

# Accessible and Authentic Interviews for Candidates with Disabilities

Employers are increasingly interested in diversifying their workforce. Companies who are actively pursuing a more inclusive workforce that includes people with disabilities, often report [challenges in finding qualified candidates](#). While employers are looking for candidates with the right mix of skills, qualifications, and experience, candidates themselves are also looking for organizations that meet their criteria for an inclusive workplace.<sup>1</sup> The interview experience is a major factor in whether talent joins your company or moves on.

## Standardizing the Interview Approach for All Candidates

Job interviews can be stressful for both the employer and candidate. Some employers may find themselves to be a little nervous or uncomfortable when interviewing candidates with disabilities. It's important to ensure that your company has standard processes in place to ensure equal opportunity for all candidates. Standard approaches ensure everyone is held to the same expectations and standards. Company practices that help to create standard interview practices include:

### Create Process

Ensure that your application and interview portals are accessible to all.

If your company provides any [digital pre-employment testing](#), these processes must be accessible to all applicants.

Standardize the process for the opportunity to self-identify as a person with a disability in the application and interview process. Where possible, build that process into HR portals to ensure confidentiality.

Standardize protocol for inviting applicants for an interview. Ask all applicants if they need anything to fully participate in the interview process.

Assign the reasonable accommodation request and follow up process within the company. Create protocols for ensuring any requested accommodations are implemented.

Ensure all documents needed for the interview process are accessible by assigning the task. Send accessible documents as a matter of course to all applicants.

Identify and use accessible interview locations across your company (to include access for people in wheeled mobility devices, nearby parking, proximity to an accessible restaurant, and an accessible path of travel to and from the interview).

Ensure digital accessibility for [online interviews](#).

Standardize positions that require an employment tests such as those that measure aptitude, physical agility or specific skills. Ensure that they are designed to test the essential functions of the position. Ask all candidates to complete the test.

Create a protocol to ensure that hiring managers share the same expectations and descriptions of jobs with all candidates during the interview process.

Create a process to ensure that HR screens interview questions put together by a hiring committee to ensure that no illegal questions (questions that might illicit disability information) are asked.

Review and update the job requirements so they are an authentic and current representation of the job. EARN's *Encouraging Applicants with Disabilities: Job Descriptions and Announcements* [checklist](#) and accompanying [explainer](#) may be helpful in this process.

## Educate Hiring Managers

Whether or not a manager is comfortable with disability can shape the experience of the job candidate during the interview process. Providing some basic training about disability etiquette, the impact of assumptions about what a person with a disability can and can't do, and company policies that might help a new employee with a disability feel welcome in their new role can be extremely helpful. Here are some recommendations around educating hiring managers:

Ensure hiring managers understand disability etiquette to increase the comfort level of both managers and job candidates. This might include a discussion on how certain candidates may present during the interview process (i.e., failure to make eye contact).

Ensure hiring managers focus the interview on the merits of the candidate not whether or not they have a disability. Unfounded assumptions about what a candidate with a disability can and can't do can lead to discrimination.

Teach hiring managers about the reasonable accommodation process and other programs that may benefit employees.

Ensure hiring managers understand that all applicants are to be held to the same standard.

Educate hiring managers about what they can and can't ask during the interview process as it relates to disability. Practice disclosure conversations during an interview so they are aware of what to do should the issue of disability come up during the interview.

## Accessible Interviews: What You Need to Know

Companies have an obligation to make reasonable accommodations during the hiring process to enable candidates with disabilities to participate in the interview process. A reasonable accommodation should not be viewed as "special treatment," rather accommodations level the playing field for those who may need to approach the interview a little differently in order to best demonstrate their skills and abilities. Remember that the goal of the interview is to accurately assess the candidate's skills, qualifications, and experience for the position they are applying to. A checklist of best practices to ensure accessible interviews is provided below.

Ensure any accommodations requested prior to the interview are in place before the candidate arrives.

Visit the interview location prior to conducting the interview to ensure it meets the candidates access needs.

Check in with the candidate to see if they have what they need to fully participate in the interview now that they are on-site.

Allow service animals to accompany the candidate to the interview. Do not pet or otherwise distract the dog.

Ask [job-related](#) interview questions and those relevant to job functions. Focus on how the person plans to be effective in the position.

Remember that you can't ask any questions that are likely to reveal a disability. Instead ask, can you perform the essential functions of this job with or without a reasonable accommodation.

Any candidate can be asked how they would perform a particular job task. If the candidate requires accommodations to do so successfully, ensure that they are provided.

Remember to relax. Everyone's a little nervous in an interview situation, don't let the fear of making a mistake in etiquette impact your ability to connect with the candidate.

## Resources

**[Job Accommodation Network \(JAN\)](#)** 1-800-526-7234 (V/TTY)

JAN is a no cost, confidential service from the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) that provides information on job accommodations for people with disabilities, the employment provisions of the ADA and other related legislation.

**[Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(EEOC\)](#)** 1-800-669-4000 (V); 1-800-669-6820 (TTY)

The EEOC enforces the ADA's employment provisions and provides resources that can answer employers' questions about how to ensure their hiring process is inclusive of people with disabilities.

**Employment Tests and Selection Procedures:** [www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/employment-tests-and-selection-procedures](http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/employment-tests-and-selection-procedures)

**Job Applicants and the ADA:** <https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/job-applicants-and-ada>

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel, L. & Brandon C. (2006). Finding the right job fit. Society for Human Resources: HR Magazine. Retrieved from <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/pages/0306daniel.aspx>.

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