

Making Workplace Accommodation Decisions

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CIDI Web Series: Learn from the Experts

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Agenda

- Employment and People with Disabilities
- What are Workplace Accommodations
- Accommodation Process
- Resources (inc. two in development)
- Questions?



Employment and People with Disabilities

Employment Stats

- Only 38% of people with disabilities, age 16-64 are actively working or seeking employment (compared to 77.6% without disabilities)
- Unemployment for people with disabilities is twice that of people without disabilities (8.4% vs. 4.0%)
- Many workplace disabilities are hidden -- the most common include low back pain, repetitive stress injuries (e.g., carpal tunnel), learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder (ADHD), mental illnesses....
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. (July 2021). Employment status of the civilian population by sex, age, and disability status, not seasonally adjusted, in *Economic News Release*, U.S. Department of Labor.
www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t06.htm

Who is Involved?

- Employers / employees make most accommodation determinations. In a Georgia Tech survey:
 - One-third of employees received accommodations through a vocational rehabilitation (VR) program
 - 46% through employer-supported programs
 - 19% identified their own accommodations

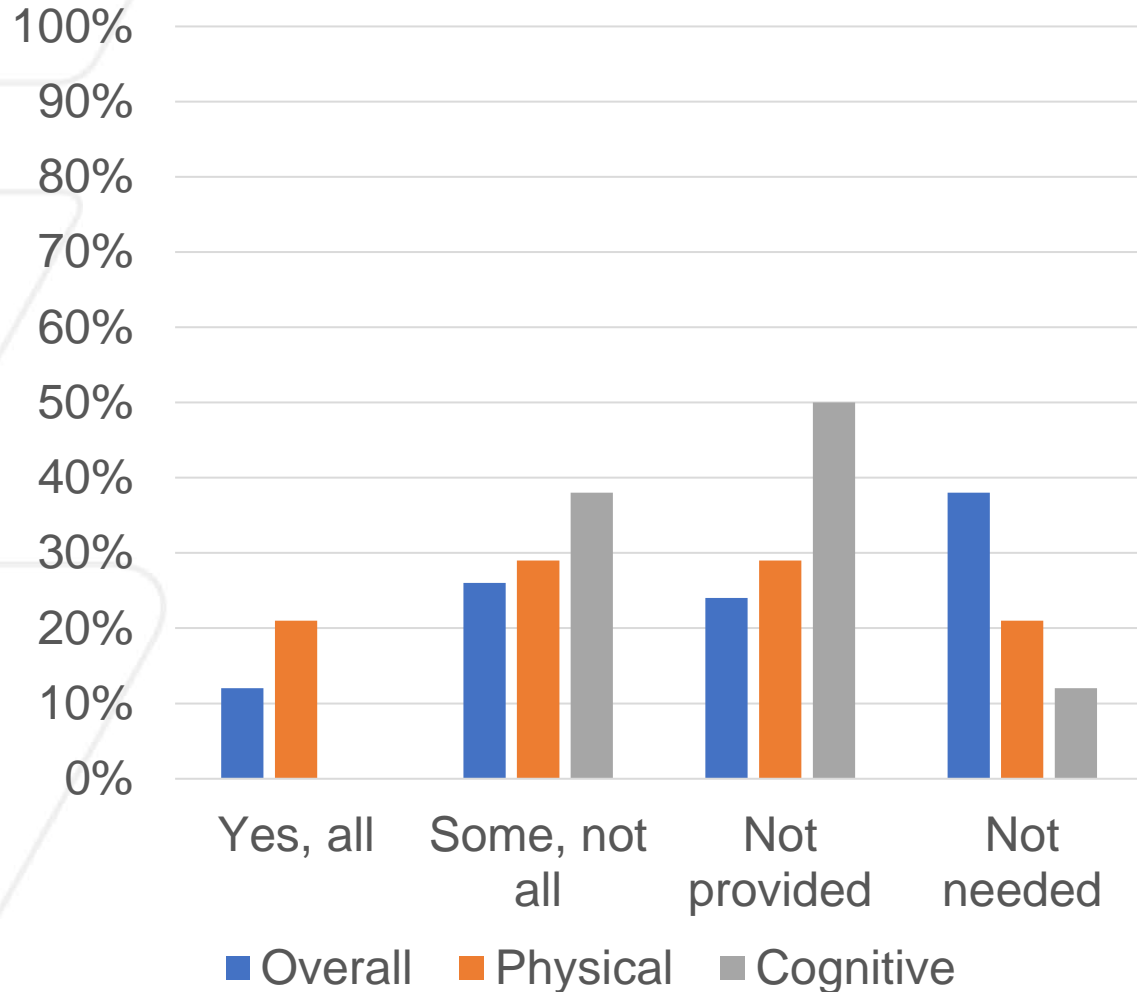
How Does This Impact My Work?

Workplace accommodations might be needed for:

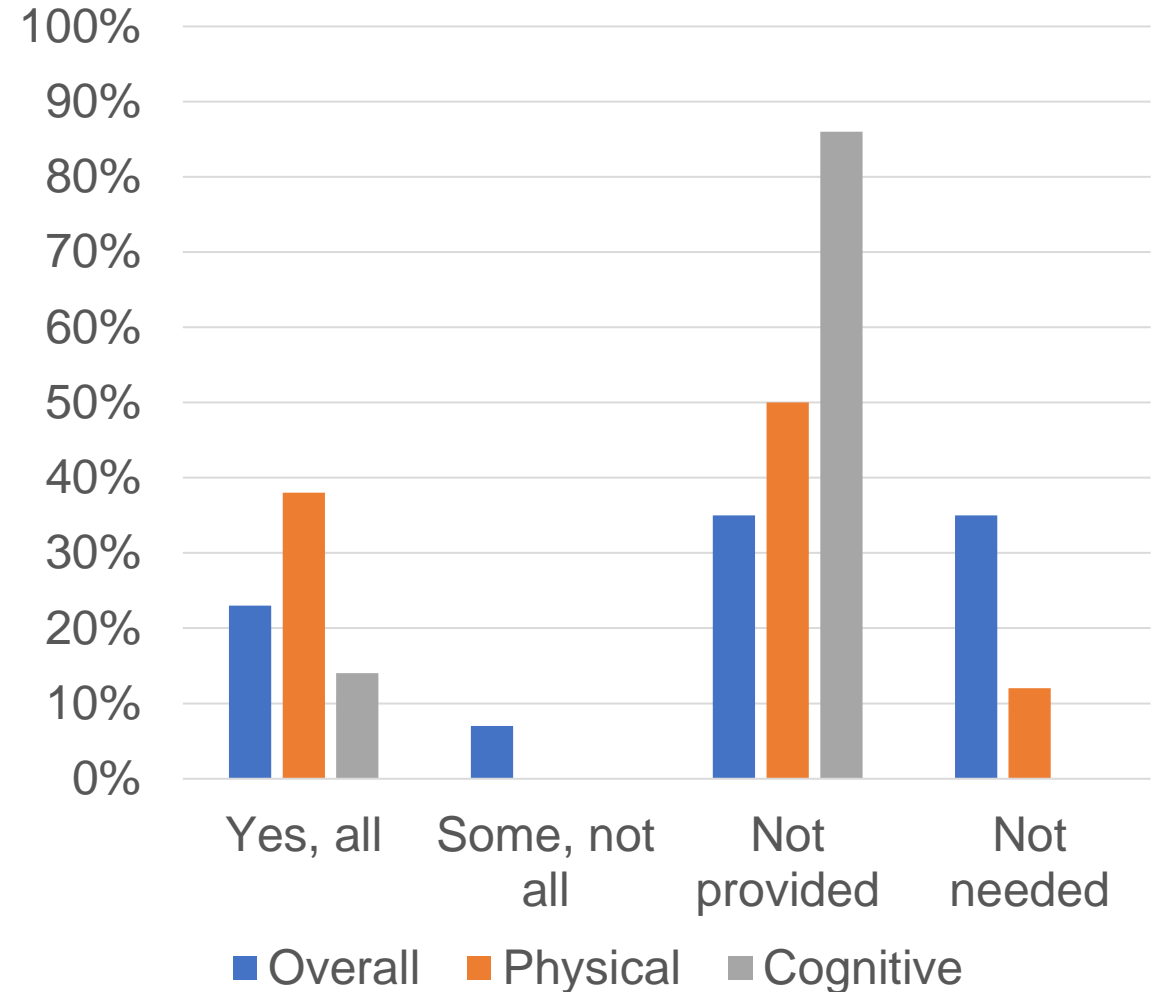
- (Students transitioning to work)
- Degree-required internships, field work
- Student employees (e.g., work study, TAs, GRAs)
- Yourself

Did You Get the Accommodations that You Needed?

Student Teachers



Grad. Teaching Assist.





What Are Workplace Accommodations?

Workplace Accommodations

- “Any change in the work environment or in the way things are customarily done that enables an individual with a disability to enjoy equal employment opportunities” (Source: EEOC)
- Mandated by Title I of ADA; focused on needs of the specific worker



What is reasonable accommodation in the workplace?

- Enables qualified employees to do (and apply for) their job despite having a disability, unless
 1. Doing so would pose an undue hardship on the employer or
 2. It poses a safety risk.
- Qualified employees are all those who have the requisite degrees, skills and experience to perform the job's essential functions, with or without accommodations.

Importance of Workplace Accommodations

- 75% could not perform all of their job duties without workplace accommodations [1]
- 15% had been fired or laid off in the past because they had not been able to get the accommodations they needed [1]
- Workplace accommodations improved productivity (80%), self esteem (70%) [2]

[1] National survey by Georgia Tech (Williams, Sabata & Zolna)

[2] Survey of Californians on AT usage (Yeager et al.)

What do accommodations look like in practice?

A variety of changes could be considered reasonable accommodations:

- Remote work opportunities
- Modified schedules / flexible hours
- Job coaches
- Worksite modifications
- Assistive technology (AT) - low, medium, or high-tech
 - May be similar to the AT used for school



Workplace Accommodations Process

The (Interactive) Accommodation Process

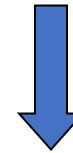
Initiation



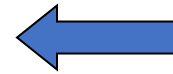
Gather information



Analyze the situation



Determine solutions



Review / follow up



Training
Trial Periods

Common reasonable accommodation misunderstandings

(1)

- Employers do not have to remove essential functions, create new jobs, or lower production standards as an accommodation (but they can if they wish).
- A business can claim “undue hardship” to deny an accommodation if it is unduly disruptive (e.g., telework for some jobs, slower work that impacts the work of others).
- It is important to accommodate all aspects of the job (e.g., training, break room)

Common reasonable accommodation misunderstandings

(2)

Accommodations are not one-size-fits all.

- An accommodation for one employee with ___ may not fit another employee with the same diagnosis.
- Title III guidelines for making businesses accessible to the public (ADA Standards for Accessible Design) may not fit the Title I requirements for accommodating individual workers.
- Employers can only use safety as an excuse if they can show that the specific employee poses a problem (e.g., not any employee with a particular condition).

What do accommodations cost?

- The majority of employers would probably be surprised to know that most accommodations can be provided very inexpensively.
- An ongoing survey conducted by the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) found:
 - 56% of accommodations cost absolutely nothing to implement, (require adapting previous work styles or processes)
 - the rest of the accommodations cost, on average, under \$500
 - Only about 6% resulted in annual costs



Workplace Accommodation Resources

Resources ⁽¹⁾

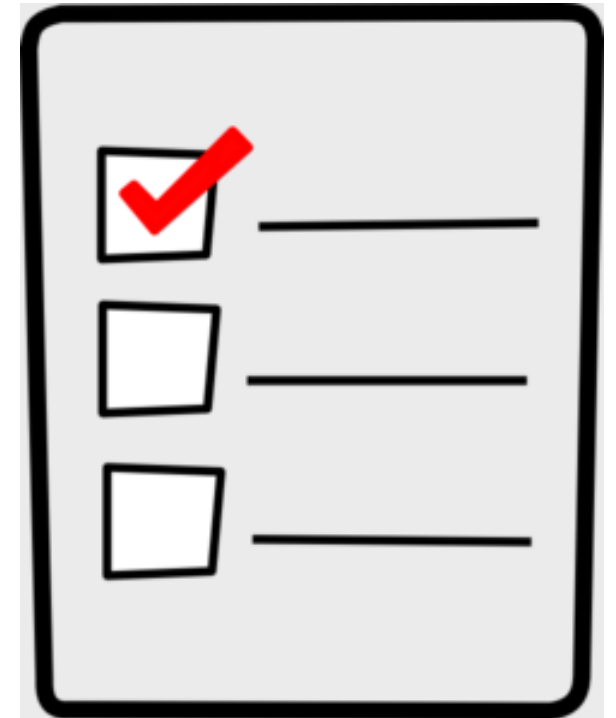
- ADA National Network
 - Legal / procedural information
 - <https://adata.org/>
- Job Accommodation Network (JAN)
 - Articles, search by disability, phone inquiries
 - <https://askjan.org/>

Resources ⁽²⁾

- State AT Act Projects (e.g., Georgia Tools for Life)
 - AT information, loan closets, training
 - <https://at3center.net/>
- Providing Reasonable Accommodations to Individuals with Disabilities in Internship Sites and Postdoctoral Internship Positions
 - <https://www.apa.org/pi/disability/resources/reasonable>

CIDI's Workplace Accommodation Decision Tools

- **Work ACCESS**: An online workplace accommodation assessment tool for employers and employees to use together. It presents questions about the problem, and based on the answers, makes recommendations.
- **Assistive Software Knowledgebase**: A centralized, online resource on assistive software and mobile apps used as workplace accommodations. It provides general product information and other tips to maximize use of the software.
- **(Run Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cl6faSxDkzk>)**



Work ACCESS: Included Work Tasks (so far)

Using Facilities

- Moving through the workplace / between floors / using doors
- Using the restroom / washing hands

Communication

- In-person communication (1-2 indiv.)
- Remote communication (phone/text)
- Participating in meetings (in-person or remote)
- Reading and writing documents
- Composing text

Using Workstation

- Sitting / standing at a workstation

Using Equipment

- Using computer
- Using phone

Organization

- Planning the work day
- Learning / remembering tasks
- Staying on task

Maintaining Well-Being

- Managing stress / anxiety

Work ACCESS Specifications (1)

- Assessment questions collect information about individual, environmental, activity, & external factors
- A rule set / decision tree links difficulties with performing activities to accommodation suggestions
- Considers a broad range of accommodations, including assistive technologies, facility modifications, strategies, policy changes, and universal features
- Provides information about product types and features rather than specific products.

Work ACCESS Specifications (2)

- Recommendations prioritized based on individual, environmental, activity, and external factors; as well as evidence of effectiveness
- Warn users when a situation is more complicated and experts need to be involved
- Links to external (non-Work ACCESS) resources:
 - Articles/videos describing accommodations
 - Other sites that provide information about specific products
 - Resources to help with funding and implementation

Assistive Software Knowledgebase

Sources of Information

- Manufacturer info
- Crowd sourcing
- Other resources / discussion sites



Assistive
Software
Knowledge-
base



Resource Information

- General Product Information
- Compatibility
- Reviews
- Usage and Training Tips

Crowd Sourcing (our definition)

Crowd sourcing is the practice of utilizing (often online) the wisdom of a group for a common goal.



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Utilizes the idea that “the research efforts of a group of people with varying opinions, when aggregated, can result in better information than a specific expert could come up with”

- SinhaRoy, S., American Libraries, 2011

How Can You Contribute?

Work ACCESS

- Will be free to people who provide feedback (check back end of year)
- Decision tree development: focus groups, validation surveys
- [https://gatfl.gatech.edu/tflwiki/index.php?title=Work ACCESS Research Opportunities](https://gatfl.gatech.edu/tflwiki/index.php?title=Work_ACCESS_Research_Opportunities)

Assistive Software Knowledgebase

- Preliminary version: <https://assistivesoftware.gatech.edu>
- Post a review / usage tips
- <http://survey.alchemer.com/s3/4119373/Review-Team-Registration>

(contributors can entered a drawing for \$50 gift cards!)

Questions?



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