

FAQ: Accommodating Persons with Disabilities

What is a disability?

An individual with a disability is defined as any person who (1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity such as seeing, hearing, speaking, walking, breathing, learning, and working, (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment. Disabilities covered by legislation include, but are not limited to, AIDS, cancer, cerebral palsy, diabetes, epilepsy, head injuries, hearing impairments, specific learning disabilities, loss of limbs, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, psychiatric disorders, speech impairments, spinal cord injuries, and visual impairments. Temporary, nonchronic conditions such as broken limbs, influenza, and pregnancy are not disabilities unless accompanied by severe complications.

What is required under ADA?

The Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits discrimination against otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities in all employment practices and any program or activity of a public entity.

Who is an “otherwise qualified individual with a disability”?

In the context of employment decisions, a qualified individual is one who meets legitimate knowledge, skill, abilities, and experience requirements of the position and who can perform the essential functions of the job with or without a reasonable accommodation. In the context of educational programs or activities, a qualified individual is one who meets the academic or technical standards requisite to admission or participation in the educational program or activity with or without reasonable modifications to the rules, policies, or practices; removal of architectural, communication, or transportation barriers; or the provision of auxiliary aids and services.

What are reasonable accommodations?

A reasonable accommodation is a modification to a job or work environment, or to academic or classroom policies and procedures, which will enable a qualified applicant, employee, student, or visitor to the University to participate in the application process, perform essential job functions, or participate in educational programs or activities.

What are some examples of reasonable accommodations?

Examples of reasonable accommodations for employees include, but are not limited to, making existing facilities readily accessible and useable, restructuring a job, modifying work schedules, and providing adaptive equipment, readers, or interpreters. Examples of reasonable accommodations or modifications for students include, but are not limited to, having written materials available in alternate formats, providing interpreters for individuals with hearing

impairments, use of note takers or recordings, extra time for exams, and providing adaptive equipment.

What is WCU's responsibility to make accommodations for visitors?

As a public institution, WCU is required to make accommodations for visitors for events that are open to the public. All events open to the public must be scheduled in an accessible location. To determine if a location is accessible, contact facilities planning at 610-436-3200. Please make your needs known as soon as possible, but not less than one week in advance, to allow time to make the necessary arrangements.

Our office advises every publication or notice of an event or program to be held at WCU contain the statement: "Accommodations for individuals with disabilities are available on request by calling _____." A phone number of the person or office sponsoring the event should be filled in the blank as the contact person for individuals to request accommodations.

Who is responsible for making arrangements and paying for accommodations that are requested?

Each office or department is responsible for making the arrangements and paying the costs associated with providing accommodations upon request. If offices or departments sponsoring the event absolutely cannot afford to pay the costs associated with making the accommodation, they should speak with their dean or divisional vice president.

How does a department or division arrange for a sign-language interpreter?

Generally, OSSD will arrange for interpreters through their contract with The Deaf-Hearing Communication Center, Inc. OSSD will cover any costs associated with interpreters for students to attend any event related to their education at WCU.

How does WCU provide accessible equipment to the University community and visitors to campus?

Managers purchasing new equipment such as tables, desks, computers, water fountains, etc., for general use by the University community or the public will be responsible for ensuring that the needs of individuals with disabilities are considered. In addition, new contracts with vendors for equipment placed on campus such as vending machines and ATM machines should require that the equipment be accessible to individuals with disabilities.

How can University departments or divisions secure training for faculty and staff on ADA questions?

The Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion offers training for faculty, staff, and managers on ADA issues. If you would like to arrange for training, please contact the office at ext. 2433.