



The Virtual Accommodations Lab

Let's tour the accommodation resource guide

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Regulatory accommodation considerations



Hi, my name is Carla, and I am going to take you on a special Accommodations Tour! We'll be making five stops along the way.

Many of these accommodations can be applied to virtual environments as well, if employees are in alternate work arrangements.



Accommodation do's and don'ts

First, let's set the stage with some helpful tips and tricks for HR Managers/Supervisors.

7 tips for an effective workplace accommodations program

- 1 Recognize the practicality in accommodating to **keep skilled employees**
- 2 Have a formal policy regarding workplace accommodations, including information on ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) and **procedures to submit an accommodation request**
- 3 Audit your **job descriptions!** These should be robust and very specific in terms of outlining necessary job functions
- 4 Share the wealth! Front line supervisors and managers should be trained to understand the **workforce accommodation policies**, even if they aren't the final decision-maker
- 5 Foster a culture of diversity and inclusion by training supervisors and managers on **recruiting, hiring, and retaining employees with disabilities**
- 6 Evaluate accommodation requests by focusing on **reasonable accommodations** based on necessary job functions, while documenting and communicating clearly through the process
- 7 Keep in touch! Check in regularly with both the **employee and the supervisor/manager**

5 mistakes to avoid with ADA accommodations

- 1 Adopting an 'Us vs. Them' attitude; instead, focus on how the **process can support business goals**
- 2 Too many decision-makers; need to ensure **consistency and legal compliance**
- 3 Trying to prove the employee isn't disabled, vs. **evaluating the disability's impact** on essential job functions
- 4 **Lack of communication**; this will only lead to frustration and distrust
- 5 Closing the file [too early]. Have a regular cadence of **follow-ups and check-ins** even after the accommodation is implemented



Office environment accommodations

Consider these accommodations for your office staff to keep them safe and at work.



Eliminate environmental factors such as odors – *asthma, migraines or headaches*

Service animals – *depression, stress, anxiety, other mental health issues*

Fluorescent light filters – *reduce visual strain, migraines or headaches*

Magnifiers or special monitors – *visual accommodations*

Keyboard trays/wrist rests – *wrist and upper extremity conditions*

Flexible schedules and breaks – *mental wellness*

Telephone amplifier or RELAY services – *hearing impairments*

Noise cancelling headphones – *anxiety, ADD, PTSD*

Sit/stand workstation – *conditions affecting the back/neck, lower extremities*

Ergonomic chair – *spine, hip, shoulder, wrist, arm conditions*

Dictation software – *visual impairments, conditions affecting upper extremities*

Footrest – *ankle, foot, hip, knee or back conditions*

Light demand occupations



Ergonomic air tools – **upper extremities**

Private divider – **PTSD, anxiety, mental wellness**

Gripping tools – **hand injuries and upper extremity conditions**

Job restructuring to reduce repetitive motions such as twisting, bending, reaching – **musculoskeletal conditions**

Offer an allowance or discount for appropriate safety footwear – **foot or back conditions**

Forearm support – **upper extremity conditions**

Scheduled breaks, offering physical activities such as stretching or walking – **overall physical and mental wellness**

Light demand occupations put more stress on the body, whatever you can do to reduce repetition and stress helps.

Identify tasks within the workplace that can be performed temporarily by an employee to allow them to stay at work or return sooner – **overall wellness and recovery**

Cross-training to break up repetitive tasks and reduce risks – **stress, foot or back conditions**

Utilizations of stools or chairs for positions requiring extended periods of standing – **foot or back conditions**

Cushioned, anti-fatigue mat – **lower extremity or back conditions**

Power or scissor lifts – **back and lower extremity conditions**

Scooters or power chairs – **assist when unable to ambulate after injury or surgery**



Medium-heavy demand occupations

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Scheduled breaks, offering physical activities such as stretching or walking – **overall physical and mental wellness**

Gradual RTW schedules – **allowing the employee to recover while working**

Written Instructions and clear expectations – **mental health and wellness**

Consider a team lift or equipment to assist with lifting – **musculoskeletal conditions**

Grippers or forearm straps – **reduce strain on upper extremities, back, legs**

Cross-training to allow alternating roles to break up repetitive tasks and reduce risks – **stress, foot or back conditions**

Power lifts or scissor lifts – **back, lower extremity strain**

There are several ways to prevent injury and help employees stay productive. Here are some ideas.

Offer an allowance or discount for appropriate safety footwear – **foot or back conditions**

Identify tasks within the workplace that can be performed temporarily by an employee to allow them to stay at work or return sooner – **stress, foot or back conditions**

Cushioned, anti-fatigue mats – **lower extremity and back conditions**

Job restructuring to reduce repetitive motions such as twisting, bending, reaching – **musculoskeletal conditions**



Healthcare occupations

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Promotion of EAP Programs – *prevention of burnout and mental health conditions*

Employee discounts for health and wellness programs – *promoting physical and mental wellness*

Ergonomic assessment of workstation – *musculoskeletal conditions affecting the back/neck or upper extremities*

Talk-to-text software – *visual impairment, conditions affecting upper extremities*

Portable equipment and workstations – *musculoskeletal conditions affecting back or neck*

Gradual RTW schedules – *allowing the employee to recover while working*

Assistive devices can be instrumental in lifting, repositioning and transferring patients for healthcare workers!

Adjustable exam tables – *musculoskeletal conditions of the back/neck*

Cross training when applicable – *allowing staff to move easily within the organization*

Team-lift or equipment to lift or assist – *reducing strain and potential injury*

Cushioned or anti-fatigue mats – *lower extremity or back conditions*



Regulatory accommodation considerations

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Mental health offerings – **overall employee wellness**

Ergonomic seats – **conditions affecting the spine or lower extremities**

Offer cross-training to allow employees to perform another role if regulations prevent them from doing their current position (pilot, driver, conductor) – **overall employee wellness**

Awareness of regulatory agencies impact on employees' ability to perform their job – **regulatory requirements (DOT, FAA, TSA, NTSB, EEOC)**

Gradual return to work schedules – **allowing the employee to recover while working**

Hand controls – **conditions affecting the lower extremities or back**

Many employers face their own set of challenges when working with regulatory agencies within their field. These agencies enforce strict rules and guidelines for employment eligibility and safety.



Accommodation resources

It is important to remember that you are never alone. There are a lot of resources available to assist you in accommodating your employees and making your workplace safe. Here are a few resources to get you started.



MetLife's 18th annual US employee benefit trends study 2020

<https://www.metlife.com/employee-benefit-trends/ebts2020-holistic-well-being-drives-workforce-success>

Support for Managing Employee Requests and Accommodation Needs under the ADA by MetLife's ADA Workforce Solutions Team
Contact your MetLife Representative for more information.



Employees' practical guide to requesting and negotiating reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act

<https://askjan.org>



Utilization of data to identify ergonomic opportunities

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/ergonomics/identifyprobs.html>



Telework guidance

<https://www.telework.gov/guidance-legislation/telework-guidance/reasonable-accommodations>



CDC website for researching diseases and conditions

<https://www.cdc.gov/diseasesconditions/index.html>



National Alliance on Mental Illness

<https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Individuals-with-Mental-Illness/Succeeding-at-Work>