

Is a supervisor obligated to provide any accommodation that is requested?

No. Once your employer knows about your need for an accommodation, he or she must engage in an interactive process with you to help determine what accommodations might be appropriate. Your employer does not have to provide the exact accommodation you are requesting, but must have meaningful discussions with you about what will work and what is reasonable. Employers must make reasonable efforts to determine the appropriate accommodation for you, by consulting with you and giving primary consideration to your preference. The employer may select a less expensive alternative as long as it is appropriate and meets your needs.

What if I deny a request for reassignment?

Supervisors must notify the employee in writing if a request for reasonable accommodation is denied and no alternative accommodation is offered. The denial must include specific reasons for the denial and the employee or office that made the decision. The supervisor must notify the employee of his/her right to file an EEO complaint, the procedures for doing so, as well as identify and explain any avenues available for informal dispute resolution. For disability-related complaint procedures, see AFI 36-2706, Equal Opportunity Program, Military and Civilian.



If I provide a RA to an employee and other employees ask why the employee has special equipment or a modification to policy or procedure, what can I tell them?

You may tell them it is a private matter and in compliance with federal policy. You may not reveal any information, to include that a RA was requested. All RA requests must remain confidential. If the employee with the RA chooses to share the information, that is the employee's choice but it does not release you from your requirement to keep the information confidential.



Where should I go for more information about reasonable accommodation?

The installation Disability Program Manager or servicing Civilian Personnel Office may be contacted for information on reasonable accommodation. Additional information may also be found on the Equal Employment Opportunity website at <https://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/accommodation.html>.

Air Force Equal Opportunity Policy Office – A1Q

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REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

FACTSHEET FOR Supervisors of EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

Revised November 2018



REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION FACTSHEET FOR Supervisors of EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act

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The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, protects qualified employees and applicants with disabilities in the Executive Branch of the Federal Government from employment discrimination based on disability. It requires federal agencies to provide reasonable accommodation for known physical or mental disabilities to qualified employees and applicants, unless to do so would cause an undue hardship. The Law also ensures equal access to Federal programs, activities, and facilities for people with disabilities.

What is a reasonable accommodation?

Reasonable accommodation (RA) is a modification to a job or work environment, or to a policy or procedure to enable a qualified applicant or employee with a disability to participate in the application process or to perform essential job functions.

What does a reasonable accommodation accomplish?

Reasonable accommodation ensures that a qualified person with a disability has the same rights and privileges of employment as those without disabilities.

Is providing a reasonable accommodation required?

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 USC §791 et seq.) as amended by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, as amended (42 USC §12101 et seq.) requires all federal agencies to provide reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with disabilities who are employees or applicants for employment, unless to do so would cause undue hardship. Air Force policy on the provision of RA is set forth in AFI 36-205.

Who is the decision authority for reasonable accommodation?

The first level supervisor is the decision authority for reasonable accommodation. Once you are aware there may be a need for reasonable accommodation, contact the local DPM who will assist in identifying the employee's limitations, and in identifying accommodations to work around the limitations.

How should an employee request a reasonable accommodation?

A person with a disability can make the request orally or in writing. The individual need only note that they are experiencing some limitation due to a medical condition. They need not use any special language such as "disability" or "reasonable accommodation." The request may be made by the individual or by a third party on behalf of the individual.

The request may be made to a supervisor, manager or to the Disability Program Manager (DPM). This triggers the "interactive process".

When the supervisor receives the reasonable accommodation request, he or she shall acknowledge receipt of the request and enter into an interactive dialogue process within 10 business days of the request. The reasonable accommodation process begins as soon as the oral or written request is made.

What documentation can my supervisor request?

If the need for an accommodation is not obvious (e.g. an employee uses a wheelchair), a supervisor can ask the employee for reasonable supporting documentation. This is documentation sufficient to establish that the employee has a covered disability and establish the need for the accommodation the employee seeks. The documentation should not be a "blank check" to seek the employee's entire medical record. Medical information is confidential, must not be disclosed to anyone who does not have a need to know, and must be filed separate from personnel files.

Unauthorized disclosure of medical information is a violation of the law.



What is the interactive process?

The interactive process is the discussion that takes place between the employee and the supervisor to determine what limitations the individual is experiencing due to a medical impairment, clarify what the individual needs, and identify what accommodations might be helpful in working around those limitations.

What kind of actions may reasonably accommodate employees?

An accommodation may involve making an existing facility readily accessible; modifying work schedules, hours, policies or methods; acquiring or modifying equipment; providing qualified readers or interpreters; or modifying examinations, training, or other programs. As a last resort, RA may include reassigning a current employee to a vacant position for which the individual is qualified.

Who pays for any necessary devices or equipment needed as a reasonable accommodation?

Much of the special equipment, devices, and assistive technology is provided at no cost by the DoD Computer/Electronics Accommodations Program (CAP).

Commanders have a legal obligation to provide reasonable accommodations. An ESP code (7F) has been established to track all requests for reasonable accommodation. Should an organization be forced to defer another requirement in order to support a reasonable accommodation request, then an unfunded request can be submitted through that organization's established corporate process. Therefore, funding shortfalls are not a valid basis for denial of reasonable accommodations.