

Reasonable Accommodations in the Workplace

Reasonable accommodations in the workplace are required under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and have been strengthened by the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. As the law has evolved, many employers are not familiar with the guidelines they must follow to provide reasonable accommodations.

WHAT IS A REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION?

A reasonable accommodation is any change to a job, the work environment, or the way things are usually done that allows an individual with a disability to apply for a job, perform job functions, or enjoy equal access to benefits available to other individuals in the workplace. The following are examples of where a reasonable accommodation may be requested:

- Modifications to an application process
- Modifications to a work environment, or the way work is completed, to give qualified employees an opportunity to do the job; and
- Any other modification that would provide equal access to employment benefits that are obtained by employees without disabilities.

EXAMPLES OF REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

- Access to Work and Non-Work Areas
- Assistive Technology and/or Modified Equipment
- Interpreters
- Flexible Work Schedules and/or Telecommuting Options

WHEN DO EMPLOYERS PROVIDE REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS?

According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, an employee only has to let an employer know there is a need for an adjustment or change at work for a reason related to a medical condition. The employee can use “plain English” to make a request and does not have to mention the ADA or use the phrase “reasonable accommodation.”

Steps in the Interactive Process

1. **Identifying an Accommodation Request:** As previously mentioned, a reasonable accommodation request should come from the individual needing the accommodation. The suggestion of a specific reasonable accommodation will likely come from the applicant or employee based upon previous life or work experience.
2. **Explore Accommodation Options:** If an accommodation is not indicated or apparent, an employer should work with the employee to identify a suitable accommodation. Consult informally with the applicant or employee about potential accommodations that would enable the individual to participate in the application process or perform the essential functions of the job.
3. **Determine Accommodation:** Once an employer discusses accommodation options, the next step is to identifying best solution to maximize the employee’s productivity, allowing them to perform the essential function of the job.
4. **Implement Accommodation:** Begin by providing the necessary accommodation for the employee.
5. **Monitor Accommodation:** It is important to gauge the effectiveness of the accommodation over time to ensure that the appropriate accommodations are in place, or if there are any changes to employee efficiency.

For more information about the National Business & Disability Council (NBDC) at The Viscardi Center, and the benefits of membership, email NBDCinfo@viscardicenter.org or visit NBDC.com