

Reasonable Accommodation Tips for Supporting AmeriCorps Members

Overview

Site supervisors should be aware of their responsibilities to comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. This helps prevent disability discrimination.

Responsibilities:

- Site supervisors should recognize a request for a reasonable accommodation
- Site supervisors should maintain confidentiality in the reasonable accommodation process
- Site supervisors should know what to do after they receive a request for reasonable accommodation

Whenever possible, the Alliance provides and requires Host Sites to provide reasonable accommodations:

- a) when an applicant with a disability needs an accommodation in order to be considered for a service position;
- b) when an AmeriCorps member with a disability needs an accommodation to enable them to perform the essential functions of the position or to gain access to the workplace; and
- c) when an AmeriCorps member with a disability needs an accommodation to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of service.

How to recognize a request for a reasonable accommodation

Things to look for:

- An individual does not need to mention the ADA, ADAAA, or use the phrase "reasonable accommodation" when making a request for accommodation
- A member mentions that they are having a problem at work and the problem is related to a medical condition
- Examples to consider:
 - **Example A:** A member tells their supervisor, "I'm having trouble getting to work at my scheduled starting time because of medical treatments I'm undergoing." This is a request for a reasonable accommodation.
 - **Example B:** A member tells their supervisor, "I need six weeks off to get treatment for a back problem." This is a request for a reasonable accommodation.
 - **Example C:** A new member, who uses a wheelchair, informs the site that their wheelchair cannot fit under the desk in their workspace. This is a request for reasonable accommodation.
 - **Example D:** A member tells their supervisor that they would like a new chair because their present one is uncomfortable. Although this is a request for a change at work, their statement is insufficient to put the site on notice that they are requesting reasonable accommodation. They do not link their need for the new chair with a medical condition.
- If you're not certain the member has requested an accommodation, contact your trainer for assistance.

Confidentiality

- Any medical information obtained in connection with the reasonable accommodation process must be kept confidential
- Disclosure of information needed to process a request for accommodation is permitted
- Other disclosures of medical information are permitted as follows:
 - Supervisors and trainers who need to know may be told about necessary restrictions on the work or duties of the member and about the necessary accommodation(s), but medical information should only be disclosed if strictly necessary
 - First aid and safety personnel may be informed, when appropriate, if the disability might require emergency treatment
 - Government officials may be given information necessary to investigate the Alliance's compliance with the Rehabilitation Act
 - The information may in certain circumstances be disclosed to workers' compensation offices or insurance carriers
- Whenever medical information is disclosed, the individual disclosing the information must inform the recipients of the information about the confidentiality requirements that are attached to it

Next steps

- If you receive a request for reasonable accommodation, contact your trainer as soon as possible
- The time frame to ensuring compliance starts once a request for accommodation is made

- Do not request medical information
- Maintain confidentiality
- Provide any documentation you may have to the Alliance – the Alliance will maintain custody of all records obtained or created during the reasonable accommodation process
- The Alliance will work with the member and host sites to comply with the request for reasonable accommodations

Reasonable Accommodations may include:

- Making existing facilities accessible to and usable by an individual with a disability
- Modifying the service schedule
- Modifying existing equipment or devices
- Installing new equipment or devices
- Providing qualified readers and interpreters
- Appropriate modification of the application and training materials

Reasonable Accommodations do not include:

- Eliminating an essential service responsibility
- Lowering production standards that are applied to all AmeriCorps Members
- Providing personal use items, such as prosthetic limbs, wheelchairs, eyeglasses or hearing aids

Who to contact?

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