



National Disability Coordination Officer Programme
AN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

Factsheet: How to Accommodate People with Disability in the Workplace

General Tips of Accommodation for People with Disabilities

- Don't assume a person cannot perform a certain task. With the right accommodations and support, anyone can be productive. In terms of accommodation, the person with the disability knows best what he or she needs.
- Keep hallways and office spaces clear from excess clutter that may make it difficult for people to manoeuvre around or reach equipment such as fax machines, copiers, printers, etc.
- Disseminate company information, announcements or events through various methods of communication such as email, voicemail, flyers, brochure, etc.
- Provide accessible restrooms, drinking fountains and telephones. If such facilities are not available, be ready to offer alternatives, such as a private or employee restroom, a glass of water, or a desk phone.
- When planning a meeting or other event, try to anticipate specific accommodations that a person with a disability might need. If a barrier cannot be avoided let the person know ahead of time.
- Transportation is often a major issue for those who have to depend on others to get them to and from work. Offering flexible work schedules is a way to accommodate transportation needs.
- Be prepared. Encourage fellow employees to learn how to assist persons with disabilities in cases of emergency including proper evacuation procedures and medical emergencies.
- Help encourage interaction between employees with disabilities and their co-workers. Include employees with disabilities in group activities, meetings, and social gatherings. Forming workgroups or teams with interdependent tasks are an excellent way to enhance employee relations and promote inclusion.
- Be approachable. Saying "If you need anything, just ask," speaks volumes in terms of reassuring the person with a disability that you are willing to help.

Specific accommodation tips for working with people with Mobility Impairments

- Help organize materials or position office equipment such as fax machines, printers, etc. at a comfortable height and reach.

- Do not pile materials underneath tables as it hinders persons using wheelchairs from pulling up to the tables.

Specific accommodation tips for working with people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Assistive devices such as Text Telephones (TTYs) or visual alerts such as signal lights on phone or office doors are examples of accommodations for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Teach any unusual or specific words and terms as part of that workplace.

Specific accommodation tips for working with people with Blind and Visual Impairment

- Hand-held magnifiers, Braille labels, or screen reader software are examples of low and high tech accommodations.
- When describing a work routine, be specific with your language.

Example:

Inappropriate: "The files go here."

Appropriate: "The finished files go in the top drawer of the filing cabinet on the left of your desk."

- Help the person become acquainted with the workplace environment. Describe or point out location of the bathrooms, water fountains, exits, etc. Also point out office hazards such as file cabinets in the hallways, desks, or other equipment.
- Ask how the person prefers to handle regular written printed materials. Be prepared to read the information if the person says that he/she would like a reader.

Specific accommodation tips for working with people who have Cognitive or Psychiatric Disabilities

- Adjust work schedules to allow for sick or medical leave - denying this could exacerbate the person's disability
- Simplify a task by modifying procedures or allow extra time to learn procedures - denying this could cause undue hardship on the employee and unnecessary stress on the person, as well as colleagues.
- Teach multi-stepped tasks one by one. Have written instructions or tape recorded instructions available for the person to refer to when necessary. Allow for a Job Coach when needed and or requested by the employee.
- Make a check-list to help the person remember what needs to be done and in what order. Utilize a calendar to show due dates and timelines.
- Install wall partitions around workstation to minimize distractions.

Impairments specific accommodation tips for working with people with Speech and Language

- Communication boards or speech & voice enhancement equipment are examples of assistive devices that help persons with speech impairments communicate.
- If necessary, use email or other forms of written speech to enhance the means of communication.

