

Appendix C

Procedures for providing reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities

These procedures will be used to process requests for reasonable accommodation from Army employees and applicants with disabilities to ensure an appropriate response in a timely manner. Further, these procedures establish criteria for collecting and annually reporting data on the numbers and types of requests for reasonable accommodation considered Armywide.

C–1. Key terms

a. Department of Defense Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program. CAP is a centrally-funded reasonable accommodations program that provides assistive technology and services to people with disabilities, Federal managers, supervisors, and information technology professionals. CAP increases access to information and works to remove barriers to employment opportunities by eliminating the costs of assistive technology and accommodation solutions. More information is available at www.cap.mil.

b. Decisionmaker. The decisionmaker is an agency official within the employee’s chain of command, usually the employee’s immediate supervisor. In the case of an applicant, the decisionmaker will usually be the selecting official, an agency official in the selecting official’s chain of command, or an HR staff member assigned to process the vacancy (usually within the CPAC).

c. Individual with a disability. An individual who has (i) a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, (ii) a record of such impairment, or (iii) is regarded as having such impairment. Individuals who are solely regarded as having a disability are not entitled to reasonable accommodations.

d. “Qualified” individual with a disability. A “qualified” individual with a disability satisfies the requisite skill, experience, education, and other job-related requirements of the position. The individual can perform the essential functions of the position with or without reasonable accommodation.

e. Reasonable accommodation. A reasonable accommodation is any change in the work environment or the way things are customarily done that would enable an individual with a disability to enjoy EEO. Three categories of reasonable accommodations are available for employees or applicants with disabilities:

(1) Modifications or adjustments to the application process to permit an individual with a disability to be considered for a job (for example, providing application forms in alternative formats such as large print or Braille).

(2) Modifications or adjustments necessary to enable a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of the job (for example, providing a sign language interpreter or teletype (TTY) device).

(3) Modifications or adjustments that enable IWDs to have equal benefits and privileges of employment (for example, removing physical barriers in buildings or providing wheelchairs or motorized scooters to facilitate easy access to buildings).

C–2. Initiating a request for reasonable accommodation

a. Commands and organizations must make the contact information for reasonable accommodations readily available in the workplace by posting it on bulletin boards and Web sites or providing it as a handout.

b. Applicants and employees must generally inform the decisionmaker of their need for an adjustment or change to some aspect of the application process, the job, or a benefit of employment for a reason related to a medical condition.

c. An applicant or employee may request a reasonable accommodation at any time, orally or in writing. The request does not require the individual to mention the Rehabilitation Act or use the phrase “reasonable accommodation” or “disability.”

d. If the nature of the initial communication is unclear, a supervisor or a manager must confirm whether an individual is requesting a reasonable accommodation.

e. The reasonable accommodation process begins as soon as an individual makes an oral or written request for accommodation to the immediate supervisor, a supervisor or manager in the individual’s chain of command, the HR office or CPAC, or the organization’s EEO office or Disability Program Manager (DPM).

f. For applicants, the HR office or CPAC, decisionmaker, or an Army employee the applicant has had official contact with in connection with the application process.

g. Individuals requesting an accommodation must confirm their request to their supervisor. The supervisor or decisionmaker must document that the request was made and provide a copy of the documentation to the DPM within 2 business days of receipt. The DPM will assign a log number to the document for tracking purposes.

h. The decisionmaker must begin processing an oral request immediately upon receipt of the request and should not wait for written confirmation.

i. A family member, health professional, or other representative may request a reasonable accommodation on behalf of an individual seeking reasonable accommodation. The decisionmaker should confirm with the employee that the employee wants the accommodation.

C-3. Processing requests for reasonable accommodation

a. The request for accommodation begins with an interactive and flexible discussion between the requester and the supervisor. This process may include communicating with the requester to clarify the request, obtaining and exchanging information with the requester to the extent necessary regarding needs and alternatives, searching for solutions, consulting Army and outside resources, and evaluating possible accommodations and additional information, if necessary.

b. If the person receiving the request for reasonable accommodation does not have authority to approve the request, he/she must forward the request within 2 business days to the appropriate official, with a copy to the DPM. A copy of the request will also be forwarded to the servicing labor counselor/agency attorney for information purposes.

c. The decisionmaker may ask the requester relevant questions that will assist in making an informed decision about the request. The decisionmaker is entitled to know that the requester has a disability covered by the Rehabilitation Act for which an accommodation is needed. When the disability and/or need for accommodation is not obvious, the decisionmaker must contact the DPM for assistance in obtaining medical documentation about the employee's disability and functional limitations.

d. Reasonable accommodations are meant to eliminate barriers in the work environment only, not barriers outside the work environment. Common types of reasonable accommodations include modifying work schedules or supervisory methods, granting breaks or providing leave, altering how or when job duties are performed, removing and/or substituting a nonessential function, moving to different office space, providing telework, changing workplace policies, reconfiguring workspaces, providing accessible parking, and providing materials in alternative formats (such as Braille or TTY).

e. Reasonable accommodations may include personal assistance services in the form of work-related assistance, but generally do not include personal attendant care at the worksite. Work-related personal assistance services may include task-related assistance such as readers, interpreters, help lifting or reaching, page turners, or a travel attendant to act as a sighted guide for a blind or mobility-impaired employee while on occasional official travel (5 CFR 213.3102(II)). When an employee is on official travel and incurs personal attendant care expenses beyond what his/her usual expenses would be when not on official travel, the command or organization should consider reimbursement for the added travel expense.

f. A request by an employee with a disability to use a service animal at work is also a request for reasonable accommodation. Federal law defines a service animal as any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability. Employers are not required to automatically allow employees to bring their service animal to work. An employer can propose alternative accommodations that are equally reasonable and effective, or the employer must show undue hardship for denying a request for the use of a service animal as a reasonable accommodation.

g. If a decisionmaker does not immediately grant the requested accommodation, he/she must consult directly with the DPM. The DPM will coordinate, as needed, with the servicing labor counselor/agency attorney before providing the decisionmaker with any recommendations. Legal reviews must be conducted for all proposed denials of a reasonable accommodation or the particular accommodation requested.

h. As soon as the decisionmaker determines that an accommodation will be provided, he/she must immediately communicate the decision orally or in writing to the requester. If the decisionmaker initially communicates the decision orally, he/she must follow up in writing. For recordkeeping purposes, the decisionmaker will give a copy of the written decision to the DPM.

i. As part of the interactive process, the decisionmaker may offer alternative suggestions for reasonable accommodations and discuss their effectiveness in addressing the need for a reasonable accommodation. A decision to provide an accommodation other than the one specifically requested is considered a decision to grant an accommodation. If more than one accommodation is effective, the preference of the individual with a disability should be given primary consideration. However, the decisionmaker has the ultimate discretion to choose between effective accommodations. The written decision will explain both the reasons for the denial of the individual's specific requested accommodation and why it has been determined that the chosen accommodation will be effective. If the request is approved but the accommodation cannot be provided immediately, the written decision must include a projected timeframe for providing the accommodation.

j. A decisionmaker granting a request is responsible for following through and making any necessary arrangements to ensure that the accommodation is provided within the applicable time limit. Absent extenuating circumstances, the requested accommodation should be granted, modified, or denied within 30 business days from the date the decisionmaker receives the initial request. Each command or organization will determine how funding will be provided to support the provision of reasonable accommodation not covered through CAP.

C-4. Time limits

a. The command or organization will process requests for reasonable accommodations and provide accommodations, when appropriate, as soon as reasonably possible. The process begins when an applicant or employee makes an oral or written request for reasonable accommodation and not necessarily when the decisionmaker receives the written confirmation of the request (see document samples in this appendix). All parties, however, should recognize that the time necessary to process a request will depend on the nature of the accommodation requested and whether it is necessary to obtain supporting information and medical documentation. Supervisors/decisionmakers should have backups designated to continue receiving and processing requests and providing reasonable accommodations when the supervisors/decisionmakers are unavailable. Decisionmakers should ensure that the individuals know who has been designated as backup.

b. A supervisor or decisionmaker receiving a request for reasonable accommodation may be able to grant the request immediately. Absent extenuating circumstances, the requested accommodation should be granted or denied within 30 business days from the date the decisionmaker receives the initial request. However, the 30-business day timeline is paused pending receipt of the requested medical information or supporting documentation from the requester or a health care provider. Once the information has been received, the timeline resumes.

c. “Extenuating circumstances” are situations that could not reasonably have been anticipated or avoided in advance of the request for accommodation, or that are beyond the requester’s or decisionmaker’s ability to control. When extenuating circumstances are present, the time for processing a request for reasonable accommodation and providing the accommodation will be extended as reasonably necessary. Extensions will be limited to circumstances in which they are reasonably necessary and only for as long as required to deal with the extenuating circumstance.

d. When a delay occurs in processing a request for or providing a reasonable accommodation, the decisionmaker must notify the requester of the reason for the delay. Upon becoming aware of the need for a delay, the decisionmaker must contact the DPM to determine whether a provisional accommodation can be provided. A decisionmaker could consider a temporary job restructuring or the use of equipment that might permit the individual to perform some of the functions of the job.

e. The processing of reasonable accommodation requests may be expedited in appropriate cases. Expedited processing might be necessary where, the reasonable accommodation is needed to enable an individual to apply for a job, or the reasonable accommodation is needed for a specific activity that is scheduled to occur shortly.

C-5. Medical information

a. When the disability and/or need for accommodation is not obvious, the employee or applicant seeking accommodation may be asked to provide appropriate medical information related to the functional impairment and/or limitations at issue and the requested accommodation. Supplemental documentation may be requested when the information already submitted is insufficient to document the disability and/or the functional limitations. The decisionmaker should consider providing an interim accommodation until medical documentation is received and a final decision is made on a reasonable accommodation. Failure to provide necessary documentation when it has been properly requested could result in a denial of reasonable accommodations.

b. Medical documentation contains PII and is sensitive information about an individual’s medical condition and must be handled in a confidential manner. The decisionmaker must seek the assistance of the DPM before obtaining any medical documentation. The DPM, in coordination with the servicing labor counselor/agency attorney (as needed), will assist in obtaining appropriate medical documentation.

c. Medical information will be requested only to the extent reasonably necessary to establish that the requester is an individual with a disability and/or needs the requested accommodation and provide information on the nature, severity, and expected duration of the impairment (for example, functional limitations, symptoms, side effects of any treatments, and so forth); the activity or activities the impairment limits; the extent to which the impairment limits the individual’s ability to perform the activity or activities; and/or why the individual requires the particular accommodation requested and how the accommodation will assist the individual to apply for a job, perform the essential functions of the job, or have the benefits of the workplace.

d. Based on the medical documentation provided, the decisionmaker may elect to approve the request for reasonable accommodation. On a case-by case basis, the decisionmaker may submit medical documentation to the occupational medicine physician or other medical expert for assistance in assessing functional abilities regarding that individual’s ability to perform a job, in order to help the decisionmaker choose an effective reasonable accommodation. The information should inform the medical authority of the nature of the job, the essential functions the individual will be expected to perform, and any other information relevant to evaluating the request.

e. The medical authority may request supplemental medical documentation when the submitted information is insufficient to document the existence of a disability and the need for reasonable accommodation.

f. If the supplemental medical documentation does not result in sufficient information, the activity may require the employee requesting the accommodation to be examined by a health care professional of the activity's choice at the activity's expense.

C-6. Reassignments

a. Reassignment is the accommodation of last resort and is available only to employees, not applicants. Supervisors/decisionmakers will consider a reassignment only if no reasonable accommodations are available to enable the individual to perform the essential functions of his/her current position, or if the only effective accommodation would cause undue hardship. Reassignment may be made only to a vacant position. The command or organization will not create new positions or displace employees from their jobs.

b. The vacant position is considered available as long as a selection to fill the position has not been made and no DOD Priority Placement Program matches are pending. An employee is qualified for the identified reassignment if he/she satisfies the requisite skill, experience, education, and other job-related requirements of the position and can perform the essential functions of the position with or without reasonable accommodation. If the employee is qualified for the position, he/she should be reassigned to it as a reasonable accommodation and not have to compete for the position.

c. If a reassignment is under consideration, the decisionmaker must consult with the servicing CPAC and Staff Judge Advocate. The servicing CPAC will conduct a vacancy search based on the employee's expressed preference and qualifications. The decisionmaker should explain to the employee why he/she cannot be accommodated in the current position and that a reassignment is under consideration. The decisionmaker should determine the employee's preferences with respect to the reassignment, such as whether the employee is willing to be reassigned outside the facility or outside the commuting area, including outside the geographical area and, if so, to what locations; be reassigned to a different type of position he/she may be qualified for and, if so, to what type(s); be reassigned to a different subcomponent of the department and, if so, to which one(s); and be reassigned to a lower grade or pay band position if no position is available at the current grade or pay band and, if so, down to what grade or pay band.

d. The reassignment should not create an adverse personnel action or adversely impact the employee's career.

e. If an employee is reassigned outside the local commuting area or to a different geographical area, the employee must pay any relocation expenses unless the activity routinely pays such expenses when granting voluntary transfers to other employees.

C-7. Denial of requested accommodation

a. Decisionmakers must inform the DPM and Staff Judge Advocate before denying a request for accommodation or the particular accommodation requested. The decisionmaker must provide documentation that demonstrates the effort made to explore, with the requester, other options for accommodation. The command or organization must obtain legal reviews for all proposed denials of a reasonable accommodation or the particular accommodation requested before informing the requester of the denial.

b. When the decisionmaker denies an individual's request for an accommodation, he/she must notify the requester of the denial in writing. The notification must be written in plain language and state the specific reason(s) for the denial (for example, why the medical documentation is inadequate to establish that the individual has a disability or needs reasonable accommodation, why the requested accommodation would be ineffective, the reasons the decisionmaker believes the offered accommodation would be effective, or why the requested accommodation would pose an undue hardship). The written denial must identify the supervisor/manager and the office that made the decision and provide information about the individual's right to file an EEO Complaint and invoke other applicable statutory or regulatory processes, including the availability of the informal dispute resolution process.

c. The decisionmaker must complete the memorandum for the record documenting the denial of accommodation request (see document samples in this Appendix) and submit it to the staff judge advocate along with a copy of the written notification of denial.

d. In determining whether a proposed reasonable accommodation poses an undue hardship, the decisionmaker, in consultation with the DPM and the labor counselor/agency attorney, must consider the overall resources and options available to the Army, not just the budget or resources of an individual segment, subcomponent, or division within the Army.

C-8. Confidentiality

a. The decisionmaker or any other official who receives information in connection with a request for reasonable accommodation may share information that is confidential and connected with that request with other Army officials only when those other Army official(s) demonstrate a need to know and that the information will be used solely to make determinations on an accommodation request, or to help the decisionmaker make a determination.

b. The Rehabilitation Act requires that all medical information be kept confidential. DPMs, decisionmakers, and other persons who have access to information necessary to make a decision on a request for reasonable accommodation must maintain this information in a secure location separate from the employee's personnel file and may not further disclose this information except as provided in in this appendix.

c. Officials must be informed about the confidentiality requirements whenever medical information is disclosed to them.

d. Supervisors and managers who need to know will be informed about necessary restrictions on the work or duties of the employee and about necessary accommodation(s).

e. Building managers and others planning for emergency evacuations may be informed to include special provisions in emergency evacuation planning and procedures.

f. First aid and safety personnel may be informed if the disability might require emergency treatment.

g. Other government officials may be provided information necessary to investigate the Army's compliance with the Rehabilitation Act.

h. The information may be disclosed to workers' compensation offices or insurance carriers in certain circumstances.

i. Information may be shared with other agency officials who have an official need to know to execute their mission, such as labor counselors, agency attorneys, HR or the servicing CPAC personnel, the occupational medicine physician or the medical advisor, and EEO specialists.

j. Other information that must be kept confidential includes the fact that an employee or applicant is receiving an accommodation or has a disability. Managers should explain the policy of assisting any employee who encounters difficulties in the workplace if coworkers question what they perceive as different or special treatment of an accommodated employee.

k. The manager/supervisor will also point out that many of the workplace issues employees encounter are personal and that it is the agency's policy to respect employee privacy. An employee may, however, authorize release of information that may facilitate a requested accommodation. The authorization should be addressed and confirmed in writing before it is released.

C-9. Information tracking

a. The local EEO office will establish a system of recordkeeping to track the processing of requests for reasonable accommodation. The decisionmaker who processed the accommodation request must complete and submit information to the DPM. A sample format is provided in this appendix.

b. Records that contain medical information about a particular individual with a disability are subject to the confidentiality restrictions and the activity's recordkeeping systems must contain safeguards to ensure that those restrictions are observed.

c. At a minimum, the records related to an employee who requested a reasonable accommodation will be maintained for the duration of the employee's tenure to ensure that the employee is not asked to provide medical information previously submitted. After the employee's tenure, they will be maintained in accordance with the Army's records retention policies.

d. The EEO office will retain information or any cumulative records used to track the activity's performance with regard to reasonable accommodation for at least 5 years. Tracking performance over a 5-year period is critical to enable the activity to assess whether it has adequately processed and provided reasonable accommodations.

e. Information will be summarized in the annual MD 715 Report to the EEOC through command channels. On an annual basis, activities will report the following information as part of the reporting process:

(1) The number of reasonable accommodations, by type, that have been requested for the application process and whether those requests have been granted or denied.

(2) The types of reasonable accommodations that have been requested by job series.

(3) The number of reasonable accommodations, by type, for each job series that have been approved and denied.

(4) The number of requests for reasonable accommodations, by type, that relate to the benefits or privileges of employment and whether those requests have been granted or denied.

(5) The reasons for denial of requests for reasonable accommodation.

(6) The amount of time taken to process each request for reasonable accommodation.

(7) The sources of technical assistance that were consulted in trying to identify possible reasonable accommodations.

(8) Relevant information will be examined during Army's onsite EEO Program reviews. The Army review will evaluate the activity's performance in responding to requests for reasonable accommodation. Reviews will include:

(9) The length of time it takes the activity to respond to requests for different types of reasonable accommodations.

(10) Whether the activity has been unable to provide any particular types of reasonable accommodations.

(11) Whether any activities consistently are not granting reasonable accommodations, and the various reasons activities denied a request for reasonable accommodation.

C-10. Informal dispute resolution and Equal Employment Opportunity Complaints

a. An informal dispute resolution process is a voluntary mechanism through which an employee can request reconsideration of a denial of reasonable accommodation, regardless of whether the person has started the EEO Complaint Process. An informal dispute resolution process begins when an employee asks the decisionmaker to reconsider his or her decision. Employees may also request reconsideration of the denial from officials higher in the decisionmaker's chain of command.

b. The Army's preferred method of informal dispute resolution is ADR. An individual whose request for accommodation has been denied has the option to initiate ADR through any applicable ADR process the Army has established that covers such disputes.

c. An individual whose request for accommodation has been denied may file an EEO Complaint in accordance with AR 690-600. An employee whose request for accommodation has been denied and who is covered by a collective bargaining agreement may elect to file a claim of discrimination under a negotiated grievance procedure that covers such claims or through the EEO Complaint Process, but not both. An employee filing an EEO Complaint also may request the use of ADR at any stage of the Complaint Process.

d. The informal dispute resolution process does not affect the time limits governing the EEO Complaint Process. An individual's participation in ADR does not satisfy the requirements for bringing a claim under the EEO, Merit Systems Protection Board, or negotiated grievance procedures. When a request for reasonable accommodation is denied, the individual wishing to pursue the EEO Complaint Process must do so within 45 days of the denial, even if he/she has already requested participation in ADR.

e. Contact information for the activity's servicing EEO office should be available on the activity's Web site, posted in the local CPAC, or at the end of these procedures.