

Accommodations are any change in the work environment or in the way things are customarily done that enables an individual with a disability to enjoy equal employment opportunities across the employee lifecycle. Accommodations can make a workplace more inclusive by allowing employers to attract and retain a more diverse workforce.

THE VALUE IN ACCOMMODATIONS

Approximately 54 million Americans — or about one in five — have a disability. And many employers provide accommodation and/or assistive technology (AT) simply because they feel it is “the right thing to do.” The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) surveyed 1,200 employers between 2008-2017 and found the following:

- 59% of accommodations cost absolutely nothing, while the rest typically cost only \$500 or less.
- 75% reported the accommodations were either very effective or extremely effective.
- 90% indicated they were able to retain a valuable employee.
- 72% were able to increase a person’s productivity.

EXAMPLES OF ACCOMMODATIONS

Some accommodations are simple and straightforward while others are more complex. Try different accommodations to see what works best for you and your environment.

Simple Accommodations

- Raise a work surface.
- Use a color-coded task list.
- Offer an adaptive keyboard or mouse.

Complex Accommodations

- Restructure the job to reallocate job functions.
- Explore solutions for work-related travel.
- Provide on-site mentoring and/or interpreter

THE ACCOMMODATION PROCESS

The accommodation process is one that is interactive — a collaborative effort to identify effective accommodation solutions for the employee.

1. **Gather information on the situation.** This includes information about the employee, their task and equipment being used.
2. **Consider the impact.** What is the employee’s work environment? What would be the cost of the accommodation? How effective will it be? Take into consideration the employee’s personal needs.
3. **Try to problem solve.** Try the equipment before purchasing it. Also, look at natural supports or local technology groups for free or discounted equipment.
4. **Implement solutions.** Make sure the equipment works, or ensure new policies or job functions work well within the environment.
5. **Train the employee and related coworkers or managers.** It’s important the employee knows how to use the equipment properly and that coworkers or managers are kept in the loop.
6. **Communication is key.** Be clear and honest with everyone involved. Talk with the person as you would anyone else, and don’t make assumptions about what a person can or can’t do.

RESOURCES

Job Accommodation Network (JAN): One-on-one guidance on workplace accommodations through the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)

- **Searchable Online Accommodation Resource (SOAR):** Designed to let users explore various accommodation options for people with disabilities in work and educational settings.
- **A to Z Accommodation Database:** A starting point in the accommodation process with lists by disability, topic, work-related function and limitation.

App Resources: The AT industry has been revolutionized by smart devices and apps.

- **AppleVis:** AppleVis is the leading online resource for blind and low-vision users of Apple products such as the Mac, iPhone, iPad, Apple Watch and Apple TV.
- **BridgingApps:** BridgingApps is a community of parents, veterans, therapists, doctors, educators and people with disabilities who share information on how apps and mobile devices can help people of all abilities reach their highest levels of physical, social and cognitive development.