

Reasonable Accommodation Interactive Process: What to Do When an Individual Requests an Accommodation to Perform the Job

Step One: Determine Essential Functions of the Job

First, identify the essential functions of the job. Essential functions are fundamental job duties of the employment position the individual with a disability holds or desires and that are exclusive of the marginal functions of the position. Remember: Determine essential functions of the job on a case-by-case basis.

Step Two: Identify the Individual's Abilities and Limitations

Next, determine the abilities and limitations of the individual with a disability. Of course, he or she is usually best able to tell you what can and cannot be done. Therefore, discuss the job with him or her. When necessary, obtain medical information regarding the disability, the individual's functional limitations, and the need for reasonable accommodation.

Step Three: Identify Potential Accommodations

Now, determine whether the individual can perform these essential functions. If not, determine whether accommodations can be made to enable the individual to safely perform these functions. Begin by asking the individual what he or she thinks is needed to perform the job. Remember: To identify potential accommodations and their feasibility, consult with the appropriate parties (e.g. Operations, Safety, and Medical).

Step Four: Determine the Reasonableness of Accommodations and Select Options

Consider whether the proposed accommodations would:

- Eliminate or alter the essential functions of the job.
- Impose an undue hardship on the Postal Service.
- Violate the terms of a collective bargaining agreement.
- Fail to eliminate or reduce the direct threat of harm.

Think about the individual's preferences, the effectiveness of each accommodation, and costs. Select the accommodations most appropriate for both the Postal Service and the individual. The selected accommodations need not be the best or the most expensive, or even the ones preferred by the individual. So long as they are reasonable and enable the individual to perform the essential functions, they are acceptable. Remember: The employer makes the ultimate decision concerning what accommodations to adopt.

For detailed information on reasonable accommodation and the interactive process, read Handbook EL-307, *Reasonable Accommodation*.