Accommodation Problems / Solutions for Reopening with COVID-19

Version 1.0
Many of these reopening practices/guidelines are taken from
OSHA, CDC, and the Georgia Department of Health

As we adjust to a world with Covid-19, states are beginning to reopen. People are returning to a workplace with new safety practices. Unfortunately, some of these practices will pose barriers to people with various disabilities.

This document outlines potential accommodation problems resulting from reopening safety practices, and when possible, lists ideas for accommodation solutions. It is a work in progress, and is part of the Work ACCESS project's efforts to develop an online tool for conducting workplace accommodation assessments.

This list will be further developed with crowd sourcing. If you would like to help us with this effort, please email us your suggestions or join us in July/August for a series of focus groups to brainstorm additional solutions.

Conduct daily in-person or virtual health checks (temperature/symptom screening)

Problems	Solutions
Employee may have difficulty recognizing symptoms Employee may have difficulty responding to symptom screen questionnaires	• Use a format (e.g., text, images) that is accessible to the employee and that the employee understands. • Provide an electronic version of the questionnaire that is compatible with the employee's assistive technology. • Work with the employee to develop questions in terminology that the employee understands. • Allow the employee to fill out the questionnaire at home, when he or she may not feel as rushed to complete it.

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Train employees on new policies and procedures

Problems	Solutions

Employees may have difficulty understanding presentations or print materials on new policies and procedures	• Make presentations accessible.
	
	    o Employees with low vision or blindness may need large, high contrast text and verbal description of graphics.
	
	    o Employees who are deaf or hard of hearing may need captioning or sign language interpreters.
	
	    o If providing training online, use a meeting platform that is compatible with the employee's assistive technology.
	
	• Provide materials in formats that are accessible for the employee (e.g., electronic documents, large print, Braille).
	
	• Illustrate new procedures through images or video for employees who are not strong written text users.
	
	• Provide copies of presentations that can be reviewed following the training session.

Stagger work schedules to minimize the number of employees in the office at the same time

Problems	Solutions
Different work schedules may prevent employees from getting help from coworkers	• If an employee relies on particular coworkers for assistance, schedule them together or ask another coworker to provide that assistance.
Different work schedules may limit public transportation options	• Work with the employee to plan his or her work schedule.

Promote frequent hand washing

Problems	Solutions
Employees may forget to wash hands or not do it sufficiently	• Provide reminders to wash hands and on how to do it (e.g., length of time). Use a format (e.g., text, images) that is accessible to the employee and that the employee understands.
People with mobility or reach/dexterity problems may be deterred from using inaccessible sinks.	• Consult the ADA accessibility guidelines for making bathroom sinks accessible. This might include making sure that there is sufficient space to move near the sink, sufficient knee clearance, and easy-to-operate faucet controls.
People with mobility or reach/dexterity problems may be deterred from using inaccessible soap dispensers	• Use a portable soap dispenser that can be positioned as desired by the user (instead of or in addition to a wall-mounted dispenser). • Use motion-activated soap dispensers rather than pump soap dispensers.
People with mobility or reach/dexterity problems may be deterred from using inaccessible hand sanitizer	• Use a smaller, portable hand sanitizer dispenser that can be positioned as desired by the user (instead of or in addition to a wall-mounted dispenser). • Use motion-activated hand sanitizer dispensers rather than pump hand sanitizers • Use hand sanitizer wipes instead of liquid sanitizer
Employees may contaminate their hands again from using a manual wheelchair after hand washing	• Wear protective gloves when propelling the wheelchair

Wear a cloth face mask covering, protective gloves, or protective gowns

Problems	Solutions
Masks get in the way of lip reading.	• Use a facial mask with a clear plastic center panel. This solution might work best for short communications since the masks are more difficult to breath through and they tend to fog up. • Explore other communication methods.
Masks muffle speech, which could be problematic for employees with soft speech or who are hard of hearing	• Amplify the person's speech. • Explore other communication methods.
Glasses can fog up, adding to other vision problems	• Masks with nose wires, that fit closer to the face, are reported to result in less fogging of glasses.
Masks can pose problems for people who are hypersensitive to touch and they can be uncomfortable to wear for long periods of time	• Experiment with different mask materials. • If possible, allow the employee to work in a separate area where mask use may not be needed for the entire day.
Employees may have difficulty putting on or taking off the mask, gloves, or gown	• ??
Employees may have difficulty reading facial expressions	• ??
People who use masks for breathing conditions may have trouble deciding which mask to wear	• Employees with underlying respiratory conditions should continue to work from home if possible.
Employees with motor disabilities may have more difficulty moving around when wearing protective gowns	• ??

Promote proper respiratory etiquette (covering sneezes and coughs)

Problems	Solutions
Employee may forget proper etiquette.	• Provide training / reminders. Use a format (e.g., text, images) that is accessible to and is understood by the employee.
Employees with motor disabilities may have trouble covering their mouth/nose	• The wearing of a face mask may reduce the need to cover a sneeze.

Set up employee workspaces at least 6 feet away from each other

Problems	Solutions
Employees with cognitive or vision issues may have difficulty knowing how much room you need between workers	• Provide training / reminders. Use a format (e.g., text, images) that is accessible to and is understood by the employee. • Mark physical boundaries • Erect physical barriers between consecutive workstations

Use video conferencing instead of physical meetings

Problems	Solutions
Video conferencing platforms may not be accessible.	• See our documents on accommodations for telework.

Limit workplace visitors

Problems	Solutions
Job coaches or personal care assistants may not be able to access the business	• Work with the employee to determine what services can be provided remotely and where exceptions to a visitor policy may be warranted.

Perform routine environmental cleaning (cleaning doorknobs, handles, etc.)

Problems	Solutions
Surfaces that employees (or customers) come in contact with need to be disinfected.	• In addition to cleaning high traffic areas in the workplace, also clean lesser-used automatic door and elevator buttons that employees with disabilities interact with.
Cleaning may be a new job task that the employee has difficulty completing.	• Additional accommodations may be needed for cleaning tasks. • The cleaning tasks may need to be reassigned to a different employee.

Cross-train employees in case large numbers of employees are absent due to sickness

Problems	Solutions
Employees may need accommodations for tasks they don't normally do.	• Cross-train employees on tasks that are similar to their current work and which might involve the use of the same accommodations.