTINUED MEDICAID ELIGIBILITY (SECTION 1619(B)) (SSI)

What it Does

This continues Medicaid coverage for most working SSI beneficiaries under age 65 when their earnings become too high to allow an SSI cash payment.

Requirements to Qualify

To qualify for this incentive, a person must:

- Have been eligible for an SSI cash payment for at least one month;
- Still meet the disability requirement;
- Still meet all other non-disability requirements;
- Need Medicaid in order to work; and
- Have gross earned income which is insufficient to replace SSI, Medicaid and any publicly funded attendant care.

The Social Security Administration uses a threshold to measure whether a person's earnings are high enough to replace his/her SSI and Medicaid benefits.

What Is the Threshold?

The threshold amount is based on:

The amount of earnings which would cause SSI cash payments to stop in the person's state;
and

The annual per capita Medicaid expenditure for the state.

If the person's gross earnings are higher than the threshold amount for his/her state, the Social Security Administration can figure an individual threshold if the person has:

Impairment-related work expenses;

Blind work expenses;

A plan to achieve self-support;

Publicly funded attendant or personal care; or

Medical expenses above the state per capita amount.

People in Virginia are be eligible for Medicaid under the section 1619 (a & b) incentive as long as they were eligible for Medicaid in the month before they became eligible for section 1619.

REINSTATING ELIGIBILITY WITHOUT A NEW APPLICATION (SSI)

What it Does

This enables people to regain eligibility for SSI cash payments or continued Medicaid coverage after a period of ineligibility without filing a new application.

Cash Payments

A person eligible for continued Medicaid coverage under section 1619(b) can begin receiving SSI cash payments any time earnings drop below the break-even point.

A person who is not eligible for continued Medicaid coverage because earnings exceed the threshold can regain eligibility for SSI cash payments if income drops below the break-even point within 12 months.