
Practical steps for managers

Reasonable Accommodation



**“Ask the employee
what they need
to enable them
to reach their
potential.”**

Purpose

The purpose of this information is to provide practical steps for managers to ensure disabled employee's reasonable accommodation needs are met.

What are reasonable accommodations?

Reasonable accommodations are modifications and adjustments made to enable any person to either attain or retain employment including promotion and professional development.

The need for reasonable accommodation applies across the whole employment continuum. As well as in-work accommodations, these include:

- job advertisements
- applications
- selection interviews
- recruitment
- on the job training
- promotions
- job protection and termination of employment.

Provisions of reasonable accommodation

- Part of good management
- Enable an employee (potential employee) to perform to their full capacity
- Employees feel valued

Finding out about your agency's process?

Read your agency's reasonable accommodation policy. If you are unsure where to find it, contact your HR manager.

The document should provide you with the following information.

- The procedures to follow
- Who has responsibility for any budget
- Who has sign off for any reasonable accommodation
- How to document any discussion or decision
- Steps to take if a request is considered unreasonable
- Any decision review process

Provisions of reasonable accommodations

- Part of good management
- Enable an employee (potential employee) to perform to their full capacity
- Employees feel valued

Starting the process

- Don't make assumptions
- Ask your employee
- Look at the options
- Seek specialist support
- Provide effective training
- Effective handover
- Review regularly

Don't make assumptions

No two people with the same disability or health condition are the same. It is really easy to fall into the trap of assuming that the last employee with this disability or health condition required a certain accommodation so all I have to do is the same for this employee. This is why it is so important to have a conversation with the employee or potential employee. It is a good way of building trust and rapport.

Ask your employee

It is important to really ask the employee what support they would need to enable them to reach their potential in the job. The conversation would involve asking what the needs are and not what the disability or health condition is.

Look at the options

Having established the need with the employee, the next step is to look at the options. In looking at the options, consider what you would provide all employees for example, desks (including standing desks), chairs, large monitors, and ergonomic or specialist keyboards/mouses.

One area people often missed is the accessibility features built into Microsoft®.

Microsoft® has a number of accessibility features that are already built into the system. Many people aren't aware of this: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/accessibility>

The aim of a flexible workplace is to create a working environment that is mutually beneficial to both the organisation and the employee.

A flexible workplace could include:

- flexible start and finish times
- flexible rostering or scheduling
- flexible leave arrangements
- part-time work
- rostered days off or time in lieu
- regular or occasional working from home
- job-sharing
- nine-day fortnights/compressed working week.

Sometimes employees and managers cannot determine whether something will work unless they try it. A solution is to agree that the accommodation will be implemented for a trial period and, if it does not work, something else will be considered.

Keep employees informed throughout the accommodation process. Employees, who understand what steps the employer is taking and why certain decisions are made, are more likely to be satisfied with the outcome.

Once an accommodation has been chosen it is important to document the agreement.

Seek specialist support

If you and the employee are unsure of the range of options, you could seek input from a person within the organisation who may have specialist knowledge or from one of the impairment organisations or a specialist assessment.

A specialist assessment for equipment can be arranged through Workbridge who administer support funds on behalf of the Ministry of Social Development. It is the responsibility of the employee to apply to Workbridge although, as an employer, you may support them with their application.

Where specialist equipment is required, and the employee applies for support funds, the equipment then belongs to the person and they can take it with them when they move to another organisation.

You can also arrange disability responsiveness training for colleagues to assist their understanding of how to support a colleague. This is particularly useful for people with mental health conditions.

Provide effective training

An often overlooked step in the process is providing effective training to use equipment. In some cases, employees and their managers must learn how to use equipment or new methods of doing things. Without effective training, an accommodation may fail.

Effective handover

Another area that is often overlooked is at the point of changing from one manager to another. Arranging a handover discussion with the two managers and the employee will keep everyone informed of the process. Where a discussion is not possible, there should be good handover notes that the employee has had input into.

Review regularly

People's circumstances and needs change over time. When identifying a person's reasonable accommodation, part of the process should involve establishing a time to review how well things are going and whether any changes are needed.

Resources

Additional information especially practical examples can be sourced from:



Employment NZ

<https://www.employment.govt.nz/workplace.../reasonable-accommodation-measures>



Workbridge

<http://www.workbridge.co.nz>

<http://supportfunds.co.nz/how-to-apply/>



The Human Rights Commission

<https://www.hrc.co.nz/.../reasonable-accommodation-guide-focussing-persons-disabilities>



The State Services Commission

<http://www.ssc.govt.nz/lead>



Job Accommodation Network (USA)

[https://askjan.org/Effective Accommodation practices](https://askjan.org/Effective%20Accommodation%20practices)

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