

The ABCs of SCHEDULE A

Tips for Applicants with Disabilities on Getting Federal Jobs

INTRODUCTION

There are many advantages to working for the federal government. Federal employees serve in a wide variety of exciting jobs, earn good wages, receive medical benefits, and make a difference through public service. The federal government hires people in many different fields, from accounting to public affairs, health care to law enforcement, and everything in between.

There are a number of ways that people can apply for a job in the federal government. For individuals with disabilities, one of those paths is the Schedule A Hiring Authority for people with disabilities.

So what is Schedule A?

There are a lot of rules and regulations that govern the hiring process in Federal agencies. Most of the time, an individual must go through a competitive process which is open to all applicants. Selectees through this process are hired into the "[Competitive Service](#)".

The Schedule A Hiring Authority for people with disabilities (Schedule A) is an exception to the traditional hiring process. Schedule A streamlines the hiring process for persons with disabilities and, in some instances, hiring officials may select solely from a list of qualified Schedule A applicants.

You can apply using Schedule A if you are a person with an intellectual disability, a severe physical disability, or a psychiatric disability. In order to be selected you will need to show that you meet the qualifications of the job (with or without reasonable accommodation).

This guide provides answers to many of your questions about using Schedule A to obtain a job in the federal government.

THE ABCs

A. Identify an open position

If you are interested in working for the federal government, your first task is to identify an open position for which you want to apply, if you do not already have one in mind.

Most federal vacancies are advertised on the USAJOBS web site, found at www.usajobs.gov. This is the federal government's official site for job information and includes thousands of job postings.

Not all agencies use USAJOBS to announce job vacancies, so it is important to check specific agency web sites for additional information about employment opportunities. A list of all agency websites can be found [here](#).

Below are some helpful hints to navigating resources on USAJOBS.

QUICK TIPS & HELPFUL HINTS

- USAJOBS allows you to search for openings in a particular agency, career field, city or all three using the [advanced search function](#). Even better, USAJOBS has a mobile app that will notify you whenever a new vacancy announcement is posted that matches your search criteria. To learn more about USAJOBS Mobile Apps, [click here](#).
- USAJOBS allows you to save your job searches in the system once you create an account. You can also receive e-mail updates when new job announcements are posted which meet specific criteria saved on a USAJOBS account. To learn more about saved searches and e-mail notifications, [click here](#).
- If you cannot access the internet, or need additional assistance, you can call 1-800-FED-INFO (333-4636).
- Connect with USAJOBS on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for up-to-date information on vacancy announcements and tips on the application process.

B. Prepare your application

Once you have identified a job(s) you would like to apply to, create a USAJOBS account and start preparing your application materials.

Step 1: Prepare your resume

To apply for a federal job, you need a resume that accurately describes your abilities and qualifications.

You can create a resume directly on the USAJOBS website using the "[resume builder](#)" feature. This may be useful if you are seeking your first job or are re-entering the workforce. Alternatively, you can upload an existing resume directly onto USAJOBS. If you need assistance with creating a resume, please see the [Resources](#) page at the end of this guide.

Your resume is a chance to show why you would be a great fit for the particular job that interests you. You can tailor your resume to demonstrate how your skills match the job qualifications listed in the vacancy announcement.

QUICK TIPS & HELPFUL HINTS:

- USAJOBS allows you to create a profile and to store different versions of your resume on the site. This can come in handy if you are applying for several positions requiring different skill sets.
- Name each resume using your first name, last name, and job category (ex: Robert Smith_Program Analyst)

Step 2: Prepare documents for the job vacancy

Beyond creating a resume, you may need to prepare other documents as required by the job vacancy. The job announcement will tell you what materials to include in your application package (such as a writing sample, cover letter, transcripts from high school or college, or a professional certification/license).

For some positions you may need to complete an occupational questionnaire--a series of yes/no and/or multiple choice questions. This helps the agency determine whether an applicant has the requisite skills and experience for the position.

Read the job announcement carefully. Your application will be considered "incomplete" if you fail to provide all required documentation or fail to complete any required questionnaires. An agency will not give you an opportunity to provide the missing information once you've submitted your application; instead, your "incomplete" application will be rejected.

Step 3: Obtain your Schedule A documentation

To apply using Schedule A, you may also be required to submit documentation that proves you have an intellectual disability, severe physical disability, or psychiatric disability. This is often referred to as "[Proof of Disability Documentation](#)". This documentation simply lets the agency know that you are eligible to apply using Schedule A because you have an intellectual disability, severe physical disability, or psychiatric disability. It is advisable to have this letter ready before you apply under Schedule A.

You can request this documentation from:

- Your doctor;
- A licensed medical professional;
- A licensed rehabilitation professional; or

- Any federal, state, District of Columbia, or US territory agency that issues or provides disability benefits.

Most of the time, agencies will accept a letter from one of the above as proof of disability. The proof of disability documentation needs to specify that you are eligible to apply using Schedule A. It does NOT need to detail your specific disability, medical history or need for accommodation. To view sample Schedule A proof of disability letters [click here](#).

Please be aware that some agencies may request additional documentation as proof of disability.

C. Apply for the job

Once you have your resume and supporting documents in order - including your Schedule A proof of disability documentation - you are ready to apply for the job. You should use two approaches when applying for federal jobs as a Schedule A applicant.

Approach 1: Apply through USAJOBS

You should start by applying for the position online through the USAJOBS web site or the specific federal agency's web site. You should do this as soon as you find a position for which you are interested in applying. Sometimes agencies will only accept a limited number of applications. Also, every job posting will only accept applications for a specific amount of time. Thus, *it is important that you apply as quickly as possible*.

When you apply online, make sure you follow the application instructions in the job posting. There may also be a place for you to upload your Schedule A proof of disability documentation.

Approach 2: Apply *directly* with the agency using the Schedule A process

Most agencies have a Disability Program Manager (DPM) or [Selective Placement Program Coordinator \(SPPC\)](#) whose role is to help the agency recruit, hire, and accommodate people with disabilities. Contact the DPM or SPPC at the agency where you wish to work and ask for guidance on the best way to apply for the identified vacancy using the Schedule A hiring process for persons with disabilities. He or she can work with you to make sure your resume/application is considered through Schedule A. [Click here](#) for a directory of Selective Placement Program Coordinators in each agency.

It is advisable to apply for a position through the regular vacancy announcement (on USAJOBS or the agency's web site) AND THEN follow-up with the SPPC/DPM or appropriate office. Contacting the appropriate agency person responsible for overseeing Schedule A applications can take time. It is important to factor this in as part of your application deadline.

QUICK TIPS & HELPFUL HINTS

- Not all agencies have a Disability Program Manager (DPM) or Special Placement Program Coordinator (SPPC), so you may need to speak with the Human Resource (HR) Specialist identified on the vacancy announcement.
- There are several regulations that are generically referred to as "Schedule A." These regulations cover more than just persons with disabilities. When contacting a federal HR professional concerning possible employment opportunities, explain that you are referring to Schedule A for persons with disabilities. The regulations concerning Schedule A can be seen at [5 C.F.R. 213.3102\(u\)](#) and [5 C.F.R 315.709](#).
- When speaking with the DPM or the SPPC, let the person know about your experience and the types of positions you are seeking. He or she may tell you about other vacancies for which you may qualify.
- If you are told that the agency does not use Schedule A (some agencies do not), ask if there are other hiring flexibilities the agency offers. Remember, the Schedule A process is only one of a number of ways you can apply for a job with the federal government. Agencies may also have other hiring flexibilities for persons with disabilities, so inquire with the agency to maximize your opportunities.

What happens after you submit your application?

Generally, the agency will contact you about the status of your application. If, after a reasonable period of time you haven't heard from the agency about your application, you should follow-up with the DPM, SPPC, or the HR Specialist listed on the job vacancy.

If the agency is interested in you as a candidate for the open position(s), someone from the agency will contact you to set up an interview. At this point, you should let the DPM, the SPPC, or the HR Specialist listed on the job vacancy know if you need an accommodation for the interview.

If the agency wants to hire you, you will be offered the position. After you accept an offer of employment, if you believe you will need an accommodation to perform the job duties, now is the time to ask. You want to give the agency plenty of time to get your accommodations in place to ensure you will have what you need your first day.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1. How do I know if I have a disability which would allow me to be eligible for hiring under Schedule A?

A1. The Schedule A regulations specify that a person must have an intellectual disability, a severe physical disability or a psychiatric disability to be eligible to be hired through Schedule A. The regulations do not specifically include or exclude particular disabilities under those three categories of disabilities. Remember, to determine eligibility, you must submit proof of disability documentation from:

- Your doctor;
- A licensed medical professional;
- A licensed rehabilitation professional; or
- Any federal, state, District of Columbia, or US territory agency that issues or provides disability benefits.

The Department of Labor's Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) has also identified some [questions](#) that may be helpful in determining your eligibility under Schedule A.

Q2. If I am eligible for a Schedule A appointment, am I guaranteed a job?

A2. No. First, you have to be qualified for the job. Second, an agency has to decide if you are the best suited for the job. If you aren't selected for a position, do not be discouraged. Keep applying for federal jobs! Follow-up with the DPM or the SPPC and ask about other vacancies you may be qualified for.

Q3. Are agencies required to use Schedule A to hire people with disabilities?

A3: No. An agency can choose whether or not to use the Schedule A process for persons with disabilities.

Q4: Why do I have to disclose that I am a person with a disability to be considered under Schedule A?

A4: Schedule A was created to provide employment pathways specifically for people with disabilities. Although you are not required to disclose a disability to apply for a Federal job, you are required to disclose to be eligible for Schedule A consideration or appointment.

Q5: Do I have the option of selecting which potential federal employers I disclose my Schedule A status to when I apply using USAJOBS?

A5. Yes. When you apply for positions, you will have the option of letting the agency know you are eligible for consideration under the Schedule A hiring authority. **If you choose not to do so, you can apply instead as any other candidate would through the ordinary hiring process.**

Q6: Can I submit the same proof of disability documentation more than once when applying for a position using Schedule A? Must the documentation be dated within a specific timeframe?

A6. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) imposes no requirements concerning the recentness of the documentation (provided the information is accurate), or any limitations on the number of times an applicant may submit such documentation.

Q7. What kinds of appointments can an agency use when hiring through Schedule A?

A7. An agency may make a temporary, term or permanent appointment. For a glossary of terminology, [click here](#).

Q8: What if I need more related experience?

A8: Agencies have the option of giving Schedule A applicants a temporary appointment when it is necessary to observe the applicant on the job to determine whether the applicant is able or ready to perform the duties of the position. When an agency uses this option, the hiring agency may convert the individual to a permanent appointment in the "Excepted Service" (see Q12) whenever the agency determines the individual is able to perform the duties of the position.

Q9: Where can I find contact information for the SPPCs or DPMs?

A9: You can find the appropriate person or office by either using the contact information included in the vacancy announcement itself (all announcements include a phone number

and/or e-mail address to be used for questions), or by searching a [directory of SPPCs](#) maintained by OPM. Agency DPMs may also be listed in the directory of SPPCs.

Q10: May a family member or vocational rehabilitation counselor contact the agency about the position I am applying for on my behalf?

A10: A third party such as a family member, your career counselor, vocational rehabilitation counselor or VA counselor may contact the agency about your job application on your behalf if it is necessary as an accommodation. They may also help you compile your application materials, but remember - YOU are in control of your job search.

Q11: I sent my resume to the SPPC/DPM a while ago, but there is now an open position for which I think I would be a good fit. Will I be considered for the new job?

A11: Even though you sent your resume to the SPPC/DPM, it is your responsibility to follow-up with them if you subsequently see a new vacancy which matches your qualifications. You should also apply for the vacancy through USAJOBS as soon as you see the posting. You may consider indicating your Schedule A eligibility on USAJOBS.

Q12. I have heard a lot of different terms used in describing the types of hiring done in the federal government. What are they and what do they mean?

A12. There are three services in the federal government and each has different rules and regulations that determine the hiring processes. Those services are the "Competitive Service," the "Excepted Service" and the "Senior Executive Service."

Competitive Service: Most selections for positions in the federal government are made through a structured competitive process. When an individual goes through the competitive process, they may be hired into the "[Competitive Service](#)".

Excepted Service: Sometimes, Congress or the President create exceptions to the competitive service rules which provide another way for people to apply for and be hired into federal jobs. These non-competitive processes are often referred to as "[Non-Competitive Appointments.](#)" The hiring of people with disabilities through the Schedule A process is one such hiring authority in the "Excepted Service."

Senior Executive Service: The Senior Executive Service (SES) is comprised of key positions just below the top Presidential appointees.

Q13. If I am hired through Schedule A, can I be converted to the competitive service?

A13: Yes. When you are hired through Schedule A, you are in what is called the "Excepted Service." You can be converted to the "Competitive Service" when you meet the following criteria:

1. You complete 2 or more years of satisfactory service without a break of more than 30 days, under a non-temporary Schedule A appointment;
2. You are recommended for conversion by your supervisor;
3. You meet all requirements and conditions governing career and career-conditional appointment except those requirements concerning competitive selection; and
4. You are converted without a break in service of one workday

Q14. Is conversion to a career or career-conditional appointment mandatory after two years on a Schedule A appointment under 5 CFR 213.3102(u)?

A14. No, conversion to a career or career-conditional appointment is not mandatory. The hiring agency maintains the discretion to determine whether an employee is ready for placement in the permanent career workforce. The agency is not required to convert an individual on the 5 CFR 213.3102(u) appointing authority; however, the intent of Executive Orders 12125 and 13124 concerning employment of persons with intellectual disabilities, severe physical disabilities, and psychiatric disabilities is to permit these individuals to obtain "civil service competitive status." Civil service competitive status is obtained through conversion to the competitive service, rather than remaining in the excepted service.

RESOURCES

Federal Resources

There are numerous federal programs designed to assist people with disabilities in finding employment. The following is a non-exhaustive list of programs/resources:

- USAJOBS [webpage](#) for applicants with disabilities
- OPM's [webpage](#) for job seekers with disabilities

- The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) [web portal](#)
- [Disability.gov](#) has resources geared to help people with disabilities get started with their job search. This is the federal government's one-stop informational website for people with disabilities, their families, employers, veterans and service members, workforce professionals, and many others. Disability.gov's [Guide to Employment](#) provides resources for individuals with disabilities seeking federal and private sector employment opportunities.

Recruitment and Referral Programs

The OPM Shared List - OPM has developed a database of candidates with disabilities who are eligible to apply for employment through Schedule A. Interested applicants with disabilities may submit appropriate documentation to Bender Consulting Services via e-mail at resume@benderconsult.com or through their [website](#).

Workforce Recruitment Program - [WRP](#) is a recruitment and referral program that connects federal sector employers nationwide with highly motivated postsecondary students and recent graduates with disabilities who are eager to prove their abilities in the workplace through summer or permanent jobs.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Programs - VR programs provide a variety of services to help people with disabilities prepare for and engage in gainful employment. VR services include the following: vocational counseling, training, supported employment services, and job placement services. To find contact information for a local VR provider, [click here](#).

Resume and Cover Letter Resources

ODEP, in partnership with the Workforce Recruitment Program, developed a video on writing an effective resume. [Click here](#) to view this video.

The Department of Labor's CareerOneStop [website](#), has a number of [resources for job seekers](#), including a resume builder tool, sample resumes and cover letters, and interview tips.

Resources for Veterans with Disabilities

There are numerous organizations and agencies that exist to assist veterans with disabilities find and maintain employment. The following is a sample of useful resources to keep handy:

- [The Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

- The U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) [Veterans Employment & Training Service](#)
- [Hire Heroes](#)
- [Wounded Warriors Project](#)

Advocacy Organizations for People with Disabilities

A number of disability organizations, such as the ones listed below, have great resources that may help with your job search inside and outside of the federal government. Some of those organizations include:

- [American Association of People with Disabilities](#)
- [American Council of the Blind](#)
- [Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Government](#)
- [Federal Employees with Disabilities](#)
- [National Council on Independent Living](#)

Accommodations

CAP - The Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP) provides assistive technology and services to people with disabilities throughout the federal government FREE OF CHARGE! (Note: Before contacting CAP directly, check with the DPM or SPPC, as they may already have a relationship with CAP.)

JAN - The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is the most comprehensive resource for job accommodations available and is a terrific and easy-to-use resource. This free consulting service is designed to increase the employability of people with disabilities. JAN provides individualized worksite accommodation solutions, as well as information on job accommodations and related subjects for employers and people with disabilities.

Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/publications/abc_applicants_with_disabilities.cfm