



Workplace Accommodation Guide

Accommodations for employees with disabilities aren't complicated or expensive. Learn about some of the accommodations that are available.

What is the "Duty to Accommodate?"

Duty to accommodate means an employer must provide reasonable accommodation to an employee with a disability.

What is "Reasonable Accommodation?"

While reasonable accommodation differs on a case-by-case basis, it generally means any change to a job, the work environment, or the way things are usually done that allows an individual with a disability to apply for a job, perform job functions, or have equal access to benefits available to other individuals in the workplace.

An employer must make accommodations to a 'reasonable' degree—unless it means incurring undue hardship.

What is "Duty to Inquire?"

If an employer notices an employee is acting differently or starts to experience performance issues, they have a duty to inquire if there is something having an impact on the person at work. If the change is due to a disability, an accommodation may be needed.

What is "Undue Hardship?"

Employers are responsible for providing an accommodation up to the point of "undue hardship." Undue hardship differs on a case-by-case basis. Generally, undue hardship means "the point at which it is too unsafe, difficult, or expensive to remove barriers so people can participate in work or other areas of daily life." The point of undue hardship is dependent on the size of an organization and the resources available to them.

You would need to prove a **bona fide occupational requirement** for undue hardship. This means you prove each of the following:

1. There is a legitimate job-related purpose for the requirement.
2. You honestly believe the requirement is necessary for the job.
3. You explored changes to the requirement or accommodations for a worker but could not find a way to make it work.



Myth

Making accommodations for employees with disabilities is complicated and expensive.

Fact

More than half of job accommodations cost nothing, and 80% of job accommodations cost less than \$500.

Examples of Workplace Accommodations

These examples are good to consider for both visible disabilities (ex. uses a wheelchair, has a stutter) and non-visible disabilities (ex. Autism, depression, Crohn's Disease).

1. Scheduling/hours of work.

- Part-time hours.
- Flexible work schedule.
- Ability to work from home.
- Split shifts.
- Scheduling work only at one location.

2. Written materials in alternative formats.

- Documents with a font size of at least 18pt and easy-to-read sans-serif font types (ex. Verdana, Arial) may accommodate employees with low vision.
- Documents in accessible PDF formats (either remediated internally, or remediated by a service provider like [Grackle Docs](#) or [Easy Surf](#)) to be used with screen reader software (ex. JAWS or NVDA).
- Written materials that include photos or diagrams can make it easier for some employees with cognitive disabilities to understand what is being described.

3. Workspace paths of travel are clear of barriers.

Ensure that all major pathways to [key areas/functions of your workspace](#) are clear of obstacles. This will make it easy for all employees to navigate the space. Structural modifications to a space can often be covered by grants.

4. Personal supports in the workplace.

These may require revisiting your policies or working with an external provider. Often, the person with a disability may be already connected to services in their community.

- Guide dogs.
- Job coach.
- Personal assistant/support worker.



5. Job customization or job carving for non-essential tasks.

Job customization, sometimes called job carving, is a term for customizing job duties. It is a way to increase employee productivity while capitalizing on the skills and strengths of workers with disabilities.

- **Task reassignment:** Some of the job tasks of existing workers are reassigned to a new employee. This reassignment allows the existing worker to focus on the critical functions of their job. Task reassignment typically takes the form of job creation, whereby a new job description is negotiated based on current, unmet workplace needs.
- **Job carving:** An existing job description is modified — containing one or more, but not all, of the tasks from the original job description.
- **Job sharing:** Two or more people share the tasks and responsibilities of a job based on each other's strengths.

An example of job carving might be for an employee who develops a disability while in a long-term role. They can no longer maintain the physical requirements of a hands-on occupation, but have highly specialized skills, like Talia Showers, Nurse, Canuck Place Children's Hospice. Her workplace customized a role that uses her experience while providing greater flexibility.

6. Other accommodations may include:

- Mentorship.
- Minimizing distractions in the workplace (ex. provide a quiet space to work, earplugs, ability to customize work space lighting/sounds, noise-cancelling headphones.)
- Relocating an employee's workstation to be closer to other required equipment/rooms.
- Providing written job or task instructions.
- Providing a list of prioritized tasks.
- Optical magnifiers to magnify written materials.
 - Learn more about tech tools for employees with vision loss.
- Use of audio recording devices or AI tools for note-taking or meeting minutes.
- Hands-free telephones or voice-to-text/text-to-voice translation.
- Document holders to assist in typing.
- Keyboards with keys that use high-contrast colours.
- Speech recognition software (e.g. Dragon NaturallySpeaking).



Resources

A-Nu Vision Coaching & Consulting. [Top 5 Tech Tools for Employees with Vision Loss.](#) Accessible Employers.

Accessible Employers. [Talia Showers' Story with an Inclusive Employer - Canuck Place Children's Hospice.](#)

BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner. [Accommodations in the Workplace \(Infosheet\).](#)

BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner. [Responsibilities Under the Code as an Employer.](#)

Job Accommodation Network (JAN). [A to Z of Disabilities and Accommodations.](#)

Job Accommodation Network (JAN). [Customized Employment.](#)

Job Accommodation Network (JAN). [Situations and Solutions Finder.](#)

Rick Hansen Foundation. [Accessible Design Considerations for Employers.](#) Accessible Employers.