



What is a Reasonable Accommodation?

Note: This information does not constitute legal advice. The law is constantly changing and application of the ADA depends on the specific circumstances of each case. Consult an attorney when faced with legal issues.

The ADA requires employers to provide a reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with disabilities.

- A reasonable accommodation is any change in the work environment or the manner in which work is conducted that enables an individual with disabilities to enjoy equal employment opportunities and participate fully in the workplace.
- An employee generally must request a reasonable accommodation.
- The accommodation must enable the employee to perform the essential job functions.
- A reasonable accommodation cannot impose an undue burden on the employer.
- Whether an accommodation is reasonable or poses an undue burden depends on the nature of the job, the size and resources of the employer, the number of employees available to take on nonessential functions of the job, and other factors. It is a case-by-case determination that should be made through the [interactive process](#).

When am I entitled to a reasonable accommodation?

- Under the Americans with Disabilities act (ADA), employers are required to make reasonable accommodations to the known physical or mental impairments of an [otherwise qualified individual with a disability](#) who is a job applicant or employee.

- The reasonable accommodation requirement under the ADA applies to employers with at least fifteen employees and to state and local government employers. The Pennsylvania Human Relations Act imposes the same requirement on employers with five or more employees. Many local laws require the same of even smaller employers.
- The reasonable accommodation requirement protects qualified job applicants and current employees who have impairments that substantially limit a major life activity and individuals who have records or histories of such impairments
- The reasonable accommodation requirement extends to the application process, job functions, and the benefits and privileges of employment.
- The reasonable accommodation requirement protects full-time and part-time workers.
 - Note: an employer may grant any accommodation it wishes, but the law only obligates it to provide reasonable accommodations.

What are some examples of reasonable accommodations?

- Making existing facilities accessible to people with disabilities. For example: installing a wheelchair ramp.
- Acquiring or modifying equipment. For example: purchasing a caption telephone for an employee with hearing problems to use on the job.
- Restructuring a job by re-allocating or eliminating non-essential job functions. For example: excusing a cable repair man with a panic disorder from climbing was a reasonable accommodation when it could be done with no adverse impact on the employer.

- Part-time or modified work schedules. For example: assigning only daytime shifts to an employee with vision problems who cannot drive at night, or giving later shifts to an employee who had trouble waking up in the morning due to her depression.
- Changing tests or training materials. For example: reading aloud the questions of a required test to a potential employee with dyslexia.
- Providing qualified readers or interpreters.
- Providing reserved parking spaces if parking is provided for all employees.
- Allowing an employee to bring a service animal to work.
- Employees are entitled to 12 weeks of paid medical leave under the FMLA.
- Additional unpaid leave may be a reasonable accommodation, depending on the employer and the duration. For example: a four month leave of absence was a reasonable accommodation for an employee who worked for a global corporation.
 - An indefinite leave of absence is generally not a reasonable accommodation.
- Allowing the employee to work from home may be a reasonable accommodation. However, it is not a reasonable accommodation if the essential job functions require the employee to be on site. For example: working from home was a reasonable accommodation for an insurance underwriter; it was not a reasonable accommodation for an IT specialist who had to attend meetings and work with others.
- Reassigning an employee with a disability to a vacant position. There are some limits on this accommodation. It is only available when no other reasonable accommodation will allow the employee to perform the essential functions of her present position. It is also only available when there is a vacant position for which the employee is qualified.

What practices are not considered reasonable accommodations?

- The following is a list of several practices which employers are not required to do as a form of reasonable accommodation. But employers may do these things if they wish.
- Removing or eliminating essential job functions.
- Lowering production standards.
- Changing a position that is currently full-time to a part-time position.
- Providing personal use items such as prosthetics, wheelchairs, and eyeglasses is not a reasonable accommodation if these devices are also needed off the job.
- An employer is not required to create a new position for an employee with a disability or to remove other employees so that an employee with a disability can be reassigned.
- An employer is generally not required to reassign an employee with a disability if another employee is entitled to that position under an established bona fide seniority system or collective bargaining agreement.

When is my employer not required to make a reasonable accommodation?

- Employers are not required to make accommodations for individuals who are regarded as having a disability and do not actually have disabilities.
- Employers are not required to provide accommodations for an employee with a disability when the employer does not know that the disability exists.
- The employer is not required to make accommodations that are primarily for the personal benefit of the employee with a disability outside of her job. For example: buying the individual a hearing aid or wheelchair.

When is an accommodation not reasonable?

- An employer is not required to provide an accommodation that imposes an undue burden.

- Whether an accommodation imposes an undue burden depends on the employer's size, resources, number of employees, the cost of accommodation, and the number of employees available to take on non-essential job functions.
- An employer is required to provide an accommodation even though it will impose some cost or burden. The question is whether there is an undue burden.

What is multiple reasonable accommodations are available?

- If there is more than one reasonable accommodation available, your employer may choose with accommodate to provide. But the chosen accommodation must enable you to perform the essential functions of the job.
- You are not entitled to any one particular accommodation that you prefer.
 - For example: if you prefer an accommodation to work from home but your employers offers you a work schedule modification that will also enable you to do your job, you are not entitled to work from home, even if it is reasonable.