

Reasonable Accommodation

The term "reasonable accommodation" is a term that Congress defined only through examples of changes or modifications to be made, or items to be provided, to a qualified individual with a disability. A reasonable accommodation is adapting the job site or job functions for a qualified person with a disability to enable an individual with a disability to enjoy equal employment opportunities. This does not mean that the employer must lower the standards of work for the position or change the job requirements. There are three categories of reasonable accommodations:

- Modifications or adjustments to a job application process to permit an individual with a disability to be considered for a job (such as providing application forms in alternative formats like large print or Braille);
- Modifications or adjustments necessary to enable a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of the job (such as a voice activated computer); and
- Modifications or adjustments that enable employees with disabilities to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment (such as removing physical barriers in an office cafeteria).

Reasonable accommodations that can be requested include, but are not limited to, the following:

- making existing facilities accessible;
- restructuring the job;
- utilizing part-time or modified work schedules;
- adjusting or modifying tests, training materials, or policies;
- providing qualified readers and interpreters;
- acquiring or modifying equipment; and
- reassigning an individual to a vacant position for which the employee must be qualified.

Reasonable Accommodations DO NOT include:

- Eliminating a primary job responsibility
- Lowering production standards that other workers must meet
- Providing personal use items (Examples include prosthetic limbs, wheelchairs, eyeglasses, hearing aids);
- Anything considered an undue hardship to the employer, and;
- Excusing a uniformly applied conduct rule that is job-related and consistent with business necessity (Example: violence, threats of violence, stealing, or destruction of property).

According to the Job Accommodation Network, Average Costs of Job Accommodations are as follows

31% of all accommodations suggested- no cost
19% cost between \$1 and \$50
19% cost between \$50 and \$500
19% cost between \$500 and \$1,000
11% cost between \$1,000 and \$5,000
<1% cost more than \$5,000

Tax incentives are often available for companies that have to spend substantial amounts of money on accommodations.

Some examples of simple accommodations are:

- An employee does not know when to return from break so he is given an alarm watch that signals him when it is time to return to work
- A chef who has paraplegia and uses a wheelchair needed to access several different areas in the restaurant kitchen. The chef could use a stand-up wheelchair, allowing him to remain in his wheelchair but work at standing height when necessary.
- A person with multiple sclerosis was extremely sensitive to heat. If the office thermostat were adjusted to meet her needs, her co-workers would be too cold, and the company was not able to provide her a private office. The individual was provided a cool vest that kept her body temperature down without affecting her colleagues' comfort.
- A company used two-way radios to keep its fieldworkers in touch with each other and the main office. One employee, however, could not use the system because of a hearing loss. The field worker with hearing loss was outfitted with a portable text telephone. This allowed the employee to contact the main office, which was equipped with a TTY, which stands for Text Telephone.

Determining Reasonable Accommodation

- Review the particular job and determine its purpose and essential functions.
- Consult with the individual with a disability to determine the specific skills and limitations.
- Identify potential accommodations in consultation with the individual.

When determining reasonable accommodations, refer to HR for assistance and advice on potential accommodations.