



**U.S. AIR FORCE**

# REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION FACTSHEET FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

**Air Force Equal Opportunity Policy Office - SAF/MRQ**

## **What is a reasonable accommodation?**

Reasonable accommodation (RA) is a modification to a job or work environment, or to a policy or procedure to enable a qualified applicant or employee with a disability to participate in the application process or to perform essential job functions.

## **Is providing a reasonable accommodation required?**

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 USC §791 et seq.) as amended by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, as amended (42 USC §12101 et seq.) requires all federal agencies to provide reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with disabilities who are employees or applicants for employment, unless to do so would cause undue hardship. Air Force policy on the provision of RA is set forth in AFI 36-205.

## **What is an undue hardship?**

An undue hardship is an action that requires "significant difficulty or expense" in relation to: overall size of the agency's program with respect to the number of employees; number and type of facilities and size of budget; type of operation, including the composition and structure of the agency's workforce; and nature and cost of the accommodation. An agency is not required to make an accommodation if it can demonstrate that providing the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on its everyday operations.

Section 501 of the  
Rehabilitation Act

**The Rehabilitation Act of  
1973, protects qualified  
employees and applicants  
with disabilities in the  
Executive Branch of the  
Federal Government from  
employment  
discrimination based on  
disability. It requires  
federal agencies to provide  
reasonable  
accommodation for known  
physical or mental  
disabilities to qualified  
employees and applicants,  
unless to do so would**

**cause an undue hardship.**

**The Law also ensures  
equal access to Federal  
programs, activities, and  
facilities for people with  
disabilities.**

**What does a reasonable accommodation do?**

Reasonable accommodation ensures that a qualified person with a disability has the same rights and privileges of employment as those without disabilities. It does not alter or lower the standards or expectations, but they do work around limitations caused by the disability.

**How do I ask for a reasonable accommodation?**

If you need an accommodation, you should tell your first line supervisor or others in your chain of command (1) that you have a disability (unless your disability is obvious), (2) how your disability interferes with your ability to do your job functions, and (3) what accommodations you need in order to do your job functions. Your local Disability Program Manager (DPM) may also be able to assist you. Although you may make your request orally or in writing, it is better practice to put your request in writing so you have a record of it. Your supervisor should respond in writing within 10 business days.

**What documentation can my supervisor request?**

If the need for an accommodation is not obvious (e.g. an employee uses a wheelchair), a supervisor can ask the employee for reasonable supporting documentation. This is documentation sufficient to establish that the employee has a covered disability and establish the need for the accommodation the employee seeks. The documentation should not be a “blank check” to seek the employee’s entire medical record. Medical information is confidential, must not be disclosed to anyone who does not have a need to know, and must be filed separate from personnel files. Unauthorized disclosure of medical information is a violation of the law.

**What is the interactive process?**

The interactive process is the discussion that takes place between the employee and the supervisor (augmented by the DPM as needed) to determine what limitations the individual is experiencing due to a medical impairment, clarify what the individual needs, and identify what accommodations might be helpful in working around those limitations.

**What kind of actions may reasonably accommodate employees?**

An accommodation may involve making an existing facility readily accessible; modifying work schedules, hours, policies or methods; acquiring or modifying equipment; providing qualified readers or interpreters; or modifying examinations, training, or other programs. As a last resort, RA may include reassigning a current employee to a vacant position for which the individual is qualified. In selecting the particular RA, the principal test is that the device, service, or modification of policy or method must be effective so that it enables the individual to apply for the job, to perform the essential functions of the job, and to have equal access to the facility, information, activity or event.

**Is my supervisor obligated to provide any accommodation that I request?**

No. Once your employer knows about your need for an accommodation, he or she must engage in an interactive process with you to help determine what accommodations might be appropriate. Your employer does not have to provide the exact accommodation you are requesting, but must have meaningful discussions with you about what will work and what is reasonable. Employers must make reasonable efforts to determine the appropriate

accommodation for you, by consulting with you and giving primary consideration to your preference. The employer may select a less expensive alternative as long as it is appropriate and meets your needs.

**How can I work with my supervisor to obtain a reasonable accommodation?**

You should participate in the process of developing or implementing the accommodation. If you and your employer do not initially agree on the accommodation, you can offer your employer a referral to accommodation specialists such as the Computer Electronic Accommodation Program (CAP) at [www.cap.mil](http://www.cap.mil) or the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) at [www.askjan.org](http://www.askjan.org). You can also contact your local DPM or EO Office for assistance.

**What should I do if my accommodation request is denied?**

You should be notified in writing if your request for reasonable accommodation is denied and no alternative accommodation is offered. The denial must include specific reasons for the denial and the employee or office that made the decision. Your manager must notify inform you that you have a right to file an EEO complaint, the procedures for doing so, as well as identify and explain any avenues available for informal dispute resolution For disability-related complaint procedures, see [AFI 36-2706](#), *Equal Opportunity Program, Military and Civilian*.

**Where should I go for more information about reasonable accommodation?**

The installation Disability Program Manager or servicing Civilian Personnel Office may be contacted for information on reasonable accommodation. Additional information may also be found on the Equal Employment Opportunity website at <https://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/accommodation.html>.