



Reasonable Accommodation in the U.S. Postal Service

A Guide for Employees
and Applicants

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The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 applies to the Postal Service™ and prohibits discrimination against qualified employees and job applicants with disabilities. The Act also imposes an obligation on the Postal Service to find ways to accommodate a qualified individual with a disability where appropriate.

Who Is Eligible for Protection Under the Rehabilitation Act?

To be protected under the Act, an individual must be qualified to perform the job and show that he or she is a person:

- With a disability;
- With a record of a disability;
- Responsible or caring for a person with a disability; or
- Regarded as having a disability.

Who Is a Qualified Person With a Disability?

A qualified person with a disability is one who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, meets prerequisites (skills, experience, education, and other requirements) for the job the individual holds or desires, and can perform the essential functions of the position with or without reasonable accommodation.

What Is a Physical or Mental Impairment?

A physical or mental impairment can include:

- Any physiological disorder or condition.
- Cosmetic disfigurement.
- Anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory, cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitourinary, hemic, lymphatic, skin, or endocrine.



- Any mental or psychological disorder, such as mental retardation or organic brain syndrome, and can encompass emotional or mental illness and some learning disabilities.

What Is a Major Life Activity?

Generally, a major life activity is an activity of fundamental significance to most persons and not simply something important to a particular individual. A major life activity includes obvious functions such as hearing, seeing, walking, speaking, caring for self, performing manual tasks, and breathing.

When Does an Impairment Substantially Limit a Major Life Activity?

An impairment substantially limits a major life activity when it either renders an individual unable to perform the major life activity or significantly restricts his or her performance when compared to an average person's performance of the same activity.

What Is the Goal of Reasonable Accommodation?

The goal of reasonable accommodation is to enable individuals with disabilities to enjoy equal employment opportunity. The Postal Service requires the same performance standards and conduct of employees with disabilities as it does of other employees.



Does Every Person With a Disability Require an Accommodation?

No. Many qualified individuals with disabilities are able to advance through the selection process and perform their jobs without any particular accommodation.

How Do I Make a Request for Reasonable Accommodation?

If you are an employee and believe you are a qualified individual with a disability who requires accommodation in the application process (including a Postal Service exam), in your job, or in a job you



seek, make your request orally or in writing to your supervisor or manager. If you are applying for Postal Service employment, make your request to the examiner, selecting official, or local manager of Human Resources. Explain the nature of your limitations and the accommodation you need. (This request can also be made by someone on your behalf.)

What Are My Responsibilities?

If you believe that because of a mental or physical disability the testing process will be an artificial barrier to your demonstration of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required in the job, you are responsible for making your needs known as early as possible to the appropriate official. Request accommodation in advance by contacting the examination administration office, selecting official, or local manager of Human Resources. Similarly, if you are an employee bidding or applying for a job and need accommodation for the job desired or in some component of the selection process (application completion, interview, training), you are responsible for making your needs known to the examiner or local Human Resources manager. Request accommodation in enough time to allow for a timely decision.

If your disability is not obvious or already known, you may be required to provide documentation from an appropriate professional to clearly explain the nature and/or impact of the impairment, the need for reasonable accommodation, and/or to clarify how the requested accommodation may help you to perform the essential functions of the job. If the documentation provided is not sufficient, supplemental medical information may be required, including where appropriate, examination by a medical specialist of the Postal Service's choosing and at the Postal Service's expense.



What Happens After My Request Is Made?

Your request for reasonable accommodation will activate an interactive process to determine whether you are a qualified individual with a disability who meets minimum qualifications. If so, essential functions of your job or the job for which you applied are identified, your abilities and limitations are considered, potential accommodations and their feasibility are identified, and the reasonableness of the accommodations is determined. Also considered are whether the accommodation would pose an undue hardship to the Postal Service and whether the accommodation would eliminate or reduce any direct threat of harm to you or others. You will be involved in this interactive process.



When Will I Receive a Decision?

While expedited processing may be necessary to enable an individual to apply for a job or to participate in a specific activity scheduled to occur shortly, you will normally receive a decision from your manager or the examination administration office within 20 business days from the date of the request where the accommodation is simple and straightforward and no extenuating circumstances apply. In cases where substantiating documentation is required or where there are extenuating circumstances, you will be notified of the reason for delay and the approximate date on which a decision is expected.

What Else Should I Know?

At the Postal Service's expense, a medical expert of the Postal Service's choosing may further review your medical documentation. In all cases, your medical records will be kept confidential.



What Happens If My Request Is Denied?

You will be notified in writing of the reason for the denial and the name of the person or the office that made the decision. Further, if you are a qualified individual with a disability, you will be advised of your ability to participate in any informal dispute resolution processes, your right to file an EEO complaint, and any other appeal rights to which you may be entitled.

Where Can I Get Additional Information About Reasonable Accommodation?

This material is intended as a general reference for information purposes. For detailed information see Handbook EL-307, *Reasonable Accommodation, An Interactive Process*, available in hard copy from your Human Resources Office and the Material Distribution Center. The handbook is also available online at two Postal Service Web sites: Intranet (blue.usps.gov/cpim/) and Internet (www.usps.com).

The Postal Service is committed to building and maintaining an effective, diverse, and motivated workforce — a goal reinforced in the Postal Service's Transformation Plan.

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