

Assistive Technology (AT) in the Workplace

Job Accommodation Network Tip Sheet

Employees with disabilities may benefit from reasonable accommodations, including assistive technology, to perform various parts of their jobs and have equal access to employment opportunities.



What is a Reasonable Accommodation?

A reasonable accommodation is any change in the work environment or in the way things are usually

done that results in equal employment opportunity for an individual with a disability. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), recommends that employers use an “interactive process” to help determine effective accommodations, which simply means that employers and employees with disabilities who request accommodations work together to come up with effective accommodations.

Assistive Technology (AT)

From alternative input devices to wearable technology, AT can be used in conjunction

with traditional accommodations, such as a schedule modification, or as a stand-alone solution. AT can mean a device or service that can be used as a tool by a person with a disability to achieve or maintain function. Examples that may be helpful in the workplace include communication access devices, screen magnification software, and alternative input devices. The right AT for a particular individual will depend on factors such as unique disability related needs, the type of task being performed, and the setting. AT professionals and other service providers may be able to help identify accommodation options.

If a device or product is primarily needed for work-related tasks, the employer may need to consider purchasing it. Equipment that is needed both on and off the job, such as hearing aids or glasses, may constitute a personal use item that employers are not obligated to provide. If the employer purchases the device, the employer owns it and can dictate how and when it is used. In some cases, allowing the use of AT may be the accommodation as opposed to actually providing it.

Device Lending Library

There are Device Lending Libraries in different locations across California. They provide short-term (30 day) loans to people with disabilities of all ages who want to try out a piece of assistive technology before making a purchase. Device Lending Libraries are valuable community resources that allow individuals with disabilities to figure out what might work for them before they ask an employer to buy it.

Requesting AT

Individuals with disabilities may request accommodations, including AT, at any time during the application process or while employed. Per guidance from the EEOC, it is not necessary to use the words “ADA” or “reasonable accommodation.”

Employers have the option to choose accommodations other than what is being requested as long as an effective accommodation is selected. It may be helpful to prepare a list of reasons to support why the specific piece of AT being requested would work best, as well as a list of potential alternative accommodation ideas.

While requests do not need to be in writing, the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) provides information on how to request and negotiate an accommodation as well as information on how to write an accommodation request letter.

See:

- Employees' Practical Guide to Requesting and Negotiating Reasonable Accommodations Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) at <http://AskJAN.org/EeGuide/>
- Ideas for Writing an Accommodation Request Letter at <http://AskJAN.org/media/accommrequestltr.html>



JAN is a free, national resource for individuals, employers, and service providers who are seeking help coming up with accommodation ideas. JAN is funded by a contract with the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor. Above are links to JAN publications that may be useful for individuals with disabilities who are preparing to make an accommodation request. A service provider or other representative may make an accommodation request on behalf of an applicant or employee with a disability.

Visit the Ability Tools website to learn more about AT and Reasonable Accommodation: AbilityTools.org

Visit the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) website AskJAN.org for information about requesting and providing accommodations in the workplace.

This article was submitted by the Job Accommodation Network.