

## **Participants' Guide to Disability-Related Workplace Accommodation**

### **Scope:**

The focus of this guide is to provide participants with an understanding of the roles, responsibilities and desired outcomes in relation to the disability-related workplace accommodation process.

### **What are the goals of our accommodation program?**

The University promotes a campus environment that is equitable, inclusive and accessible, and is committed to providing a workplace in which all employees are treated with dignity. To this end, the University will make every reasonable effort to:

- meet the disability-related needs of employees and job applicants
- assist employees with performing the essential duties of their job to a reasonable standard
- ensure employees enjoy the same benefits and privileges irrespective of disability
- support job applicants in fully participating in recruitment process

### **When is the duty to accommodate triggered?**

It is typically an employee's obligation to identify potential accommodation needs and trigger the accommodation process. Occasionally, a manager may trigger the process if they reasonably become aware that the employee requires accommodation.

### **Who is involved in the accommodation process?**

The main participants in the process are the employee, the supervisor or manager (management), the Health and Disability Management Specialist (Human Resources - HR) and Homewood Health. Depending on the complexity of the situation and the needs of the employee, other stakeholders may be engaged as needed, e.g. rehabilitation specialists, union representatives, Environmental Health and Safety Officer, etc.

### **How is private medical information protected?**

We recognize that the accommodation process involves the disclosure of private information that employees may not otherwise disclose to their employer. Sensitive medical information pertaining to diagnosis and treatment is kept secure and confidential by our third-party benefits provider (Homewood Health) and is not shared with HR, management or other employees.

### **How are costs associated with the accommodation process managed?**

As per the [Ontario Human Rights Commission](#) and the duty to accommodate, the accommodation provider (employer) is to bear the cost of any required medical information or documentation (i.e. doctors' notes, assessments, letters setting out accommodation needs, etc.). The accommodation provider must also bear the cost of the required accommodation.

## **How is the purchasing and repairing of equipment managed?**

The Health and Disability Management Specialist will work with the employee's manager to ensure that the right equipment is purchased and provided to the employee in a timely manner and aligned with the University's [Procurement of Good and Services Policy](#).

As part of the accommodation monitoring process, the equipment will be taken into consideration. At that time or at any time the equipment is in need of repair or replacement, the employee's manager will take the lead and will consult with the Health and Disability Management Specialist as needed. The employee is encouraged to inform their manager as soon as possible, of any equipment related issues or additional requirements.

## **When and why are accommodation plans reviewed?**

An accommodation plan should be reviewed on a yearly basis at minimum, but the timing of the review will be based on the individual's circumstances.

There are a variety of reasons of why an accommodation plan should be reviewed and here are a few examples:

- When there are changes to the employee's health
- When job duties or workplace conditions change
- If the accommodation is no longer effective
- When an employee changes positions, departments or is redeployed
- After an employee returns from a medical leave or an extended leave of absence
- When there is a change in the reporting structure

## **Roles and Responsibilities:**

### **Employee:**

- engage in the accommodation process in good faith
- proactively request accommodation from management
- ensure that required forms and medical documentation are submitted to Homewood Health in a timely manner
- cooperate in the search for accommodation measures by providing input and feedback as needed and accepting reasonable accommodation measures

### **Management:**

- accept requests for accommodation in good faith and take immediate steps to commence the process by contacting Health and Disability Management Specialist
- maintain confidentiality and provide input as needed throughout the process, including information pertaining to job demands, team structures, etc.
- provide support implementing and overseeing accommodation plans
- understand the accommodation process and be a resource for employees seeking information and guidance

## **Health and Disability Management Specialist (HR):**

- oversee the disability-related workplace accommodation process from start to finish
- engage with both employee and management and maintain open communication throughout the process; providing information and guidance as needed
- consult with employee in determining the most appropriate accommodation measure including requests for accessible format or communication assistance
- compile job demands information and submit it on behalf of the University to Homewood Health
- ensure that policy and procedures are applied with consistency and fairness
- ensure that confidentiality standards are met
- create, implement and monitor accommodation plans based upon Homewood Health's assessment and in a collaborative and consultative manner

## **Disability Case Manager (Homewood Health):**

- collect the employee's signed release of information form to ensure the necessary consent has been given to complete the accommodation process
- receive and assess employee medical documentation and, if necessary, follow up to clarify existing medical information and/or request additional medical documentation
- maintain information in strict accordance with the policy provisions concerning privacy and confidentiality
- ensure that there is sufficient and appropriate medical information to validate functional limitations and restrictions, and to complete the appropriate accommodation assessment
- make appropriate recommendations for accommodation measures based upon a comprehensive review of the functional limitations and restrictions in relation to job demands and communicate the employee's functional limitations and restrictions to HR

## **Additional tips for all participants:**

- focus on abilities rather than limitations
- be positive and cooperative in your communication and approach to the process
- be flexible, creative and open to change
- reach out to the Health and Disability Management Specialist (HR) with questions or when additional support is required
- keep records of meetings so that you can keep track of progress and keep things moving forward in a timely manner

## **Additional Resources:**

[Ontario Tech University Procedure for Accommodating Employees and Job Applicants With Disabilities](#)

[Ontario Human Rights Commission Duty to Accommodate](#)

If you require this document in an alternative format or require communication support, contact Julie Day, Health and Disability Management Specialist at [Julie.day@ontariotechu.ca](mailto:Julie.day@ontariotechu.ca) or call 905.721.8668 ext 3649.