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Day 9: Job Accommodations

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2021 the employment rate for people with disabilities was 19.1% compared to 63.7 % for people without disabilities. There is a common misconception that people with disabilities are not able to work, or worse, that they don't want to work. This is not the case for most people with disabilities. Often a person with a disability can perform a job as well as anyone else but they may need a job accommodation to put them on an even playing field.

Job accommodations are modifications to the work environment or a job process which allow an individual with a disability to perform the job and enjoy equal access to benefits available to other individuals in the workplace. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed in 1990 and made it unlawful for employers to discriminate against people with disabilities.

Employees are not required to disclose their disability to an employer except to request a job accommodation. An employee can tell their employer about their disability at any time, it doesn't have to be in the interview process, however, they are not covered by the protections of the ADA until they disclose their disability.

The law states that employers must provide reasonable accommodation(s) which would allow a qualified person with a disability to perform the essential duties of the job they have or are applying for. A reasonable accommodation may require purchasing specific software or equipment but often is as simple as rearranging a few things in the work environment or providing basic accessibility. According to the [Job Accommodation Network](#) 59% of all job accommodations have no cost associated with them and costs are coming down on the ones that do.

Unfortunately, some employers make assumptions about what people with disabilities can and cannot do and may not adhere to the requirements of the ADA. Employers looking to deny an employee a reasonable accommodation may create false, unrelated reasons to terminate the employee or not hire them in the first place. It's often up to people with disabilities to advocate for themselves in situations that can be taxing, purposefully confusing, and aren't guaranteed to end in the employee's favor.

Learn More

Read:

- Disabled People React to Coronavirus Work From Home Accommodations: <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/disabled-people-react-to-coronavirus-work-from-home-accommodations>
- My Story: PTSD and Reasonable Accommodations: <https://www.edi.nih.gov/blog/opinion/my-story-ptsd-and-reasonable-accommodations>

Watch:

- Employment Accommodations (with transcript, 4:00): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDWEp070PoE>
- ADA Title I: Reasonable Accommodations (13:17): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9Jw0DVVNNq>
- How & When to Disclose My Disability Under the ADA (2:37): <https://youtu.be/vO0fv4sasmM>

Discussion:

- What are some of the benefits of hiring a person with a disability?
- Why do you think the employment rates of people with disabilities are so low?
- Does your organization have a policy in place for employees to disclose a disability? If so, do you know the policy and when it was last reviewed? If not, how can you help get a policy in place?

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