Requesting Workplace Accommodations with Confidence: A Quick-Guide

Overview

This resource is designed to help employees understand workplace accommodations, prepare for accommodation conversations, and confidently request the support they need to succeed at work. Accommodations help remove workplace barriers and support equitable participation at work. The process of requesting accommodations is a highly personal and collaborative process. You can use this guide if you are considering requesting an accommodation or accessibility support.

How to use this guide:

- Remember that accommodations help remove workplace barriers and support equitable participation at work.
- Focus on identifying barriers and the supports that would help you perform your job successfully.
- Use the reflection questions in this guide to prepare for conversations with your manager, Human Resources, or other workplace representatives.
- Revisit this resource whenever your work responsibilities, health needs, or workplace circumstances change.

Disclaimer

This resource is provided for educational and informational purposes only. It is intended to support workplace accommodation discussions and does not replace legal advice, organizational policies, collective agreement requirements, occupational health and safety obligations, or applicable accessibility, human rights, labour, or employment legislation. Employees should consult the appropriate workplace resources, Human Resources representatives, union representatives (where applicable), or legal professionals for guidance specific to their situation.

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Why Accommodations Matter

An accommodation, or accessibility support, is a change to a workplace, job task, schedule, environment, or a process. Accommodations help the worker perform their job and participate at work.

Accommodations are not special treatment, but **tools** that help remove barriers. They create **equitable opportunities** for people with disabilities, chronic health conditions, injuries, neurodivergence, other accessibility needs. Employers in Canada have a *legal duty* to accommodate disabilities.

In Ontario, employers must provide accommodations unless doing so would cause **undue hardship**, meaning a serious problem related to **cost, health and safety, or available funding**. Employers cannot refuse an accommodation simply because it is inconvenient. Some people may hesitate to request accommodations because they worry about stigma, discrimination or being perceived differently. As a result, workers might spend significant energy trying to hide, or "mask", their disability or neurodivergence. This additional effort can contribute to employee stress or burnout.

Requesting an accommodation help create conditions that are needed for employees to do their best work. Accommodations help create a work environment that you can thrive in long-term.

Common Workplace Accommodations

Accommodations can look different for everyone and are based on individual need and not assumptions.

Examples of Accommodations:

- Flexible start & finish times
- Hybrid or remote work arrangements
- Additional breaks
- Written instructions
- Recording or transcribing meetings
- Modified lighting and reduced noise
- Adjustments to workload or task prioritization

- Accessible software or technological tools
- Flexible scheduling to support medical appointments or wellness

How to Request an Accommodation

Requesting an accommodation requires a conversation between you and your manager or employer. Helping your employer understand your barriers, proposed solutions, and impact of the accommodation, can help guide a solution.

Focus the Conversation on Workplace Success

You and your employer may work together to find solutions and meet both needs, and workplace requirements.

When preparing for the conversation, consider the following questions:

- What workplace barriers am I experiencing?
- How can I describe the barrier?
- How are these barriers affecting my work?
- How can I explain the impact?
- What changes would help me succeed?
- Are there examples of accommodations that have worked for me in the past?

The accommodation process is a back-and-forth conversation between you and your employer or manager. Solutions are unique and personal.

If You are Unsure About Disclosing

Some people might choose to disclose a disability or health condition, while others might focus only on discussing accommodation needs. This is a **personal decision.**

Whether you disclose or not, focusing on the barrier(s) you are experiencing helps to focus the conversation on solutions.

Your Needs Are Valid

Everyone works differently; there is no “perfect” employee. Workplace flexibility benefits many employees, and not just those request accommodations.

Self-advocacy is part of the process. It is okay to ask for follow-up, check in on the status of the request, and ask for a timeline. Requesting an accommodation is asking for the tools, environment, and support needed to contribute your skills and do your job well.

By reducing unnecessary barriers, accommodations allow employees to focus on their work rather than the challenges around it. This helps build a more productive, inclusive, and supportive workplace for everyone

Needing support is a normal part of being human and does not reflect a person's capability or commitment. Accommodations help create equitable opportunities for employees to perform at their best. When employees have what they need to succeed, everyone benefits.

It can also be helpful to practice self-compassion throughout the accommodation process. Treat yourself with the same understanding and kindness that you would offer a colleague facing a challenge.

The Back-and-Forth Conversation

The back-and-forth conversation you have with your employer or manager is collaborative negotiation process**.** These conversations can be intimidating, especially if your boss is pushing back, offering partial accommodations, or uninformed about their duties as an employer. Recognizing that this process does involve some back-and-forth helps you prepare.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Accommodations help remove barriers and support workplace success.
- ✓ The process of requesting accommodations is highly personal.
- ✓ You have the right to request accommodations.
- ✓ Focus on the barrier and support you need.
- ✓ Accommodation is a conversation.
- ✓ Accommodation is a collaborative process.
- ✓ You do not need to mask your needs to succeed.
- ✓ The goal is to create a workplace where you can thrive.
- ✓ Remember to practice self-compassion.

Who Can Help

CCRW is Canada's leading organization on disability and work, promoting and supporting meaningful and equitable employment for persons with disabilities. We work with others to build skills, share ideas, and create more accessible employment opportunities.

Untapped Talent is CCRW's inclusive employment hub, connecting employers and job seekers with tools, resources, and opportunities that advance disability-inclusive employment.

CCRW

Website | LinkedIn | Instagram | Facebook

Contact number: 1-800-664-0925

Untapped Talent

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