

Federal Schedule A Hiring Authority Fact Sheet: Tips for Youth and Young Adults with Disabilities Interested in Starting a Career with the Federal Government

The Schedule A hiring authority (Schedule A) is one of the paths that can greatly benefit youth and young adults with disabilities who have an interest in beginning a career with the Federal government. Schedule A can be a fast track way for Federal agencies to bring in talented individuals with disabilities. When properly implemented, it's a win-win situation for both you and the hiring Federal agency!

Learning about Schedule A

What is Schedule A?

Schedule A is a hiring authority for Federal agencies to use to tap into a diverse and vibrant talent pool without going through the often lengthy traditional hiring process. Schedule A allows individuals to apply for a Federal appointment through a noncompetitive hiring process. This means that if you meet the eligibility status of the appointment and the minimum qualifications for a position, you may be hired for the position without competing with the general public. Schedule A can be used to hire people in all professions from clerical staff to attorneys.

Who can use Schedule A?

If you have documentation to show your disability status, you may choose to apply for Federal appointments through Schedule A. People with disabilities may apply for Federal appointments either using Schedule A or the traditional competitive hiring process.

Who is considered to be an individual with a disability status?

Have you received Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits? Were you ever identified as needing services through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)? Did you receive services in elementary or high school through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 plan in school? Did you ever use Disabled Student Services on your college campus? Have you ever needed an [accommodation](#)? Have you ever received vocational rehabilitation services? Do you fit under the Americans with Disabilities Act's (ADA) definition of an individual with a disability? If you answered yes to any of these questions you may be eligible to use Schedule A.

How do I document that I am Schedule A eligible?

To demonstrate Schedule A eligibility you need to provide documentation to identify:

- 1) **Your disability status** - Get a letter stating that you have a disability from your doctor, a licensed medical professional, a licensed rehabilitation professional, or any entity that issues or provides disability benefits. The letter does NOT need to give details of your medical history. It should state that you are able to perform the essential functions of the job. It may address if you need accommodations to perform the job. The simpler the facts are presented, the better.

There are no specific definitions as to what qualifies as disability status under Schedule A, so Federal agencies interpret the requirements broadly.

- 2) **You are “job ready”** - One way to show you are “job ready” is for a manager in the field in which you would like to work to review your resume and references and, if applicable, a recent transcript. Another way to satisfy the job readiness requirement is to have the person who drafts your letter to also certify job readiness. Saying something as simple as, “Elena is likely to succeed in an office environment,” is sufficient. An important thing for you and whoever assists you with this letter to remember is that hiring agencies are free to decide for themselves who is a good fit for their open position(s).

Introduction to Federal Government Employment

Why should I consider a career in Federal government?

It’s simple. The Federal government needs leaders like you, who bring with them a unique perspective and are determined to contribute their strengths to improve and enhance its work. Federal employees are able to make a difference through public service, receive medical benefits, and develop unique skill sets. Here are some other advantages to working for the Federal government that you should know about:

- Federal employees play an important role in addressing challenging and pressing national issues.
- Federal salaries and benefits are competitive with the private sector.
- Federal employees are given an opportunity to receive cutting-edge training and professional development to advance in the field.
- The Federal government may help employees pursue a graduate degree and/or help them pay back a school loan.
- Most Federal government agencies have policies and programs to improve life in the workplace and to assist employees in balancing their work with life responsibilities (e.g., on-site child care, dependent care, work schedule flexibilities).

When should I start to think about working for the Federal government?

It's never too early to think about working for the Federal government. If you are a high school or college student and think you may be able to use Schedule A, talk with your school guidance counselor, transition specialist, job coach, family, mentor, and others about how this fits into your career goals.

Do I need to have a specific degree or major, like political science or government?

No. The Federal government, like the private and nonprofit sectors, works on a variety of issues. Each agency has its own unique mission and needs to hire people to fill a range of functions. If

you prefer policy analysis, then how about working with the Office of Management and Budget and assisting the President by presenting options for budget and legislation? You may consider a career with the U.S. Department of State if you would like to play a role in creating mutual understanding between the people of the U.S. and the people of countries around the world. Are you interested in preserving America's natural resources and honoring our cultures and tribal communities? If so, you might consider a career with the U.S. Department of Interior. Are you interested in space exploration? If so, you might consider a career with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Or, would you prefer to have a career with the U.S. Department of Education and encourage educational excellence and equal access for all students? This is just a start. Your career options are limitless!

Do I have to move to Washington, D.C. to get a job in the Federal government?

No. Most people think that working in the Federal government means working in Washington, D.C. and that you may have to move away from your family and friends, but that is hardly the case. In fact, 84 percent of Federal jobs are located outside the greater Washington, D.C. area! Also, if you are a world traveler, you might be interested to know that there are more than 44,000 Federal employees who work overseas and abroad.

Finding your Federal Job

How do I find out about open positions in the Federal government?

The Federal government's official Web site for job information is **USAJOBS** <http://usajobs.gov/>. Through this Web site, you can search for openings in a particular field, city, or agency, or all three. You also can sign-up for e-mail alerts about job openings by type of job, agency, and/or geographic area. If you cannot access the Internet or need additional assistance, you can call 202-606-2525 or 978-461-8404 (TTY).

There are some Federal agencies that have their own hiring system and evaluation criteria. These agencies are called excepted service agencies. Excepted service positions, like Schedule A appointments, are not required to be posted on the USAJOBS Web site. As a result, it is important to look at **individual agency Web sites** for job announcements.

And of course, when it comes to finding a job, **networking** is essential - talking with friends, family members, teachers, mentors, and acquaintances about your employment goals, interests, and desires. Don't forget to reach out beyond people you already know and take steps to set up informational interviews to expand the opportunities available to you.

How do I apply to a Federal government position?

Once you find a position you are interested in, you will have to provide all the required documents mentioned under "Learning About Schedule A" and take the following steps:

Contact the Hiring Manager, Human Resource (HR) professional, Disability Program Manager (DPM), and/or Selective Placement Coordinator (SPC) within the agency where you wish to work. 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 SPCs maintained by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The directory can be found at http://apps.opm.gov/sppc_directory/, but please note that this list is not always accurate.

Submit your application through both the regular job posting announcement on the USAJOBS Web site and the individual agency Web site to make sure that your application is not overlooked. In some cases, the hiring manager may request that you send your application directly to him or her.

Once you submit your application, it's important for you to be proactive, persistent, and patient. The Federal hiring process is complex and can take time. During this waiting period, it's your job to follow-up and stay on top of the process. If you don't hear from the agency after a couple of weeks, call them and follow-up to check on the status of your application. If they are interested in you for the open position(s), they will contact you to set up an interview. If the agency wants to hire you, you will be offered the position. If you have not already been asked for your proof of disability, you may be asked for it at the offer stage. No matter what, be prepared to put in some time and effort to find the correct people who can help you.

Overall, it is up to you to take control of the application process for a Federal job. This is a perfect opportunity for you to demonstrate the skills an employer looks for in a job candidate. Demonstrate self-confidence, keep your expectations high, advocate for yourself, and be responsive to your future employer's requests.

Keep in mind that hiring managers want to speak directly with their potential future employee, you, so discourage your parents, friends, and mentors from calling on your behalf for additional information. Use your best judgment on what your abilities are, and decide whether you need to arrange accommodations to communicate your questions with your possible future hiring manager.

What should I do if I am offered a Federal job?

Before you accept an offer for a Federal job:

- Ask for the offer of employment in writing and a detailed job description.
- Make sure to ask the person extending the offer - typically a HR professional - to clearly explain the offer and answer any questions you may have related to the salary, employee benefits (e.g., health insurance, student loan repayment assistance, etc.), and terms of employment (probationary period vs. permanent). An employee who comes under Schedule A is on a probationary period. The term of this probationary period should be discussed with the person extending the offer. Once an employee shows that they are a good fit for the position, he or she can initiate the process to be changed to permanent status.

After you accept an offer for a Federal job:

- If you believe you will need accommodations (e.g., [assistive technology](#), [personal assistance services \(PAS\)](#), sign language interpreter, quiet space, etc.) to perform the job duties, now is the time to ask to ensure you will have what you need your first day.

Do you get the general idea about how you may use Schedule A for the Federal hiring process? Let's see. Review this self-checklist.

Self-checklist:

- I know what the advantages are of working for the Federal government.
- I know what Schedule A appointment means.
- I know who may use Schedule A appointment.
- I know what I need to prove that I am able to use Schedule A appointment.
- I know how to find out about open job positions in the Federal government.
- I know how to find the contact information for the appropriate people (e.g., hiring manager, HR professional, DPM, SPC) within the agency I wish to work at.
- I know how to submit my application.
- I know why I need to be proactive, persistent, and patient during the Federal hiring process.
- I know what steps to take before I accept an offer for a Federal job.
- I know when and how to communicate what my accommodation needs are (if necessary).

Good luck and we look forward to working with you!

Frequently Asked Questions

Where can I go to learn more about Schedule A?

To learn more about Schedule A take a look at the **U.S. Office of Personnel Management Federal Hiring Flexibilities Resource Center** Web site:

http://www.opm.gov/strategic_management_of_human_capital/fhfrc/flx05020.asp.

Who else has noncompetitive status?

Individuals who have served the country through certain programs such as AmeriCorps and the Peace Corps may also be eligible for noncompetitive status. To learn more about eligibility for noncompetitive status take a look at:

<http://www.makingthedifference.org/federaljobs/competitiveservice.shtml>.

Where can I go to learn more about excepted service information? To learn more information about excepted service information and employment opportunities take a look at **USAJOBS.gov Excepted Service** Web site:

<http://www.usajobs.gov/ResourceCenter/Index/Interactive/ExceptedService>.

Where can I go to get more advice on successfully getting a Federal job?

Get answers to most of your questions about using Schedule A and the Federal hiring process at **The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's ABCs of Schedule A Hiring for Job Applicants Tips for Getting Federal Jobs** publication. The publication is available at:

http://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/initiatives/lead/abc_applicants_with_disabilities.cfm.

Where can I go to learn more about finding and applying for government jobs and internships?

To learn more about finding and applying for government jobs and internships take a look at the **Makingthedifference.org Federal Internship** Web site:

<http://makingthedifference.org/federalinternships/>.

Before I apply for a job, I want to make sure I have employable skills. How can I develop those skills without already having a job?

To learn more about how to develop employability skills through volunteering, reach out to the **Corporation for National and Community Service**. Visit www.nationalservice.gov or call 202-606-5000 or TTY 202-565-2799.

I've never had to manage my own money before. Where can I learn how to do that?

To learn tips on how to learn to take control of your finances take a look at the **MyMoney.gov Youth** Web site: <http://mymoney.gov/category/topic1/youth.html>.

Where can I go to find out about more youth resources?

To learn information on youth facts, program funding information, and tools to help you assess community assets, generate maps of local and Federal resources, search for evidence-based youth programs, and keep up-to-date on the latest, youth-related news take a look at the

FindYouthInfo.gov Web site: <http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/>.

I have a disability, and I want to make sure I have the right resources to succeed in my new job. Where do I go to find out about those resources?

To learn about comprehensive disability-related information and resources for people with disabilities, their families, employers, veterans and service members, workforce professionals, and many others take a look at the **Disability.gov** Web site: www.disability.gov.

I have a disability and am not sure what skills I need in order to get a job. Where can I go to find out about these skills?

To learn more about what skills employers want in employees, take a look at the **Essential Skills to Getting a Job, What Young People with Disabilities Need to Know** publication. The publication is available at: www.dol.gov/odep/documents/essential_job_skills.pdf.)

I want to participate in the Workforce Recruitment Program. Where can I learn more about it?

To learn more about the **Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP)**, 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, visit the WRP Web site: www.wrp.gov. There you will find eligibility requirements for potential WRP candidates, as well as information about how colleges and universities can participate in the program.

Where can I go to find out about employment and youth with disabilities?

To learn information about employment and youth with disabilities take a look at the **National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD-Youth)** Web site: <http://www.ncwd-youth.info>.

Where can I go to learn about my rights and responsibilities as a job applicant or an employee?

Federal laws make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or an employee because of the person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information. For further information visit the **U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)** Web site: www.eeoc.gov or call 1-800-669-4000 / TTY 1-800-669-6820.

I will need certain accommodations to do my job well. Where can I go to find out about the accommodations available to me?

To learn more about resources on accommodations, reach out to the **Job Accommodation Network (JAN)**. JAN represents 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. Further information can be found on JAN's Web site: www.askjan.org.

I need assistive technology in order to do my best work. Where can I go to find out about the availability of assistive technology for Federal employees?

To learn about the availability of assistive technology and services to people with disabilities throughout the Federal government take a look at the **Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP)** Web site: www.cap.mil. (Note: Before contacting CAP directly, check with the Disability Program Manager (DPM) or Selective Placement Coordinator (SPC), as they may already have a relationship with CAP.)

Where can I go to find out about the resources that make sure people with disabilities can get good jobs?

To learn about information on publications, briefs, programs, and events that promote policies and strategies for people with disabilities to have unlimited employment opportunities take a look at the **U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy** Web site:

www.dol.gov/odep.

I am a veteran and want to make sure that I have employable skills. Where can I go to find out about developing these skills?

To learn about resources and expertise to assist and prepare veterans to obtain meaningful careers, maximize their employment opportunities, and protect their employment rights take a look at the

U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Veterans Employment & Training Service (VETS)

Web site: www.dol.gov/vets/welcome.html.

I want to make sure I am prepared to get a job. Where can I go to do that?

To learn about **State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program (VR)** services to help youth and young adults prepare for and engage in gainful employment take a look at the U.S.

Department of Education's Education Resources Organization's Directory Web site:

http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/Programs/EROD/org_list.cfm?category_ID=SVR.