

Accommodation Scenarios – Reasonable or Unreasonable

Divide the class into small groups of three to five members. Start off with each team having the scenario role-play scene provided in print, braille, and/or by email to their technology device of choice. Information will include list of people in the scene, topics of their speaking roles, intentions of the scenario to convey to audience, and props to use.

Tell the students to not share accommodation results with other groups. They are to keep their selection and opinions a secret. Explain they will work together to finish the dialogue and then act out the scene to the whole group. This will make the role-play unique to their ideas.

Students will self-select the different roles listed on the cards and act out the assigned scenario.

List of people for both scenarios: (Students determine the speaking roles being played based on the scene):

- Employee who is visually impaired
- Office assistant
- Office manager
- CEO of the company
- Office peer

Props – White cane, backpack, papers, table, IOS or Android phone or IPAD, refreshable braille device, laptop, pretend guide dog leash, etc.

Scenario One - Reasonable Accommodation or Unreasonable Accommodation?

Intention of the Scene: In scenario one, the new employee arrives for the first day of work and is greeted by office manager and CEO and introduced to colleagues in the office. The new hire has a guide dog. The employee begins the first day with company-wide training sessions with other new hires from different departments and staff. They are in the technology lab for instruction on new products and data systems being used by the company. The new hire has limited functional vision at 20/800 with decreased peripheral vision and residual vision for reading print at 36 to 42-point font or greater. The new hire reads braille, uses audio feedback, and digital talking books. The company staff trainer begins to move through the requirements of the technology

system. The new hire brought his/her refreshable braille device.

And at lunch, the new hire is ready to find the guide dog relief area. The employee quickly finds there is no grass area near the office building or outdoor trash cans close to the office. The first grass area is across the freeway.

Request: Before the end of the day, the new staff member who is visually impaired asks to meet with the office manager. He/she explains the accommodation request is for individualized instruction with specific keyboard commands for the assistive technology he/she will use. In addition, he/she also requests guide dog relief area near the building. He/she explains what is needed for his/her guide dog to be healthy and for he/she to be safe in the work environment. The new employee explains what is typically used in airports for a safe service dog relief area and asks for this option to be near the office. The new employee gives the office manager resource links of several companies that make these resources.

Are the requests in Scenario One Reasonable?

Answer: Yes, both are reasonable accommodations

Explanations of Answers:

Modified training - When the workplace is rolling out a new system or upgrading its computer programs, an all-staff training session may not cover keyboard commands or other details specific to assistive technology users. As an employee who is blind or visually impaired, you should be able to request individualized instruction to allow you to learn these systems properly.

Guide Dogs Relief Area - A guide dog relief area is a reasonable accommodation where commercial products are on the market and are compact for small spaces.

Scenario Two - Reasonable Accommodation or Unreasonable Accommodation?

Intention of the Scene:

An employee with low vision has taken a new job. The employee with low vision drives with prism magnification in special low vision glasses. He/she has a driver's license and lives in a state that allows for low vision drivers. The new employee benefits from handheld and portable magnification devices for work. His/her vision is 20/250. He/she prefers to read print at 24 to 40-point font depending on the light in the room and/or uses electronic magnification devices to read. The employee with low vision is given a new laptop computer for the office along with his/her peers. What is not included is additional zoom magnification software designed for people with visual impairments. The built-in screen computer magnification options in computer settings is not enough to offer workable solutions to enlarged text. Specially designed zoom software provides magnification and a dictation reading program for low-vision users.

Request: The employee with a visual impairment asks the office manager for screen magnification and reader software for the blind or visually impaired to accommodate the work he/she is doing on the laptop. For this employee and his/her visual impairment, larger screen magnification is better. The employee explains the benefit to him/her of using a larger 24-inch screen connected to the laptop through an adaptor and HDMI cord for more accurate and faster access to visual information.

Are the requests in Scenario Two reasonable?

Answer: Yes, both are reasonable accommodations

Explanations of Answer:

Assistive technology: Assistive technology is an important accommodation for employees who are blind or visually impaired, allowing them to access computers and other systems in the workplace alongside their sighted peers. Typical examples of assistive technology include scanners, magnifiers, digital recorders, screen reading software, refreshable braille displays, and braille embossers.

Although the larger screen, adaptor and cord are not assistive technology per say, these are reasonable and low cost options. This request does not show undue hardship to the company.

Scenario Three - Reasonable Accommodation or Unreasonable Accommodation?

Intention of the Scene: An employee who is blind uses a variety of assistive technology along with refreshable braille and screen reader technology. The company has made available Optical Character Recognition (OCR) assistive technology devices that scan and read printed materials. What the employee feels is needed to save him/her time during the day and especially at meetings is to have a fellow employee sit next to him/her and read all the notes and visual information for each meeting instead of using assistive technology.

Request: The employee who is blind requests that colleagues stop what they are doing and read notes, minutes of meetings, and memos to him/her. The employee with a visual impairment officially asked the boss for a designated person to read printed notes and memorandums that are sent by email.

Are the requests in Scenario Three Reasonable?

Answer: No, it is not a reasonable accommodation

Explanations of Answer:

The employee has an email system on the laptop with screen reader technology. The employee prefers to ask colleagues to stop their work and read various notes to him/her. The request is not reasonable.

However, an option from the company could be to offer more support with training on screen reader software and offer new App technology resources and training with reading text aloud and identifying objects through photos to the employee. This would help the employee with a visual impairment work more efficiently and eliminate negative office dynamics.

Debrief:

What is a reasonable accommodation?

There are many Internet sites that share ideas about the rubric to determine reasonable accommodations or not. Researching ADA can be another task the students consider for additional study time. A reasonable accommodation is any change to the application or hiring process, to the job, to the way the job is done, or the work environment that allows a person with a disability who is qualified for the job to perform the essential functions of that job and enjoy equal employment opportunities. In all work environments, an accommodation is considered anything that allows someone to do the essential functions of their jobs. An accommodation could be equipment, coaching, scheduling, task rotation or job rotation; any change that allows someone to do the essential function of their job.

Accommodations are considered “reasonable” if they do not create an undue hardship or a direct threat. In order to determine what is reasonable, an employer must look at the request made by the applicant or employee with a disability. Whether or not an accommodation is reasonable will vary according to the position the employee holds, the way their disability affects their ability to do their job, and the environment that they work in.

What is an unreasonable accommodation?

When determining if an accommodation is reasonable or unreasonable, there are three criteria that must be considered.

1. Undue Hardship to the Company
2. Removing Essential Job Functions from the Position
3. Displacing a Fellow Employee