DREAM

Employment Network Resources

Reasonable adjustments

An introduction for employers

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031

cyda

Children and Young People with Disability Australia

What is covered in this fact sheet?

- What are reasonable adjustments?
- What are access needs?
- Disclosing disability
- Different working styles, lifestyles and beliefs

Reasonable adjustments

To ensure people with disability are treated equally and are included in your workplace, you might need to make reasonable adjustments. It is important to have an open and honest conversation with your employees about their access needs and how you can provide for them.

What are reasonable adjustments?

Reasonable adjustments are changes or improvements made to your workplace to ensure people with disability can safely access the work space, and participate equally in all aspects of work life.

Disability is incredibly diverse and unique, and there are a range of tools, technology and practices to help people with disability participate fully in the workplace, based on their access needs.

Examples of reasonable adjustments:

assistive technology like screen readers or ergonomic keyboards

captions, subtitles, audio description and interpreters in online meetings or videos shared internally

rearranging furniture, installing wheelchair ramps and tactile signs

adjustable furniture or computer equipment

accessible and inclusive written communications, like Easy Read format

flexible working hours or an option to work remotely

accessible toilets and parking spots

This is not an exhaustive list. The adjustments your employees might need are unique to their lived experience of disability.

How to talk to employees about their access needs

Having an open and honest conversation with your employees about their access needs is crucial.

Communicating about access needs can help you work with employees to identify tools, technology or practices they may need to communicate, engage and participate in the workplace equally.

When you talk to your employees about their access needs, it is important to be open-minded, respectful, use inclusive language and take a strengths-based approach. It is important to be honest about adjustments you cannot provide.

Inclusive language means respecting how a person identifies. For example, they may use identity-first language, 'a disabled person,' or person-first language, 'a person with disability.' Some people may not identify as having a disability at all. Use positive language like 'wheelchair user' instead of 'wheelchair-bound' or 'confined'.

Questions you may ask:

- What are your access needs?
- What are your preferred communication methods?
- What do you need to feel included and supported in physical and online work spaces?

Accessibility ideas:

- identify your employees access needs in collaboration with them
- conduct an assessment of accessibility in the workplace
- understand your legal responsibilities and rights
- develop a Disability Action Plan
- make reasonable adjustments

Disclosing disability

Your employees are not obligated to disclose their disability, unless it may affect their potential to be safe, or the safety of others, in the workplace.

The [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#) protects people with disabilities against bullying, harassment and unfair treatment. If an employee discloses their disability to you, it is expected that you will provide a safe and accessible work environment. You cannot treat an employee with a disability less favourably than their non-disabled peers, or disclose their disability to others without their written consent.

Employment Assistance Fund (EAF)

A free workplace assessment is available through the [Employment Assistance Fund](#).

Your employees might be eligible for the Employment Assistance Fund, which will help them understand what technology or assistance they may need to meet their access needs. A qualified assessor will examine your workplace and speak with you and your employees about possible changes to improve accessibility.

Other things to consider

It is important to consider different working styles, lifestyles and beliefs.

Easy Read documents allow people with intellectual disabilities, low literacy levels, and people who use English as a second language to easily access and engage with information. These resources use plain language, are clear and concise, highlight the main points and provide imagery for additional context.

Think about the kind of workspace you can provide. Some people might need calming or stimulating spaces depending on their energy needs. Others might need well lit or dimly lit areas, depending on their sensory needs.

Getting feedback is important to ensure what you are doing is working and is a chance for your employees to check in with how they are feeling and what further adjustments they may need.

By providing inclusive and accessible resources, values and practices within the workplace, you are supporting people with disabilities to thrive.

Helpful Links

Creating accessible and inclusive communications - Guide for Employers | IncludeAbility
Supporting staff to disclose disability | Job Access
An Employer's Guide To Employing Someone With Disability | DSS
Disability Discrimination Act 1992 - Easy Read

Disclaimer

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This fact sheet was current as of September 2023 and may not contain the most recent information and updates. Information is provided as a general guide and should not be considered legal or professional advice.