

The Employers' Reasonable Accommodation Handbook: Sensory Disabilities Learner's Guide

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Overview

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) supports employers in creating workplaces that are diverse and inclusive of employees with disabilities. One way OOD does this is through providing consultations and training on Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), worksite accessibility, reasonable accommodations, and disability inclusion.

This learner's guide is a reference companion for the webinar titled "Sensory Disabilities" which is the fifth in the six-part series "The Employers' Reasonable Accommodation Handbook." This educational series will include an overview of various disability groups and address ways to provide effective reasonable accommodations and foster a disability inclusive culture. In this fifth session of the handbook, these topics will be summarized:

- Sensory Disabilities,
- Disability Inclusive Workplace Culture, and
- The Interactive Process and Reasonable Accommodations.

The information included is for educational purposes, is not an exhaustive list, and is not intended as legal advice.

Sensory Disabilities

Disabilities related to hearing, vision, or both are considered sensory disabilities. Conditions covered in this learner's guide include deafness and hard of hearing, blindness and low vision, and color vision deficiency.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

According to the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), it is estimated that more than 28 million Americans are deaf or hard of hearing. Deafness and hard of hearing can be a result of genetics, infections, health conditions, physical trauma, age, and loud noises.

The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) defines hard of hearing as having some hearing loss but the ability to use hearing to communicate and defines deafness as the inability to hear well enough to rely on hearing to process information.

It should be noted that many people in the Deaf community believe that being deaf is a cultural identity rather than a disability. Because this learner's guide focuses on reasonable accommodations and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the term "hearing disability" will be used throughout.

Each condition is unique, however here are common ways individuals with hearing disabilities are impacted in the workplace:

- Barriers with communicating one-to-one or in groups and in activities such as daily work conversations, meetings, phone calls, and training sessions.
- Barriers with receiving and responding to sounds in the workplace, alarms, warning signals, and emergency notifications.

Individuals with hearing disabilities may experience barriers with some of these workplace activities but may not experience barriers with all of them. The degree to which an individual is impacted is unique. Each person's abilities, strengths, and skills are also unique.

Vision Disabilities

According to the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB), it is estimated that more than 32.2 million adult Americans report difficulties with seeing despite using corrective lenses or are blind and unable to see at all. Vision disabilities can be a result of genetics, congenital conditions, vitamin deficiencies, infections, age-related diseases, and head trauma.

JAN provides these definitions of blindness, legal blindness, low vision, and color vision deficiency:

- Blindness – customarily means a lack of usable vision
- Legal Blindness – vision of 20/200 or less in the better eye with the best corrective option
- Low Vision – a vision condition that cannot be corrected with lenses; some usable vision remains
- Color Vision Deficiency – inability to distinguish between some colors and shades; it is rare to have total inability to see color

Each condition is unique however, here are common ways individuals with vision disabilities are impacted in the workplace:

- Barriers with accessing printed or digital materials, taking notes, and completing forms.
- Barriers with workplace communications and functions such as meetings, trainings, and presentations.
- Barriers with accessing a phone, Smart device, computer, and other workplace equipment and technology.
- Barriers with work tasks involving assembly, repair, color-coding, and auditing.
- Barriers with work commute and work-related travel.
- Barriers with accessing and navigating the work environment.

Individuals with vision disabilities may experience barriers with some of these workplace activities but may not experience barriers with all of them. The degree to which an individual is impacted is unique. Each person's abilities, strengths, and skills are also unique.

Deafblind

The correct terminology for combined hearing and vision disabilities is deafblind. According to the National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB), it is rare to have the combined condition of deafness and blindness. A combination of hearing and vision disabilities can be a result of premature birth, congenital conditions, syndromes, post-natal conditions, diabetes, and age-related conditions.

NCDB defines deafblind as having combined hearing and vision loss that limits access to both auditory and visual information. Most individuals who are deafblind are not profoundly deaf and totally blind but instead have some degree of combined vision and hearing loss. The degree to which an individual is impacted is unique. Each person's abilities, strengths, and skills are also unique.

ADA Definition of Disability

Individuals who meet the definition of disability according to the ADA and are qualified for the job are eligible to receive protection under Title I from employment discrimination based on disability. The ADA defines a person with a disability as “...a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity.”

Major life activities are those daily functions that are important to most individuals and that most individuals in the general population can perform with little or no difficulty. The ADA provides two non-exhaustive lists which include examples of major life activities and major bodily functions. Here are some examples of each:

- Major life activities: performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, walking, sitting, reaching, lifting, speaking, reading, communicating, interacting with others, and working.
- Major bodily functions: sensory, neurological, brain, circulatory, and endocrine functions.

The major life activities and major bodily functions substantially limited by a hearing or vision disability, or both will be unique to the individual.

The ADA does not provide an exclusive list of individual diseases, diagnoses, or conditions that qualify as a disability. However, the ADA National Network [resource](#) “The Americans with Disabilities Act Questions and Answers” includes a list of conditions which should “easily be concluded” to be a disability. Both deafness and blindness are included in this list.

OOD Resource:

For more information on the ADA’s definition of disability, view “**The Employers’ ADA Handbook – Title I Overview**” on the employer’s page of the OOD [website](#).

Disability-Inclusive Workplace

Employers who wish to hire, retain, and advance individuals with disabilities make efforts to foster a disability-inclusive culture in the workplace. Many of these strategies are the same across disability types. This learner’s guide highlights ways to create a culture that is inclusive of individuals with hearing and vision disabilities by addressing disclosure, generalizations, and disability etiquette.

Disclosure

Under Title I of the ADA, individuals with disabilities can request a reasonable accommodation at any point in the hiring process and during employment, including in response to a low performance rating. To receive a reasonable accommodation, an individual must disclose their disability. Disclosing is a personal choice and can be a difficult and overwhelming decision to make.

There are reasons individuals may choose not to disclose a disability. Here are some examples:

- No accommodation is needed.
- Sensory disabilities can be visible or invisible. Invisible means they are not obvious. People with invisible disabilities may fear others won’t believe they have a disability.

- Concern that the misconceptions associated with sensory disabilities will negatively impact hiring and promotion decisions.
- Fear of negative reactions to the disability and work performance.
- Concern that an employer will think they cannot afford the accommodations needed.
- Fear that previous achievements will be “erased” by disclosing what may be considered a “weakness.”

Employees with sensory disabilities report disclosing their disability led to increased morale in the workplace as others shared a similar disability, decreased stress due to feeling they could bring their whole self to work, and access to reasonable accommodations needed to perform the job. When employers are intentional about fostering a culture of disability inclusion, employees may feel more comfortable about disclosing their disability because the environment feels safe and open.

Fostering a disability-inclusive culture in the workplace may help individuals with disabilities feel comfortable to request a reasonable accommodation if they need one. Here are strategies employers can consider:

- Create an accessible hiring process and digital work environment,
- Have a policy or procedures for providing reasonable accommodations,
- Provide training on policies/procedures for all employees at onboarding and annually,
- Know what constitutes a request for an accommodation and make it easy for an individual to request one,
- Post reasonable accommodation statements in key areas in the built and digital work environments,
- Use plain language in training communications and statements,
- Choose accessible fonts and use proper color contrast in written and digital materials,
- Create digital materials that are accessible by screen reading software,
- Include alternative text in visual content of digital materials,
- Ensure audio and video content includes correct captions,
- Include images of individuals with disabilities in marketing materials and on websites,
- Ensure employee newsletters include topics related to disability,
- Train supervisors to recognize a request for an accommodation and to direct the employee to human resources,
- Provide disability etiquette and awareness training for all employees,
- Educate all employees on how to make meetings disability-inclusive,
- Be familiar with effective reasonable accommodations and resources for identifying solutions,
- Respect privacy and follow protocols for confidentiality,
- Include interpreters for meetings, presentations, and gatherings, and
- Ensure alerts and emergency alarms are provided in audio, visual, and tactile formats.

Generalizations

Individuals with sensory disabilities have variance in their abilities, limitations, and needs just as people without sensory disabilities do and can perform a variety of types of jobs. However, individuals with sensory disabilities can be impacted negatively in the hiring process and at work when generalizations

are made about their abilities. Here are examples of myths and facts about sensory disabilities summarized from a variety of resources:

Myths versus Facts

Myth	Fact
Deaf or Hard of Hearing	
Hearing aids restore hearing.	Hearing aids do not “cure” hearing loss. They can help improve hearing by amplifying certain sounds and filtering out background noise, making it easier to hear in a noisy environment.
People who are deaf do not talk.	Some deaf employees can speak and some cannot. The ability to speak is unique to the individual and not a reflection of intelligence.
Deaf individuals read lips.	Some deaf individuals speech read. Lip reading is different from hearing. In the best of conditions, approximately 30% of English speech sounds are visible on the mouth.
All hearing loss is the same.	There are various types and levels of hearing loss. Just like with all types of disabilities, how hearing loss affects an individual is unique.
All deaf individuals use sign language.	Not all deaf individuals know or use sign language, but most will benefit from gesturing, demonstrations, and using more than one communication method. To know the best way to communicate with a person is to ask the person.
People who are deaf or hard of hearing prefer to communicate through email rather than in-person, over the phone, or through a virtual meeting.	Not all people who are deaf or hard of hearing prefer to communicate in the same way. Some people prefer to speak, to use sign language, or to write. Ask the person how they prefer to communicate.
Talking louder will help a person who is hard of hearing to understand.	While increased volume may be helpful for some, other individuals may not hear certain tones.
When individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing miss something that was said, it’s okay to respond by telling them it wasn’t important, or you will fill them in later.	When a person with hearing loss misses something said in a conversation it can be frustrating. Dismissing the importance of what was said compounds that frustration. It’s best to repeat the information or find another way to convey what was said if that is what is needed.
Deaf employees will need a sign language interpreter full-time.	An employee may need a sign language interpreter for certain situations, like interviews and training. At other times, there are many low-tech ways to communicate, such as writing on a notepad or texting. Live captioning is another way that can be effective.
People who are deaf cannot drive.	People who are deaf can drive. Statistics show people who are deaf have fewer accidents than people who can hear. People who are deaf can use visual cues, such as flashing lights on emergency vehicles or noticing other cars moving to the side of the road as indicators when navigating a vehicle on the road.

Deaf people are less intelligent than hearing people.	This misconception has contributed to the lack of job opportunities available to people who are deaf. Hearing does not relate to intelligence. Deaf people are as capable to learn and perform daily tasks, like work, as hearing people.
Blind or Low Vision	
People who are blind or have low vision cannot perform work to the same productivity level as employees who are sighted.	A person who is blind or has low vision can be as productive or more productive than employees who are sighted. The person may need time to orient to the work environment and learn alternative ways to perform the job.
Technology does not exist to enable an individual who is blind or has low vision to use a computer.	Assistive technology is available to enable a person who is blind or has low vision to access the computer effectively, such as magnification software, screen reader software, and information output through a braille display.
Braille is no longer needed with all the technology available for Smart devices and computers.	Technology has provided a variety of ways to receive and input information. Braille remains an important way for accessing information for people who are blind or have low vision and is of equal importance to technological alternatives.
People who are blind or have low vision are limited in the job tasks they can perform and the careers they can pursue.	People who are blind or have low vision can pursue many of the same jobs and careers as people who are sighted.
Employees who are blind or have low vision require more supervision than employees who are sighted.	With proper training and effective accommodations, individuals who are blind or have low vision can perform their jobs successfully and do not require additional supervision.
An employee who is blind or has low vision will be absent more than employees who do not have disabilities.	People who are blind or have low vision have better attendance rates than employees without disabilities. They are often loyal to their employers which can lead to increased longevity.
Employees who acquire a visual disability suddenly or over time cannot continue to perform their job.	Services and solutions are available to enable individuals who acquire a disability of any kind to retain their job. Service can be offered through organizations like OOD to provide orientation and mobility training, skills training, and ideas for effective reasonable accommodations.
People with low vision cannot read handwritten or printed materials.	Assistive technology is available to enable individuals who have low vision to access handwritten and printed materials.
People who are blind can see only darkness.	Approximately 18 percent of people who are legally blind are totally blind. Most people who are blind can differentiate between light and dark.
Most individuals who are blind can read braille and use a service animal as a guide dog.	A small percentage of individuals who are blind have learned braille. A small percentage of individuals use a service animal as a guide dog. It is more common for the person to use a white cane as a navigation tool.
A person who is deafblind cannot see or hear at all.	Many people who are deafblind have some level of sight and hearing. How an individual is impacted is unique. Deafblindness

	can be a congenital condition or acquired through a health condition, an accident, or aging.
Deafblind people only use touch to communicate.	Individuals who are deafblind access communication through a variety of methods, like all people, such as using the alphabet, sign language, clear speech, lip reading, and tactile finger spelling.

Investing in an inclusive workforce gives employers a competitive edge. According to the Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN), employees with disabilities have skillsets as diverse as employees without disabilities and strengthen the workplace by offering a variety of perspectives for problem-solving, innovative thinking, and performing work.

A report released by [Accenture](#) in 2018 indicated that employers who implement best practices for hiring and supporting employees with disabilities “consistently outperform their peers, including having, on average, 28 percent higher revenue, double the net income, and 30 percent higher economic profits. Staff turnover is also lower —by up to 30 percent—when a well-run disability community outreach program is in place.

Disability Etiquette

Employers who are committed to fostering a disability-inclusive culture and hiring qualified individuals with disabilities often provide disability etiquette training for all employees. This training addresses what disability is, provides general and disability-specific guidelines, and addresses proper language usage. This type of education can help all employees feel more comfortable interacting with colleagues with disabilities. Disability etiquette and awareness training geared toward the interview process can help hiring professionals to feel more comfortable and address any unintentional biases that may impact their hiring decisions.

General Guidelines

- **Show Respect** – People with disabilities are people first. Concentrate on the person and not the disability. Remember to treat people with disabilities as the independent individuals they are.
- **Be Courteous** – Respect people's personal space and any reasonable accommodations they may use.
- **Don't Assume** – Every person, and every disability, is different. Never assume what a person can or can't do. Let the person decide, and if you're unsure, just ask.
- **Ask First** – If a person appears to need assistance, make sure you ask before helping. Acknowledge and respect the person's ability to make decisions and judgments on their own, even if they decline your offer to help.

Guidelines for Interacting with People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- To get the attention of a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, it's best to use a visual signal such as waving your hands or switching the lights off and then on again. You can also gently tap the desk or workstation. Avoid shouting.
- Always face the person when talking.
- If the person is speech reading, try to enunciate clearly, place yourself in ample lighting, and keep your mouth clear of obstructions.

- Don't pretend that you understand what someone is signing or saying. Ask them to repeat, or write something down, if necessary.
- If someone is using a sign language interpreter, make sure not to block the line of sight to the interpreter. At a meeting, consult the deaf person as to the best placement of the interpreter to ensure they can visually see the information presented.
- Always talk directly to the deaf or hard of hearing person instead of their interpreter.
- If you are having trouble communicating, use a written note or mobile device to ask the person how best to communicate with them.

Guidelines for Interacting with People who are Blind or Low Vision

- Immediately identify yourself, and let the person know when you're stepping away.
- Don't be embarrassed to use phrases such as, "See what I mean?" or "Did you watch the game last night?"
- Avoid shouting.
- Ask before you shake someone's hand, so you don't take them by surprise.
- Don't help without asking and remember not to pull a person by the arm or cane.
- If you are asked to help, offer your arm so the person can grasp your elbow and be sure to alert the person to any obstacles, such as stairs or an extension cord on the floor. Let the person know when they have reached a chair or doorway.
- Keep doors either open or closed - partially open doors are a hazard.
- Refrain from touching or moving a person's cane. Think of the cane as an extension of their body.
- Never pet a guide dog or service animal, offer a treat, or call its name without asking. You risk confusing the animal, which puts the person with a disability at risk.

Using Appropriate Language

Language can evolve over time to take on a negative connotation that is hurtful and excludes individuals with disabilities. Educating all employees on proper ways to communicate can contribute to fostering an inclusive culture. Here are some tips for inclusive communications:

- Instead of referring to a person as "handicapped," say "person with a disability."
- Instead of referring to a person as "hearing impaired," say "hard of hearing." Instead of referring to a person as "visually impaired," say "low vision."
- Instead of referring to environmental features as "handicapped," say "accessible," such as accessible parking or entrances.
- Some individuals with disabilities prefer people first language, such as saying "person who is deaf or blind." However, in some disability communities, individuals prefer identity first language, such as saying "a blind or deaf person." The best practice is to ask the person how they prefer to be addressed. When in doubt, use people-first language.
- Avoid using negative words and phrases, such as hearing impaired, deaf-mute, hearing deficient, deaf and dumb, victim, or afflicted.

A best practice is to think of how you would want someone to talk to you and always remember to be respectful.

OOD Resource:

For information on Disability Etiquette and Disability Awareness training, view OOD's on-demand webinar "**Disability Etiquette Training**" on the employer's page of the OOD [website](#).

For information on OOD's no-cost Disability Etiquette and Disability Awareness training for employers, view OOD's "**Disability Education Resources**" on the employer's page of the OOD [website](#).

For information on creating an accessible hiring process, view OOD's on-demand webinar "**Inclusive Hiring: Applicants with Disabilities**" on the employer's page of the OOD [website](#).

For information on creating accessible digital work environments, view OOD's on-demand webinar "**Digital Accessibility and Accommodations**" on the employer's page of the OOD [website](#).

Interactive Process and Accommodations

Title I of the ADA requires covered employers to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified applicants and employees with disabilities, unless doing so causes an undue hardship. A reasonable accommodation is a change in the hiring process or workplace that removes a barrier and enables an individual with a disability to access equal employment opportunities and participate in work-related activities. Covered employers are required to provide reasonable accommodations in three categories of employment which enable qualified applicants and employees to access the hiring process, perform the job's essential functions, and enjoy the privileges of employment.

Not all individuals with a sensory disability need a reasonable accommodation at work. When an accommodation is needed, it is unique to the individual, the job, and the work environment. Most accommodations an individual needs come with little to no cost.

Request for Reasonable Accommodation

Providing a reasonable accommodation generally begins with a request from an applicant or employee with a disability. An individual with a disability may request an accommodation at any point in the hiring process or during employment. Here are criteria from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) of what constitutes a request for a reasonable accommodation:

- Must indicate a request for a change at work related to a medical condition or disability,
- May be communicated in the individual's preferred form of communication, and
- May include plain language that is not required to reference the ADA or use the term "reasonable accommodation."

A request can also come from the individual's family, friend, medical provider, or other representative.

Here are examples modified from the EEOC guidance of what constitutes a request for an accommodation:

- An electrician with a hearing disability receives information from his manager during daily morning meetings orally. After one of the daily meetings, the electrician gives a note to his manager reminding him of his hearing disability and requests the information for his team's

assignments be provided in writing because he is having difficulty hearing the oral delivery of the information. This is a request for a reasonable accommodation.

- A candidate who is blind calls an employer about a job opening. The employer informs the candidate that the hiring process includes a written exam and an in-person interview. The candidate tells the employer she will need assistance with the exam because of her limitation with vision. This is a request for a reasonable accommodation.
- An employee is returning to work after extended medical leave related to diabetes. During this time, his visual disability has progressed. The employee provides his employer with a note from his doctor stating he will need "some assistance" to perform the essential functions of the job. This is a request for a reasonable accommodation.

There are times the employer may ask an employee whether a reasonable accommodation is needed even if the employee has not requested one. Guidance from the EEOC indicates employers may ask an individual with a disability if they need an accommodation when all these conditions are met:

- The employer knows the employee has a disability and
- The employer reasonably believes the employee may need a reasonable accommodation at work.

Here are examples of when an employer may ask whether a reasonable accommodation is needed:

- An employee who is deaf is being asked to travel out of state to attend a conference. This is the first time the employee has been required to do this as a part of her job. The employer knows the employee is deaf and can reasonably believe she may need accommodations to travel and attend the conference. The employer may ask the employee if she needs a reasonable accommodation.
- An employee who is blind works with a team that is being relocated to an office building in a different location in the same city. The employer knows the employee is blind and can reasonably believe he may need accommodations to orient to the new location. The employer may ask the employee if he needs a reasonable accommodation.

Interactive Process

Upon receiving a request, a covered employer is expected to act quickly and begin the interactive process to identify the need for the accommodation and an effective solution. This training is focused on aspects of the interactive process unique to facilitating the process with an individual with a sensory disability.

Documentation

When a disability and/or the need for a reasonable accommodation are not obvious, an employer is permitted to obtain reasonable documentation to verify a disability exists and/or identify the need for the reasonable accommodation. Sensory disabilities at times are not obvious. Here are examples modified from the EEOC guidance of when an employer may request documentation:

- A programmer with an internet security firm has a hearing disability and communicates primarily through lip reading and speech. The employee is promoted to a senior programmer position to manage consultations related to security design for a new client. The new position requires frequent phone conversations that do not allow her to use lip reading to aid in verbal

comprehension. The employee provides her employer a note from her audiologist who recommends the use of a voice carry-over phone. This type of phone provides an almost real-time text relay of what the client is saying and enables the client to hear the employee. Because the hearing disability is not an obvious disability, the employer may request medical documentation to verify the disability.

- A customer service representative with a vision disability that is not obvious requests a larger computer monitor. To support the request the employee provides a letter from his ophthalmologist describing the employee's disability and its limitations. The letter explains the employee cannot drive and can read standard-sized print but only very slowly, for short periods of time, and with considerable effort. The condition is not expected to progress or improve. The ophthalmologist suggests that a magnification device for the computer or a larger monitor would be helpful. In this example, the employee has provided sufficient documentation that his eye condition is an ADA disability, and he needs a reasonable accommodation. The employer may not request further documentation, such as the results of all the tests conducted to diagnose the condition.

Some employers choose to create a medical documentation form that applicants and employees can use to obtain the necessary information from their treating source or provider. An example of a medical inquiry form is available for employers to review on the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) [website](#). This example from JAN may help employers to customize a form that suits their workplace.

Identifying an Effective Reasonable Accommodation

Once the disability has been verified and the need for the reasonable accommodation has been identified, the employer and the individual begin the collaborative interactive process to determine an effective solution.

The interactive process begins with understanding how the disability-related limitation is impacted at work, what barriers are present, and what essential functions of the job are affected. The limitations an individual with a sensory disability may experience include communicating at work, receiving and responding to workplace sounds and alerts, accessing printed materials, taking notes, completing forms, accessing functions like meetings and training sessions, using technology like a Smart device or computer, using workplace equipment and tools, performing assembly and repair work, inspecting finished work, color-coding items and processes, work-related travel and commute, and accessing and navigating the work environment.

Next the employer and the individual explore ideas for effective reasonable accommodations. The best place to start with identifying an effective solution is by asking the employee who made the request – he or she is likely to know what solution will work best. An employer is also permitted to consult the individual's supervisor to discuss essential functions of the job and the work environment to help with identifying an effective solution. An effective reasonable accommodation is always identified on a case-by-case basis as each individual, job, and employer is unique.

It can be helpful for employers to be aware of common types of accommodations available. The EEOC organizes reasonable accommodations into these types:

- Making the work environment accessible,
- Restructuring a job,

- Permitting a flexible schedule,
- Altering or providing equipment or services,
- Altering supervisory methods,
- Modifying policies, and
- Providing reassignment.

Not all modifications and items are considered a form of reasonable accommodation. For example, employers are not required to:

- Eliminate a job's essential functions,
- Lower quality or production standards, or
- Provide personal use items or services.

Covered employers are not required to provide accommodations that cause a direct threat to health or safety or that cause an undue hardship. An undue hardship is an accommodation that is too costly or difficult to implement. Determining undue hardship requires a case-by-case assessment.

Reasonable Accommodation Examples

Here are examples of reasonable accommodations by type:

- Making the work environment accessible for hearing disabilities:
 - Locate the workstation away from noisy areas which include background noise to enable concentration for work tasks.
 - Locate the workstation near an emergency alarm with a visual indicator, such as strobe lighting.
 - Provide adjustable lighting to enable an individual relying on sign language interpretation adequate lighting to see the interpreter. Do not position a sign language interpreter or a presenter in front of a window with natural lighting.
- Making the work environment accessible for vision disabilities:
 - Provide orientation and mobility training for a new employee who is blind to learn to navigate the work environment safely including entrances, exits, routes of travel, common areas, and workstation.
 - Install detectable warning systems in key areas of common routes of travel in the workplace.
 - Install textures or contrasting colors on steps.
 - Reposition a workstation away from natural light that causes glare on the monitor.
 - Permit lighting to be controlled.
 - Assign a partner for evacuations.
 - Provide a tactile map of common routes, evacuation routes, and workplace landmarks.
- Restructuring a job for hearing disabilities:
 - Communicate brief, simple, and routine information through written notes, text messages, or email communications.
 - Illustrate instructions and processes with written and visual images.
- Restructuring a job for vision disabilities:

- Provide written materials in alternative formats such as large print, braille, electronic, audio, or tactile graphic format.
- Provide color-coded and tactile labels or indicators for supplies, items, and tools.
- Permit telework.
- Permit in-person meetings in off-site locations to take place through a virtual meeting.
- Permitting a flexible schedule for hearing disabilities:
 - Permit an employee to leave work early to attend an appointment related to an assistive listening device or hearing aid and make this time up by working longer or shortening a break on another day.
- Permitting a flexible schedule for vision disabilities:
 - Permit an individual using public transportation for their commute to work to have a flexible start time when the transportation system causes the employee to arrive after the original start time.
 - Modify a break schedule to increase frequency of breaks or to take breaks as needed to manage eye fatigue.
- Altering or providing equipment or services for hearing disabilities:
 - Convert spoken or audio information into a written format through providing captions, video relay services, and speech-to-text applications.
 - Provide software that enables an individual to communicate by typing words into a device that are then spoken by a simulated voice.
 - Provide assistive listening devices and systems that transmit amplified sounds, such as a presenter speaking into a microphone, directly into a receiver worn in a person's ear, or an amplified stethoscope.
 - Provide a communication access device that enables two parties to type on separate units with display screens while facing one another.
 - Provide alerts in tactile and visual format for timers and indicators.
 - Use a compact, portable whiteboard or pen and paper for brief communication exchanges.
 - Place a mirror in the workstation to visually alert to colleagues approaching and in areas with industrial equipment, such as forklifts are being operated.
 - Installing visual and tactile alerts to workplace and emergency sounds and notifications, such as strobe lighting on fire alarms and pagers that vibrate.
 - Provide a tactile Support Service Provider (SSP) in conjunction with a video relay service call.
 - Providing live captions such as communication access real-time translation (CART) by a trained stenographer for interviews, training, and meetings.
 - Providing onsite or video remote interpretation for interviews, training, and meetings.
- Altering or providing equipment or services for vision disabilities:
 - Provide assistive technology such as screen magnifiers or magnification software, screen reading software, speech-to-text software, a braille display, digital recorder, braille stylus, braille slate, and braille embosser or printer.
 - Provide closed circuit television system.
 - Provide hand, stand, or portable magnifier or provide a closed circuit television (CCTV) magnifier.



- Provide a telephone light sensor that notifies of the phone ringing through audible or vibratory signals.
 - Provide talking telephone console indicators and message displays.
 - Provide talking tools and equipment, such as talking multimeter, micrometer, caliper, stud finder, level, and tape measure.
 - Provide overlay to increase color contrast between printed text and background.
 - Provide color identifying apps or overlays.
 - Provide a monitor that is flicker-free, anti-glare guard for a monitor, and computer glasses.
 - Provide optical devices such as monocular or binoculars systems, loupes, or prism spectacles.
 - Provide smart glasses.
 - Provide lighted pens, paper with tactile lines, and paper with low glare.
 - Provide task lighting or alternative lighting.
 - Provide a visual interpreting service through a Smart device or Smart glasses.
 - Provide a reader for printed materials, such as an application for a job or new hire forms.
 - Provide a driver or ride-share service to enable an employee to travel to perform work tasks.
- Altering supervisory methods for hearing disabilities:
 - Be prepared to provide information that is delivered during meetings in an audio format in a written format or captioned format and provide written notes or a transcript after the meeting.
 - Know when to utilize various accommodations for in-person communications such as in-person sign language interpretation, video remote interpretation, text message or chat, email, and paper and pen format.
- Altering supervisory methods for vision disabilities:
 - Be prepared to provide information that is delivered in communications and meetings in a visual format in an audio format or through an electronic document that is accessible by a screen reader.
- Modifying policies for hearing disabilities:
 - Modify an information technology policy to permit the use of a third-party communication application.
- Modifying policies for vision disabilities:
 - Modify a “No Animal” policy to permit the use of a service animal to assist with navigating the workplace.

Here are examples of reasonable accommodations for the hiring process:

- A candidate who is hard of hearing applied for a position as a paralegal. The hiring process included a preemployment assessment that involved viewing a video that described a scenario and then required answering questions in multiple-choice format. The candidate asked the employer whether the video was captioned and was told it was not. As a reasonable accommodation, the candidate requested a transcript of the audio content be provided during

the assessment and additional time allowed to watch the video, review the script, and answer the questions.

- A candidate who is blind applied for a position in a call center. During the interview, the candidate was shown a simulation of a customer call in the employer's system and asked how she would respond. This required listening to the customer request and accessing the customer's profile to troubleshoot the inquiry. The employer's system was not compatible with screen reading software so the candidate requested a reader to read the customer's profile so she could demonstrate to the employer how she would respond to the customer inquiry.

Here are examples of reasonable accommodations for performing the job modified from JAN's resources:

- A medical technician who is deaf could not hear the timer which indicated when lab tests were complete. As a reasonable accommodation, the employer attached an indicator light to the equipment to visually notify the technician when the timer goes off.
- A lead processor in a warehouse who is deaf needed to communicate with his fellow lead processors throughout the workday. As a reasonable accommodation, the employer provided a handheld device the employee could use to communicate with his coworkers through text messaging.
- A customer service representative for an insurance company lost his vision resulting in an inability to view the computer monitor. As a reasonable accommodation, the employer provided screen reading software for the employee to access information on the computer.
- An employee in a manufacturing plant with color vision deficiency used corrective lenses to distinguish color when performing work tasks. The corrective lenses did not fit well under the required safety glasses she was required to wear. As a reasonable accommodation, the employer provided prescription safety glasses with the same type of lenses for the employee to wear while working.
- A buyer for a department store with low vision had a limitation with reading paper documents. As a reasonable accommodation, the employer provided screen magnification software for the employee to use with computer tasks.
- A data entry clerk with diabetes was having vision-related symptoms when working on the computer. As a reasonable accommodation, the employer provided alternative lighting and a glare filter for the monitor to reduce eyestrain.
- A law office clerk with low vision experiences a barrier with reading text memos provided by attorneys in the office. As a reasonable accommodation, the employer required memos must be written in a minimum of an 18-point font and provided the clerk with a stand magnifier to assist with reading hand-written items.

Confidentiality

During the interactive process, all personal and medical information obtained must be kept confidential. This includes information received through accommodation requests, discussions, disability-related inquiries, medical examinations, and documentation. The EEOC indicates medical information should be kept in separate medical files apart from general personnel files, whether stored in physical filing cabinets or in electronic databases. There are circumstances when medical information may be shared with designated parties. Here are some examples:

- Necessary information may be shared with employees responsible for facilitating reasonable accommodations including when handling safety and emergency situations,
- Information specific to the proper implementation and use of a reasonable accommodation may be shared with designated supervisors, and
- Information requested for a compliance investigation or to assess an insurance claim, such as a workers' compensation claim, may be shared with designated parties.

For the most part, supervisors and employees who implement reasonable accommodations do not need to know the employee's disability, medical condition, or related limitations to implement the accommodation. In this case, they may only know what reasonable accommodation is needed. When confidential disability-related information needs to be shared to effectively implement a reasonable accommodation, the employer should consult with the employee first and explain why this information needs to be shared.

How to Respond to Questions

Often an employee's sensory disability is invisible, but the reasonable accommodation is not. For example, a coworker may notice a colleague is provided a Smart device or a larger monitor which have not been provided to all employees. This can lead to coworkers asking their supervisors and the employees who implement reasonable accommodations about the accommodations they notice in the workplace.

Because the ADA prohibits employers from disclosing an employee's disability, the supervisor and the employee implementing an accommodation are not permitted to tell the coworker the colleague has a disability or is receiving a reasonable accommodation. Instead, what the employer may consider is providing training for supervisors and employees who implement accommodations on confidentiality guidelines and how to respond to these types of questions. According to the EEOC guidance, here are examples of how the employee or supervisor may respond:

- Emphasize it is the employer's policy to assist any employee who encounters difficulty at work,
- Explain that these types of situations are personal, and it is the employer's policy to follow confidentiality guidelines, and
- Reassure the coworker that his or her privacy would be respected in a similar situation.

A best practice is to be proactive and provide ongoing training for all employees on the laws the employer is required to follow, including the right to reasonable accommodation for qualified employees with disabilities.

Performance, Conduct, and Safety

Performance

Title I of the ADA provides protection from employment discrimination for qualified individuals with disabilities. To be considered qualified under the ADA, an individual with a disability must meet the employer's qualification standards that are job-related and consistent with business necessity and be able to perform the essential functions of the job, with or without reasonable accommodation. Based on this, employers may expect all employees, including employees with disabilities to be qualified to perform the essential functions of the job.

When evaluating an employee's work performance, employers should generally evaluate all employees using the same criteria, including employees with disabilities. Low performance should generally be addressed with employees with disabilities in the same way it is addressed with all employees in the same job class. An evaluation that reveals low performance may be the first indication to an employee that their disability is contributing to work performance. An employee may choose to disclose a disability during this discussion and may or may not request a reasonable accommodation. When an employee responds to a low performance rating by disclosing a disability and requests a reasonable accommodation, one must be considered, and the interactive process should begin promptly. When an employee with a disability responds to a low performance rating by disclosing a disability and states this is contributing, the employer is permitted to apply the consequences that apply to any employee with low performance in the same job class.

Low performance of a job is often unrelated to an employee's disability. However, based on [guidance](#) from the EEOC, an employer may ask if an employee's low performance is related to their disability under this circumstance:

- The employer knows the employee has a disability,
- The employer has observed the employee's low performance or has received reliable information from someone else like a coworker, and
- The employer reasonably believes the disability is contributing to the low performance.

Here are two examples related to performance of a scenario adapted from the EEOC [guidance](#):

- An employee working in a hospital system is experiencing progressive hearing loss and is having difficulty following conversations in group meetings. The employee uses a hearing aid which helps with one-on-one conversations but is not effective with group conversations. The employee requests a reasonable accommodation in the form of equipment and asks for a portable listening device. He informs the employer of the specific device he thinks will be most effective. He says the device includes a microphone that could be placed on the conference room table in the middle of the group that would transmit the conversation directly to a headset he would wear. The device would amplify the voice of the person speaking through his headset and not alter the way others heard the conversation. The employer engaged with the employee in the interactive process and determined this request was reasonable and provided the employee with the portable listening device. This accommodation enabled the employee to effectively perform this essential function of the job.
- A supervisor is aware that an employee who reports to her has macular degeneration which is causing her eyesight to worsen. The supervisor notices the employee is making errors in documents she is creating on the computer and believes the mistakes can be attributed to the limitation with vision. Because the supervisor is aware of the condition and reasonably believes the employee may benefit from a reasonable accommodation, the supervisor may ask the employee if there is anything she can do to assist her. If the employee indicates she would like to pursue options, the supervisor can inform the employee of who to contact in human resources to begin the interactive process. During the process, ideas for a reasonable accommodation can be explored such as magnification software, screen reading software, or controls for adjusting font size and color contrast.

Conduct

Title I of the ADA does not generally prevent an employer from establishing conduct rules and consequences for misconduct. Employers may expect all employees, including employees with disabilities, to meet conduct standards. When an employee with a disability violates a conduct rule and the disability is not a contributing factor, the employee may be disciplined with the same consequences that would apply to any employee who violates the same conduct rule.

When an employee with a disability responds to counseling or discipline for misconduct by disclosing a disability and requesting a reasonable accommodation, the employer may apply the consequences for the misconduct and must begin the interactive process, “except where the punishment for the violation is termination.” This is because reasonable accommodation is “prospective” and does not require employers to excuse past misconduct or withhold consequences for conduct violations when an employee indicates a disability contributed. The conduct rule must be “job-related and consistent with business necessity” and equally applied to all employees.

Safety

Under Title I of the ADA, employers may require, as a qualification standard, that applicants and employees not pose a direct threat in the work environment. A direct threat is defined as “a significant risk of substantial harm to the health or safety of the individual or others that cannot be eliminated or reduced by reasonable accommodation.” Based on [guidance](#) from the EEOC, an employer may ask an employee about their disability when they have a reasonable belief based on objective evidence that the employee may not be able to perform the job safely due to their disability.

When determining direct threat, an employer should assess the risk by using the criteria provided by the ADA and avoid making decisions based on myths, fears, generalizations, and/or stereotypes. This includes assessing the individual’s knowledge, skills, experience, and the ability to safely perform the job. The EEOC criteria states to establish direct threat, an employer must:

- Show a significant risk of substantial harm exists,
- Identify the specific risk,
- Show the risk is current, not speculative, or remote,
- Perform an assessment based on objective evidence, and
- Determine if the risk can be eliminated or reduced through reasonable accommodation.

Here are two examples of scenarios:

- An employee who is deaf and works at a hardware store applies for a promotion to a position that includes operating a forklift. The employer is unsure if the candidate can operate a forklift safely and detect dangerous situations indicated by sound. During the assessment of direct threat, the employer and the employee discuss ideas for reasonable accommodations which include visually highlighting designated routes of travel for forklifts, assigning designated doors for forklifts to enter and exit, establishing rules for all forklift drivers to stop at intersections, installing mirrors at all intersections for visual indication of oncoming traffic or pedestrians, providing visual alerts alongside audio alerts, and a rear vision camera positioned such that the operator can view what is behind him. Based on these accommodations, the employer determines the candidate can safely operate a forklift and promotes him to the new position.

- A sous-chef who is blind with 15 years of experience working as a line cook with increasing levels of responsibilities applies for a job at a newly opened restaurant. The employer is concerned the candidate cannot safely work in a busy kitchen. During the assessment of direct threat, the employer considers the candidate's previous experience and his description of how he can use touch to perform tasks other employees use their vision to perform. In addition, the employer and the candidate discuss ideas for reasonable accommodations which include providing orientation and mobility training to assist the candidate in learning to navigate the new environment safely, adding braille labels on oven controls and tactile markers to identify kitchen supplies, and providing access to cut resistant gloves to use as needed. Based on the overall assessment of direct threat and these accommodations, the employer determines the candidate can safely perform the job and hires him for the position.

Employment Stories

Individuals with sensory disabilities work in a variety of work settings performing an array of jobs. Here are several examples of employment stories, some of which have been featured in previous editions of the OODWorks newsletter.

Allison

Allison Meloy is a Program Administrator in the Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired at OOD. She works on the statewide team helping to plan and implement new programs and services for the Bureau and the individuals it serves. She consults with counselors across the state when they have case-related questions, leveraging her 10+ years of previous experience in vocational rehabilitation to serve as a resource and subject matter expert. She consults with other divisions and state agencies regarding the accessibility of websites and other electronic materials like forms and fact sheets. She also assists other staff who use screen readers with learning how to use them in order to perform specific job tasks.

Allison shares that OOD's hiring and onboarding process was by far the smoothest and most stress-free experience she has ever had as an employee with a disability. The name of the reasonable accommodations coordinator was listed in her welcome email. She was able to reach out to him and have a robust follow-up phone call about her needs well in advance of her start date. Everything she needed to perform on an equal level with her sighted colleagues was waiting for her on her first day of new employee orientation.

Allison is blind and uses a few different reasonable accommodations to perform her job duties. Her primary accommodation is the JAWS for Windows screen reader. This is a piece of software on her PC which verbalizes information on the computer screen. JAWS also outputs this information to another machine she uses called a braille display. The braille display has little pins which pop up and down to form braille from any information displayed on her computer, iPhone or iPad. She uses this when giving presentations and making audio recordings.

Allison shares that the most important thing an employer can do when working with an employee who is blind (or with any disability) is to make sure there is an avenue from the beginning to engage in the interactive process as early as possible. This has helped her to feel supported and valued in the roles she holds within OOD.

Marianne

Marianne has multiple disabilities that include hearing loss, chronic pain, and carpal tunnel syndrome. She has a master's degree in Public Administration and a Bachelor of Science degree from the Ohio State University. In the summer of 2021, she began looking for work that could provide accommodations that would aid in her success. In January of 2022, she was hired by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources as a Program Administrator for the Orphan Well Program. In this position, Marianne oversees title services and public notices and assists with bid openings for projects. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources provided her an office with a door to minimize auditory distractions in the environment and a mobile phone that connects to her hearing aids using Bluetooth. Marianne's supervisor said "Marianne has been a valuable addition to the Orphan Well Program team... (Her) attention to detail and work ethic when completing title research and public notices have quickly become an asset to the program." Marianne said, "My future and my family's future are more secure now that I am receiving a regular paycheck and benefits." The entire story is available in the OOD Works [Newsletter](#).

Casey

Casey is deaf. Casey said she is a "total communicator." She said, "This means I use all methods of communication, with my primary method being signing, lipreading, and talking." Casey finished high school in 2018 and began to attend Capital University to pursue a degree in nursing. There, she was the first deaf student in the nursing program. Casey found a student nursing assistant position with the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center East Hospital. She uses a digital stethoscope that connects to her cochlear implants using Bluetooth. Additionally, when Casey has meetings, she has a device that allows for face-to-face communications by typing messages between coworkers. Casey is set to graduate in spring 2023. She said, "My ultimate goal is to be a Deaf nurse practitioner, in a Deaf-populated area, so that Deaf people will not have any communication barriers." The entire story is available in the OOD Works [Newsletter](#).

The Employer's Role with Sensory Disabilities in the Workplace

Many employers recognize the benefits of employing individuals with disabilities and are making efforts to foster a disability-inclusive workplace culture. Included below are examples of resources to support employers in these efforts.

Assistive Technology of Ohio (AT Ohio) – Device Lending Library

AT Ohio's device lending library is housed at The Ohio State University and includes items to be borrowed and tested in the work environment for effectiveness. AT Ohio offers items to be borrowed from these categories: blind and low vision devices, communication and speech, computer access, deaf and hearing impaired, education and learning, and environmental aids to daily living. The lending library is available on The Ohio State University [website](#).

Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) – Business Guide for Working with Individuals Who Are DeafBlind

HKNC's business guide is a resource for employers to assist with overcoming barriers in the hiring process and the workplace related to individuals who are deafblind. The guide provides information for successful communications, ideas for reasonable accommodations, how to prepare for emergencies, and resources for support. This guide is available on the HKNC [website](#).

National Deaf Center (NDC) – Interpreting

NDC offers interpreting resources which address types of interpreters, frequently asked questions, coordinating services, and confidentiality. These resources are available on the NDC [website](#).

Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI) – Lending Library

OCALI's lending library includes items to be borrowed and tested in the work environment for effectiveness. OCALI offers items to be borrowed from these categories: tools to support reading, writing, organization, communication, blindness and low vision, deafness and hard of hearing, computer and mobile device access, math, and independent living skills. Some of the technology can be borrowed as software loaded on a laptop, apps loaded on a mobile device or as a dedicated AT device. The lending library is available on OCALI's [website](#).

Ohio Relay

Ohio Relay provides free services that enable individuals with hearing disabilities to place and receive phone calls. The Ohio Relay [website](#) offers literature which describes how the service works, provides relay numbers, and explains how to connect to services.

OOD – Communication Card and Interactions with Law Enforcement

The Ohio Department of Public Safety's Traffic Safety Office (OTSO), Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), and statewide law enforcement partners have developed a new communication card to help individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing exchange information with law enforcement. The new card can be downloaded onto a phone or printed and stored inside a vehicle, wallet, or purse. It includes various pictures that deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals can point to in order to more easily communicate during interactions with law enforcement. The communication card also displays icons of common violations and provides tips for law enforcement to help officers effectively communicate with those who are hard of hearing or deaf. The communication card is available on OOD's [website](#).

OOD – Community Centers for the Deaf (CCD)

OOD offers a searchable database of resources for individuals and employers about deafness, deaf-blindness, and hearing loss. This database can be accessed from the CCD [webpage](#) on the OOD website in the upper right corner titled For More Information. This database can be used to find sign language interpreter vendors by county. To use this database, enter the service you are looking for (i.e., Sign Language Interpreting) and the county you're looking in (i.e., Licking), and then click search.

OOD – Searchable Database for Blind and Low Vision

OOD offers a searchable database of resources for individuals and employers about blindness and low vision. This database can be accessed from the OOD [website](#). To use this database, select the topic you are looking for in the "I am looking for information about..." drop down box and then click search.

OOD's Worksite Accessibility Services for Employers

OOD provides no-cost consultations for employer partners to support their efforts to foster disability inclusive and accessible workplaces. During a consult, OOD's worksite accessibility specialist engages with employers to understand their unique environment and goals, and then tailors resources, best practices, and helpful examples to support employers in their efforts. Topics addressed can include information on navigating Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), identifying general ideas for reasonable accommodations, providing accessibility guidelines for the physical and digital

environments, and sharing best practices for fostering a disability-inclusive workplace. For more information on a no-cost consultation, see the OOD Resource box at the end of this section.

OOD Resource:

For more information on how OOD can support employers at no cost with their disability inclusion and accessibility goals, visit the **“Workplace Accessibility”** page of the Inclusive Employer Toolkit on the Employers’ page of OOD’s [website](#).

For information on the employer’s responsibility to provide RAs, view OOD’s on-demand webinar **“The Employers’ ADA Handbook: Reasonable Accommodations and Undue Hardship”** on the employer’s page of the OOD [website](#).

For information on best practices for providing reasonable accommodations, view OOD’s on-demand webinar **“Workplace Accommodations”** on the employer’s page of the OOD [website](#).

For information on establishing a formal interactive process, view OOD’s on-demand webinar **“Navigating the Reasonable Accommodation Process”** on the employer’s page of the OOD [website](#).

Conclusion

OOD appreciates your interest in identifying solutions and resources to support a workplace that is diverse and inclusive of employees with disabilities. Each employee, each employer, and each workplace are unique and because of this, the effective strategy to create a work environment that is accessible and inclusive will be unique. We hope the information shared in this learner’s guide and webinar is helpful in supporting your efforts.

Resources

Sensory Disabilities

- ADA National Network. [“The Americans with Disabilities Act Questions and Answers”](#)
- American Foundation for the Blind. [“Statistical Snapshots from the American Foundation for the Blind”](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [“Common Eye Disorders and Diseases”](#)
- Job Accommodation Network. [“Blindness”](#)
- Job Accommodation Network. [“Colorblind/Color Vision Deficiency”](#)
- Job Accommodation Network. [“Deafness”](#)
- Job Accommodation Network. [“Hearing Impairment”](#)
- Job Accommodation Network. [“Low Vision”](#)
- National Center on Deaf-Blindness. [“Deaf-Blindness Overview”](#)
- National Federation of the Blind. [“Blindness Statistics”](#)
- National Library of Medicine. [“Post-Traumatic Visual Loss”](#)
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. [“The Employers’ ADA Handbook – Title I Overview”](#)
- ScienceDirect. [“Childhood Blindness”](#)

- U.S. Department of Labor. "[Innovative Workplace Safety Accommodations for Hearing-Impaired Workers](#)"
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. "[Your Employment Rights as an Individual with a Disability](#)"
- World Health Organization. "[Deafness and hearing loss](#)"

Disability-Inclusive Workplace

- Accenture. "[Getting to Equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage](#)"
- Accessibility. "[Do All Deaf People Use Sign Language?](#)"
- Accessibility. "[Invisible Disabilities](#)"
- American Printing House for the Blind. "[Learning About Blindness: Interacting with a Person Who Is Blind or Visually Impaired in the Workforce](#)"
- American Printing House for the Blind. "[Tools for Finding Employment: Disclosing a Visual Impairment](#)"
- Be My Eyes. "[How to Make Your Workplace More Inclusive for Visually Impaired Employees](#)"
- Connect Hear. "[Top 10 misconceptions about Deaf people you need to know](#)"
- Deaf Blind. "[Myth busters: Understanding what it's like to be deafblind](#)"
- Deaf Unity. "[Debunked: Top 8 myths about deafness you need to know](#)"
- Disability:IN. "[Business Case for Disability Inclusion](#)"
- Disabled World. "[Invisible Disabilities: List and General Information](#)"
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion. "[Disability Inclusion in the Workplace: Why it Matters](#)"
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion. "[Disability-Inclusive Workplace Culture: Building it to Last](#)"
- Gupta Consulting. "[Creating an Inclusive Workplace for Deaf Employees](#)"
- Hearing Health Foundation. "[17 Misconceptions About People with Hearing Loss](#)"
- Hearing, Speech and Deaf Center. "[Deaf 101](#)"
- Iowa Department for the Blind. "[Misconceptions](#)"
- Job Accommodation Network. "[Disability Disclosure](#)"
- Living with Hearing Loss. "[How to Handle Hearing Loss in the Workplace](#)"
- Mississippi State University. "[Common Myths](#)"
- My Hearing Centers. "[As an Invisible Disability, Hearing Loss Often Goes Ignored](#)"
- National Federation of the Blind. "[Access Technology Affordability Act \(H.R. 431/S. 212\)](#)"
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. "[Deaf or Hard of Hearing Employees](#)"
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. "[Disability Education Resources](#)"
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. "[Disability Etiquette Training](#)"
- VisionAware. "[When Your Visual Impairment Isn't Visible](#)"

Interactive Process and Accommodations

- American Printing House for the Blind. "[What to Tell Your Employer When You're Losing Your Sight](#)"
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion. "[Performance Management](#)"
- Helen Keller National Center. "[Business Guide for Working with Individuals Who Are DeafBlind](#)"

- Job Accommodation Network. "[AT Update 2022](#)"
- Job Accommodation Network. "[Blindness](#)"
- Job Accommodation Network. "[Colorblind/Color Vision Deficiency](#)"
- Job Accommodation Network. "[Confidentiality of Medical Information Under the ADA](#)"
- Job Accommodation Network. "[Deafness](#)"
- Job Accommodation Network. "[Hearing Impairment](#)"
- Job Accommodation Network. "[Low Vision](#)"
- Job Accommodation Network. "[Sample and Partner Example Accommodation Policies, Processes, Forms, and Training](#)"
- Job Accommodation Network. "[Technical Assistance Manual for Title I of the ADA](#)"
- Job Accommodation Network. "[The Manager's Dilemma: 'An Employee is Asking About a Co-Worker's Accommodation. As a Manager, What Do I say?'](#)"
- National Deaf Center. "[Interpreting](#)"
- Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence. "[Lending Library](#)"
- Ohio State University. "[About AT Ohio](#)"
- Ohio Relay. "[Resources](#)"
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. "[Communication Card to Help Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Individuals Communicate with Law Enforcement](#)"
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. "[Community Centers for the Deaf \(CCD\)](#)"
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. "[Digital Accessibility and Accommodations](#)"
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. "[Inclusive Employer Handbook](#)"
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. "[Inclusive Hiring: Applicants with Disabilities](#)"
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. "[Navigating the Reasonable Accommodation Process](#)"
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. "[Searchable Database for Blind and Low Vision](#)"
- U.S. Department of Labor. "[Innovative Workplace Safety Accommodations for Hearing-Impaired Workers](#)"
- U.S. Department of Labor. "[Planning for Performance Management – for All Employees](#)"
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. "[Applying Performance and Conduct Standards to Employees with Disabilities](#)"
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. "[Blindness and Vision Impairments in the Workplace and the ADA](#)"
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. "[Deafness and Hearing Impairments in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act](#)"
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. "[Enforcement Guidance on Disability-Related Inquiries and Medical Examinations of Employees under the ADA](#)"
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. "[Enforcement Guidance on Reasonable Accommodation and Undue Hardship under the ADA](#)"
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. "[Job Applicants and the ADA](#)"

OOD's Business Relations Team – see map on final two pages

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 - **Counties served:** Adams, Brown, Butler, Champaign, Clark, Clermont, Clinton, Darke, Fayette, Greene, Hamilton, Highland, Logan, Madison, Miami, Montgomery, Preble, Shelby, Union, and Warren
 - **Career Development Specialist:** Dustin Schwab
 - **Colleges/Universities served:** Central State University, Miami University, University of Cincinnati, Wilberforce University, and Wright State University
- **Michael Hoag, Business Relations Specialist in Northeast Ohio**
 - **Phone:** 216-210-7584
 - **Email:** michael.hoag@ood.ohio.gov
 - **Counties served:** Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Medina, Portage, and Summit
 - **Career Development Specialist:** Kris Wray
 - **Colleges/Universities served:** Cuyahoga Community College, Kent State University, and The University of Akron
- **Julie Lasher, Business Relations Specialist in Southeast Ohio**
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 - **Counties served:** Athens, Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin, Gallia, Hocking, Jackson, Lawrence, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Perry, Pickaway, Pike, Ross, Scioto, Vinton, and Washington
 - **Career Development Specialist:** Dustin Schwab
 - **Colleges/Universities served:** Columbus State Community College, Ohio University, and The Ohio State University
- **Ron Klonowski, Business Relations Specialist in East Central Ohio**
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 - **Counties served:** Ashland, Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Crawford, Guernsey, Harrison, Holmes, Jefferson, Knox, Licking, Mahoning, Morrow, Muskingum, Noble, Richland, Stark, Trumbull, Tuscarawas, and Wayne
 - **Career Development Specialist:** Dustin Schwab, Kris Wray
 - **Colleges/Universities served:** Central Ohio Technical College, Stark State College, and Youngstown State University
- **Jacob Karnes, Business Relations Specialist in Northwest Ohio**
 - **Phone:** 419-277-5192
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 - **Counties served:** Allen, Auglaize, Defiance, Erie, Fulton, Hancock, Hardin, Henry, Huron, Lorain, Lucas, Marion, Mercer, Ottawa, Paulding, Putnam, Sandusky, Seneca, Van Wert, Williams, Wood, and Wyandot
 - **Career Development Specialist:** Kris Wray
 - **Colleges/Universities served:** Bowling Green State University, Lorain County Community College, and The University of Toledo

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BUSINESS RELATIONS SERVICES MAP



Business Relations and Career Development Specialists Map

Business Relations Specialists (BRS) and Career Development Specialists (CDS):

Northeast Area

Michael Hoag - BRS

Kris Wray - CDS

- * Cuyahoga Community College
- * Kent State University
- * The University of Akron

Northwest Area

Jacob Karnes - BRS

Kris Wray - CDS

- * Bowling Green State University
- * Lorain County Community College
- * The University of Toledo

Southeast Area

Julie Lasher - BRS

Dustin Schwab - CDS

- * Columbus State Community College
- * Ohio University
- * The Ohio State University

Southwest Area

Cynthia Crews - BRS

Dustin Schwab - CDS

- * Central State University
- * Miami University
- * University of Cincinnati
- * Wilberforce University
- * Wright State University

East Central Area

Ronald Klonowski - BRS

Kris Wray - CDS

- * Stark State College
- * Youngstown State University

Dustin Schwab - CDS

- * Central Ohio Technical College



Colleges/ Universities

