

Interview Accommodations for Candidates with Disabilities

Employers have an obligation to make reasonable accommodations to enable job candidates with disabilities to participate in the interview process. Accommodations for interviews may include an accessible location for a person with a mobility impairment; a sign language interpreter for a person who is deaf; a reader for a person who is blind; and modified testing for a person with a learning disability. Below are additional examples of interview accommodations for job candidates with disabilities.

Individuals who use Mobility Aids

- Ensure that the interview location is accessible. Familiarize yourself with the location of available disabled parking spaces, ramps and elevators, and accessible restrooms, water fountains, and telephones. Prior to the interview, inform the applicant of these features.
- Enable people who use crutches, canes, or wheelchairs to keep them within their reach. Be aware that some wheelchair users may choose to transfer themselves out of their wheelchair into an office chair for the interview.
- To facilitate conversation when interviewing a person who uses a wheelchair, sit in a chair to place yourself at that person's eye level.
- A wheelchair is part of the body space that belongs to the person who uses it; never touch or lean on a person's wheelchair.

Individuals with Vision Impairments

- When greeting a person with vision impairment, always identify yourself and introduce anyone else who is present.
- When conversing in a group, say the name of the person to whom you are directing your comments.
- If you move or need to end or leave a conversation, let the person with vision impairment know.
- When walking together, offer a person with vision impairment to take your arm at or above the elbow; guide rather than propel or lead the person.
- If a person with vision impairment uses a guide dog, walk on the side of the person opposite of the guide dog; never pet or distract a guide dog.
- When getting seated for the interview, provide verbal directions as to the location of the seat.
- If there will be written materials in the interview, find out before the interview if there is an alternative format that person would prefer such as large print, Braille, electronic, or tape recorded. You may also offer to read the materials.

Individuals with Speech Impairments

- Rather than attempting to speak for the applicant or complete the applicant's sentences for him or her, exercise patience by allowing extra time for the person to speak for themselves.
- Do not pretend to understand if you do not. Ask the person to repeat what you do not understand.
- Do not shout or raise your voice.

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Individuals who are Deaf or Hearing Impaired

- If the person lip-reads:
 - » look directly at him or her;
 - » speak clearly and at a moderate pace;
 - » do not shout or exaggerate your lip movements;
 - » speak expressively - the person may be relying on your facial expressions, gestures, and body movements to better understand you;
 - » maintain eye contact;
 - » place yourself facing the light source and keep your hands away from your mouth when speaking;
 - » use a normal voice tone - only raise your voice if requested;
 - » brief, concise, written notes may be helpful.
- If the person uses a sign language interpreter:
 - » the interpreter should be seated beside the interviewer and across from the applicant;
 - » speak to and maintain eye contact with the applicant, not the interpreter;
 - » the interpreter will be a few words behind the speaker, so allow extra time for the applicant to respond;
 - » the interpreter's role is to facilitate communication - they should not be consulted or regarded as a reference for the applicant.

Individuals with Learning (Cognitive) Disabilities

- Offer to meet in a quiet or private location.
- Avoid using jargon when giving verbal explanations.
- Speak clearly.
- Allow adequate time for actions (reading, writing, speaking).
- Ask if they need clarification or have questions.
- Provide alternative ways of communicating the message (demonstrate, write).
- Be patient, flexible and supportive.
- Allow a job coach or counselor to be present during the interview to help facilitate communication and assist the applicant in learning about and understanding the essential functions of the job.

Sources: Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy and Job Accommodation Network.