

ACCOMMODATION & ACCESSIBILITY



Accommodation

In Canada, employers have a duty to accommodate employees with disabilities to the point of undue hardship. This means that businesses may be required to modify policies, practices, or spaces to meet the needs of an employee with a disability, unless the organization provides sufficient evidence that they can't afford the accommodation or that it would cause a risk to health or safety.

Accommodations are put in place in response to the specific needs of an individual. They involve removing barriers that prevent employees with disabilities from successfully completing their work. These could include:

- ▼ Scheduling accommodations
- ▼ Modifying or restructuring duties
- ▼ Modifying the physical environment
- ▼ Providing access to assistive devices and equipment
- ▼ Adapting policies and procedures

Most employers report no or low cost for accommodating employees with disabilities.

Accessibility or Design for Inclusion

Accessibility means that something is designed to be useable by the greatest number of people without requiring adaptation or modification to remove barriers. Many regions in Canada have laws in place that require employers to meet certain accessible employment standards. These may include requirements related to:

- ▼ Recruitment processes
- ▼ Workplace information
- ▼ Talent and performance management processes
- ▼ Communication about policies
- ▼ Accommodation policies and practices
- ▼ Return to work processes

In addition, employers may be required to meet other accessibility standards, such as communication, design of public space, transportation, and customer service.

Unlike accommodation, which removes barriers on an individual, case-by-case basis, accessibility doesn't just benefit employees with disabilities, but the organization as a whole. For example, while installing a ramp improves access for people who use a wheelchair or other mobility device, it also makes it easier for a person pushing a stroller or cart to access the space. Similarly, allowing for flexible scheduling doesn't just benefit someone with numerous doctor's appointments, but also people who may need to leave work early to care for a child or family member. Providing the option of sit/stand desks for all employees can improve the health of anyone in a sedentary role. While creating an accessible workplace can reduce barriers before they arise, individual accommodations may still be needed in some circumstances.

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