



Basic Employee Relations Course

Accommodation Request Approvals and Denials

Management is required to accommodate the employee if the employee is considered disabled. Pertinent reasonable accommodation law can be found at [EEOC's webpage](#). It is the responsibility of the employee to provide documentation supporting a disability. These requests should receive close review.

Once you have reviewed the medical information provided by the employee and determined he has a covered disability for which he is requesting an accommodation, what is your next step?

Review the request to make sure the employee is requesting a reasonable accommodation. Reasonable accommodations are divided into three categories: (1) modification or adjustment to a job application process to permit an individual with a disability to be considered for a job; (2) modification or adjustment necessary to enable a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential function of the job; and (3) modification or adjustments that enable employees with a disability to enjoy equal benefits and privileges or employment. As an ER Specialist, your primary involvement is with #2.

An employee does not meet the legal requirements if he or she is unable to perform the essential functions of a job. A function can be “essential” if, among other things, the position exists specifically to perform that function, there are a limited number of other employees who can perform the function if it were assigned to them, or the function is specialized and the incumbent is hired based on his/her ability to perform it.

An agency is not required to provide accommodation if it will impose an undue hardship on the operation of the agency. An undue hardship means that a specific accommodation will require significant difficulty or expense. This determination must be made on a case-by case basis, considering factors such as the nature and cost of the accommodation needed and the impact of the accommodation on the operations of the agency. There are no specific guidelines provided for this determination. However, case law is instructive that costs are very rarely found to impose an undue hardship given that costs are borne by the agency at large and not by the individual office in which the requesting employee submits an accommodation request.