Procedures for Providing Reasonable Accommodation for Persons with Disabilities

TABLE of CONTENTS

- Summary of SSA Reasonable Accommodation Procedures
- Agency Policy
- Definition of Terms
- Requesting Reasonable Accommodation
- Written Requests for Record Keeping Purposes
- Determining Which SSA Official Will Process the Request
- The Interactive Process
- Three-Part Analysis for Approving or Denying Requests
- Obtaining Medical Information
- Confidentiality Requirements Regarding Medical Information
- Approving a Request for Reasonable Accommodation
- Denying a Request for Reasonable Accommodation
- Information Tracking and Reporting
- Supporting Reasonable Accommodation – A Total Approach
- Distribution
- Inquiries
- Appendix A–Form SSA-501-F3

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION PROCEDURES

Summary of SSA Reasonable Accommodation Procedures

1. An individual makes a **request** for reasonable accommodation.

   - An **employee** can request reasonable accommodation from his or her supervisor, a supervisor or a manager in his or her immediate chain of command, the Center for Disability Services, or the component EEO officer.

   - An **applicant** for employment can request reasonable accommodation for the interview/application process from any employee with whom he or she has contact in connection with the interview/application process.

   - **Employees** (not **applicants**) must follow up an oral request in writing. However, officials should not wait for a written request to act on an oral request for accommodation.

2. A reasonable accommodation request for an **applicant** to engage in the interview/application process should be approved and provided as soon as possible. If the request is not feasible (because it would be an undue burden on the agency to provide it within the necessary time frame) the applicant should be advised of this and of alternative accommodations, which will be provided. An alternative accommodation should be provided so that the applicant can engage in the interview/application process.

3. If the reasonable accommodation request for an **employee** is approved, the requested item or service will be provided to the employee as soon as possible, generally within 30 calendar days following receipt of the request. If it is not possible to make the accommodation within 30 calendar days; i.e., if an item cannot be provided timely or medical documentation not provided timely, the employee must be informed of the status of the request within 30 calendar days following receipt of the request.

4. If the accommodation which the employee requests is not feasible, but another accommodation might be feasible, the supervisor should engage in an interactive process with the employee to identify other accommodations that would also be effective. The agency is not obligated to provide an employee with the accommodation of his/her choice but with one which is reasonable and effective.

5. If an employee's reasonable accommodation request is denied, a letter, signed by the decision maker, must be provided to the employee within 30 days of the date the decision maker receives the request. Denial letters must inform employees of their rights.

Agency Policy

It is SSA's policy to fully comply with the reasonable accommodation requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Under the law, Federal agencies must provide reasonable accommodation to qualified employees or employment applicants with disabilities, unless to do so would cause undue hardship. The agency provides reasonable accommodation when:

1. An employment applicant with a disability needs an accommodation to be considered for a job;

2. An employee with a disability needs an accommodation to enable him or her to perform the essential functions of the job or to gain access to the workplace; and

3. An employee with a disability needs an accommodation to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment.

SSA will process requests for reasonable accommodation and, where appropriate, provide reasonable accommodations in a prompt, fair, and efficient manner. The agency is also dedicated to improving the recruitment, promotion, and retention of qualified persons with disabilities by providing the information and resources necessary to support them and to accomplish the agency's mission.

Definition of Terms

- **Reasonable Accommodation:** Any modification or adjustment to a job or change in the work environment that enables a qualified applicant with a disability to compete equally or a qualified employee with a disability to perform the essential functions of the position. The accommodation must be job related and not for personal use; e.g., hearing aids, prosthetic devices, wheelchairs, and transportation to work. The need for reasonable accommodation is determined on a case-by-case basis, taking the following into consideration: the individual's specific disability and existing limitations to the performance of a job function, the essential duties of the job, the work environment, and the feasibility of the proposed accommodation.

- **Disability:** A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of a person's major life activities. The term, *substantially limits,* implies a degree of

severity and duration: A person's major life activities are substantially limited if he/she is unable to perform, or is significantly limited in the ability to perform, an activity compared to an average person without a disability. A determination of "substantially limited" must always be based on the effect of an impairment on that individual's major life activities. *Major life activitie*s are activities that an average person without a disability can perform with little or no difficulty; they include, but are not limited to: speaking, hearing, seeing, and walking.

- **Qualified Individual with a Disability:** An individual with a disability is *qualified* if he or she: 1) satisfies the requisite skill, experience, education, and other job-related requirements of the position; and 2) can perform the essential functions of the position, with or without reasonable accommodation, and without posing a threat of substantial harm to others or to him or herself.

- **Essential Functions:** Those job duties that are so fundamental to the position that one cannot do the job without performing the duties. A function can be essential if, among other things: the position exists specifically for the performance of that function; there are a limited number of other individuals who could perform the function; or the function is specialized and the individual is hired based on his or her ability to perform the function. The determination of the essential functions of a position must be done on a case-by-case basis so that the determination reflects not simply the components of a generic position description, but the job as it is actually performed.

- **Undue Hardship:** *Undue hardship* means that a specific accommodation would require significant difficulty or expense. Undue hardship is always determined on a case-by-case basis, considering factors that include the nature and cost of the accommodation requested and the impact of the accommodation on the operations of the agency. SSA does not have to provide accommodations that would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the agency.

- **Reassignment:** Reassignment is a "last resort" form of reasonable accommodation that, absent undue hardship, is provided to employees (not applicants) who, because of a disability, can no longer perform the essential functions of their jobs, with or without reasonable accommodation. Reassignment also covers employees who are new to the job, employees who no longer perform essential functions of the position, and employees who acquire essential functions that they are unable to perform. Reassignments are made only to funded vacant positions and only to employees who are qualified for the new position. If the employee is qualified for the position, he or she will be reassigned to the job without having to compete for it.

Requesting Reasonable Accommodation

A request for reasonable accommodation is a statement that an individual needs an adjustment or change at work, or in the job application process, or as a benefit or privilege of employment for a reason related to a disabling condition. **The reasonable accommodation process begins as soon as the request for accommodation is made.**

The requestor does not have to use any special words, such as "reasonable accommodation," "disability," or "Rehabilitation Act." An individual may request, from his or her supervisor, a supervisor or a manager in his or her immediate chain of command, the Center for Disability Services, or the component EEO officer, a reasonable accommodation whenever he or she determines one is needed, even if he or she has not previously disclosed the existence of a disability.

An **applicant for employment** may request a reasonable accommodation orally or in writing from any SSA employee with whom the applicant has contact in connection with the application/selection process. An **employee** should request reasonable accommodation from his or her supervisor, a supervisor or a manager in his or her immediate chain of command, the Center for Disability Services, or the component EEO officer. A family member, health professional, or other representative may request an accommodation on behalf of an SSA employee or applicant. When a third party requests the accommodation, the decision maker should, if possible, confirm with the applicant or employee with a disability that he or she, in fact, needs an accommodation before proceeding. The request should be directed to the same person to whom the employee or applicant would make the request.

Written Requests for Record Keeping Purposes

To enable SSA to keep accurate records, employees seeking a reasonable accommodation must follow up an oral request with a request in writing or in electronic format. Employees may use Form SSA-501-F3 or the "Reasonable Accommodation Wizard" to prepare their requests. The "Reasonable Accommodation Wizard is an interactive computer application that leads the employee through the request process. A copy of Form SSA-501-F3 may be found at Appendix A of these instructions.

When an individual needs the same reasonable accommodation on a repeated basis (e.g., the assistance of sign language interpreters), a written request is required the first time only. However, the requestor must give management appropriate advance notice each time the accommodation will be needed.

Determining Which SSA Official Will Process the Request

As a first step in processing a request for reasonable accommodation, the person who receives the request will normally process the request and make the final decision. However, if the person who receives the request is not the final decision maker, within 5 workdays, they will forward the request to the individual responsible for processing the request and making the final decision. At the same time, they will notify the requestor who the decision maker is.

Managers

SSA offices and local components have the authority to designate the level of management approval needed for reasonable accommodation requests that do not involve purchases from the centralized SSA accounts. The designated management official is the "decision maker" for the following types of requests:

- Requests for standard office equipment that is needed as a reasonable accommodation and adaptive items costing less than $100.

- Requests for a change in a condition of employment such as modified duties, or a change in schedule, or the location and size of an employee's workspace.

- Requests for reassignment.

  Reassignment is a "last resort" form of reasonable accommodation that will be provided, absent undue hardship, to an employee who, because of a disability, can no longer perform the essential functions of the position he or she holds, with or without reasonable accommodation. Reassignment, including reassignment to a lower-graded position, must be considered if there are no other effective accommodations that would enable the employee to perform the essential functions of his or her current job, or if all other possible accommodations would impose undue hardship.

  Reassignment is available only to employees, not to applicants, and may be made only to a funded vacant position. A funded position is a position for which the agency has a need and would fill even in the absence of the employee's need for a position. The law does not require that agencies create new positions, fill positions for which position descriptions are "on the books" but for which the agency has no need, or move other employees out of their jobs in order to create a vacancy into which an employee with a disability may be placed.

After it is determined and documented that the employee cannot perform the essential functions of his or her current position, because of his or her disability, and the agency cannot accommodate the employee in his or her current position, management will ask the employee if he or she is willing to accept a reassignment.

Management will obtain the employee's resume, SSA-45 or OF-612 to determine positions for which the employee qualifies. To qualify for a vacant position, an employee must have the requisite skill, experience, education, and other job-related requirements necessary to fill the vacant position. The employee must also have the ability to perform the essential functions of the new position with or without reasonable accommodation.

Management will initially attempt to locate an equivalent, funded position in the same commuting area which is presently vacant or which is anticipated to become vacant within 60 days. If such a position is located and the employee is qualified for the position, he or she should be non-competitively reassigned. If an equivalent, funded vacant position does not exist within the commuting area, management should determine whether the employee would be willing to relocate in order to secure an equivalent, funded vacant position and identify the area(s) to which the employee would be willing to relocate. Management should then determine whether an equivalent, funded vacant position is available in an area to which the employee would be willing to relocate. If no equivalent, funded vacant position is found, management must look for a lower graded position that is as close as possible to the employee's current grade and commuting area or in an area to which the employee would be willing to relocate and under the same appointing authority. The employee should be advised that, as with other transfers not required by management, the agency is **not** obliged to pay the employee's relocation expenses.

Managers should consult with appropriate Servicing Personnel Offices and/or Reasonable Accommodation Contact Persons to locate positions for which the employee may qualify. Management and the employee will discuss whether accommodations will be necessary in the new position and the feasibility of providing those accommodations.

Center for Disability Services (CDS)

CDS in the Office of Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity at SSA headquarters is the "decision maker" for reasonable accommodation requests funded by the following centralized accounts:

1. Centralized Accounts for Assistive Technologies and other Adaptive Devices

   - SSA maintains a centralized information technology account from which assistive technologies are purchased. Assistive technologies include computer hardware and software as well as other information technology aids that accommodate and enable persons with disabilities to perform the essential functions of their jobs. A second centralized account is maintained for the purchase of other adaptive devices that are not considered to be "technologies." Devices that are commonly provided are kept in stock.

     When CDS approves a request for assistive technologies, the devices are obtained from existing stock or purchased using funds from the centralized accounts. CDS works with the Contracting Officer in SSA's Office of Acquisition and Grants (OAG) to make procurement decisions based on the supporting documentation that is provided with the reasonable accommodation request.

2. Assistive Technologies Training

   - Specialized assistive technologies training is provided under the National Follow-on Contract for employees who receive a special computer workstation configuration that includes assistive software.

   - Specialized assistive devices training is also available for employees with disabilities under a separate contract that is administered by CDS. This contract supplies training for employees who need refresher training on the use of assistive technologies.

   - The following specific types of assistive devices training are available through the above-mentioned contracts:

     - Employees who are blind and need training on synthetic speech output devices or on computer workstation configurations containing both speech and refreshable Braille output.

     - Employees who have low vision and who need training on magnification devices or on workstation configurations containing both magnification and speech output.

     - Employees with mobility impairments who need to be trained on the use of voice recognition systems because they are unable to use keyboards or other input devices.

- Employees who are deaf and need training on integrated telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDD) systems.

3. Contract Services for Sign Language Interpreters

- The contract for sign language interpreter services provides interpreters for job applicants and employees who are deaf or hard of hearing. CDS is the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative for the agency-wide contract that provides daily onsite interpreters at SSA headquarters and hourly interpreters, by request, to all SSA offices.

- CDS reviews, approves, and funds requests for sign language interpreter services for SSA employees and job applicants. However, OAG processes the purchase requests against the agency-wide contract. CDS is responsible for monitoring the contractor's performance and reporting performance findings to the Contracting Officer in OAG. CDS and OAG share the responsibility for monitoring and upholding the integrity of the sign language interpreter contract.

- CDS's procedures for requesting sign language interpreter services under the current contract are:

  - All requests for hourly sign language interpreter services for job applicants and employees, who are deaf or hard of hearing, must be sent to CDS for approval.

  - The agency-wide contract must be used for extended services; i.e., 1-week or longer training classes, when the cost is <u>more than</u> $2,500. On those infrequent occasions, to help guarantee delivery of sign language interpreters, SSA Form-393 should be prepared and mailed to CDS as early as possible.

  - All requests for hourly sign language interpreters, when the cost is <u>equal to or less than</u> $2,500, must be prepared on SSA Form-393 and sent to CDS for approval. After receiving budget approval from CDS, sign language interpreter services may be purchased at the local level using a vendor of choice.

  - When an office will be requesting sign language interpreter services during a fiscal year, but the services provided <u>would not</u> cost more than $2,500, a blanket request for $2,500 (or less) must be sent to CDS at the beginning of that fiscal year. After

receiving budget approval from CDS, sign language interpreter services may be purchased at the local level using a vendor of choice.

4. CDS is also the decision maker for requests related to SSA's Full-Time Equivalency (FTE) Pool for Reasonable Accommodations. The FTE positions are used to allow offices to hire individuals on a full-time, part-time, or intermittent basis to serve as: readers for qualified employees who are blind and for employees who have low vision; personal assistants for employees with severe physical/mobility impairments; and sign language interpreters for employees who are deaf or hard of hearing, at sites with several deaf employees.

   - Requesting Use of FTE Pool as a Reasonable Accommodation

     - Requests are sent to CDS on Form SSA-501-F3.

     - A request to use the FTE pool to hire an individual to perform services, which will allow an employee with a disability to perform the essential functions of the position, may be initiated by the employee or by management during the employee's employment or after the hiring process.

     - Any SSA component may request use of the FTE pool.

     - Approval to hire from the FTE pool is granted only after all other options for providing reasonable accommodation have been explored.

     - CDS has the delegated authority to approve or deny requests for FTE assistance.

   - Employing an Assistant for an Employee with a Disability

- Both management and the employee must be involved in the selection, interview, and hiring process of a prospective assistant.

- Local offices are to maintain all records, and are responsible for the personnel actions and general management of the FTE pool assistants.

- When the centralized FTE pool is used, that fund pays salaries and benefits for the assistants. All other expenses for the assistants; e.g., travel, training, overtime/over-tour payment, are funded by the component/office employing the assistant.

- When an assistant for an employee with a disability is hired, the assistant is offered an appointment in the excepted service and the appointment may not exceed 2 years.

- If the assistant's performance is acceptable to the employee with a disability and to management, the appointment may be renewed for an additional 2 years.

- Readers, personal assistants, and/or sign language interpreters are hired under Schedule A authority, 5 CFR 213.3102(ll) ["ll" is double "L"]. Individuals with disabilities who are hired as assistants may be hired under the 213.3102(u) authority.

The Interactive Process

Communication is a priority and is encouraged throughout the entire reasonable accommodation process. The first step should always be a thorough, frank discussion between the employee and his or her immediate supervisor. On-going communication is particularly important where the specific limitation, problem, or barrier is unclear; where an effective accommodation is not obvious; or where the parties are choosing between different possible reasonable accommodations. CDS is always available to provide advice.

The decision maker or any other SSA official who receives information in connection with a request for reasonable accommodation may share information connected with that request with other agency officials only when those officials need to know the information in order to make determinations about that request. See sections entitled "Obtaining Medical Information" and "Confidentiality Requirements Regarding Medical Information" for specific rules governing the confidentiality of medical information.

Three-Part Analysis for Approving or Denying Requests

Before approving or denying a request for reasonable accommodation, the SSA decision maker should:

1. **Determine if the requestor is a qualified person with a disability.** A determination of disability is not necessarily based on the diagnosis of the impairment, but rather on the effect the impairment has on the life activities of the individual. A mild or borderline case may affect major life activities, but not substantially restrict those activities. Transitory conditions that last only a few weeks or months are not considered disabilities. Medical documentation may be required to determine if the requestor is a qualified person with a disability. (See section entitled, "Obtaining Medical Information.")

2. **Determine if the accommodation is needed to: 1) enable a qualified applicant with a disability to be considered for the position he or she desires; 2) enable a qualified employee with a disability to perform the essential functions of his or her position; and 3) enable an employee with a disability to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment as similarly situated employees without disabilities.** As previously noted, modifications or adjustments must be made to the job application and interviewing process to accommodate qualified applicants with disabilities. As previously defined, essential functions are the most important or main duties of the position. They are the functions that define the position. These are determined not just by the position description, but by what employees in the position do and how the job is actually performed**.** A decision maker may restructure a job held by an employee with a disability to eliminate marginal duties, but the essential functions of the job may not be eliminated nor may performance standards for those functions be lowered. Appropriate adjustments or modifications must be made so that employees with a disability can enjoy the same benefits and privileges of employment as other employees. Although an employee's accommodation of preference is always seriously considered, SSA is not obligated to provide the accommodation of choice, but must provide an equally effective accommodation.

3. **Determine what effect the accommodation will have on the employee's performance and on the agency's operations.** Is the requested accommodation reasonable? An accommodation is reasonable if it is effective. Consider the applicant's or employee's specific disability, his or her existing limitations and abilities to perform the particular job, the size and type of the agency operation, and the nature and cost of the accommodation. If the accommodation will in some way negatively impact the agency's operations, it may constitute an undue burden and another accommodation may need to be considered. If an

SSA decision maker believes that an accommodation would represent an undue burden, he or she should contact the Center for Disability Services.

Obtaining Medical Information

SSA is entitled to know that an applicant or employee has a disability that requires a reasonable accommodation. In some cases the disability or need for accommodation will be obvious or otherwise already known to the decision maker, for example where the employee is blind. In these cases, SSA will not seek any further medical information. However, when a disability or the need for an accommodation is not obvious or otherwise already known to the decision maker, SSA may require that the individual provide documentation about the disability and his or her functional limitations. At a minimum, acceptable medical documentation must establish the nature of the medical condition, the limitations the medical condition imposes and the causal connection between the medical condition and the inability to meet workplace expectations. If a decision maker decides to seek medical information, he or she will request only information sufficient to substantiate that the individual has a disability and needs the reasonable accommodation requested, and the decision maker will not ask for unrelated documentation. The decision maker has the right to consult with the SSA Medical Director to determine what information is needed as well as to review medical documentation. This review will be at agency expense.

Once the medical documentation is received, the decision maker will evaluate it, in consultation with the SSA Medical Director, if necessary. If the information provided by the person requesting the accommodation or the information provided by the health professional is insufficient to enable the decision maker to determine whether an accommodation is appropriate, the decision maker may ask for further information. If an employee fails or refuses to provide appropriate documentation or to cooperate with SSA's efforts to obtain documentation, the request for reasonable accommodation can be denied.

Confidentiality Requirements Regarding Medical Information

Under the Rehabilitation Act, medical information obtained in connection with the reasonable accommodation process must be kept confidential. This means that all medical information that SSA obtains in connection with such requests, including information about an employee or applicant's functional limitations and reasonable accommodation needs, must be kept in a secure location in locked files separate from the employee's SF-7B file or official personnel file. Any SSA employee who obtains or receives such information is strictly bound by confidentiality requirements and may disclose this information only as follows:

- Management officials who need to know (including the decision maker who requested that the medical information be obtained) may be told about necessary restrictions on the work or duties of the employee and about the accommodation(s) necessary for the employee to perform his or her duties. However, information about the employee's general medical history should only be disclosed if strictly necessary;

- First aid and safety personnel may be informed, when appropriate, *if* the employee might require emergency treatment because of the disability;

- Information may be given to Government officials or contractors assigned to investigate agency compliance with the Rehabilitation Act.

- Information may be given to the agency EEO officials to maintain records and evaluate and report on the agency's performance in processing reasonable accommodation requests.

Whenever medical information is disclosed, the individual disclosing the information must inform the recipients of the information about the confidentiality requirements attached to it. These recipients are also bound by the confidentiality requirements.

Approving a Request for Reasonable Accommodation

As soon as the decision maker determines that a reasonable accommodation will be provided, SSA will process the request and provide the accommodation in as short a timeframe as possible. SSA recognizes, however, that the time necessary to process a request will depend on the nature of the accommodation requested and whether it is necessary to obtain supporting information. If an approved accommodation cannot be provided within 30 calendar days of the date the decision maker receives the request due to extenuating circumstances; i.e., due to procurement delays, the decision maker will inform the employee of the status of the request before the end of the 30 calendar days. Also, if a decision cannot be reached within 30 calendar days; i.e., difficulty securing medical documentation, the decision maker will also inform the employee of the status of the request before the end of the 30 calendar days. Where feasible, if there is a delay in providing the request, temporary measures will be taken to provide assistance.

Denying a Request for Reasonable Accommodation

As soon as the decision maker determines that a request for reasonable accommodation will be denied, he or she will inform the requestor in writing. The explanation for the denial

should be written in plain language, clearly stating the specific reasons for denial. Where the decision maker has denied a specific requested accommodation, but has offered to make a different accommodation in its place, the decision letter should explain both the reasons for denying the accommodation requested and the reasons that the decision maker believes that the accommodation being offered will be effective. The written notice of denial should explain the procedures available for reassessment and independent review of the decision (see next paragraph) and should also inform the individual that he or she has the right to file an equal employment opportunity (EEO) complaint.

Employees can request prompt reassessment of a denial of reasonable accommodation. If an employee has additional information to provide in support of his/her request, the additional information should be forwarded to the decision maker, along with a request that the earlier decision be reassessed. The decision maker will respond to the request for reassessment within 5 business days of receipt of the new information. If the decision maker does not reverse the decision, the employee can ask for an independent review of the request:

- **If the decision maker was a management official in the region/component**, the request for an independent review should be sent to the decision maker's manager. This official will make the decision within 10 business days.

- **If the decision maker was the CDS Team Leader**, the request for an independent review should be sent to the Human Resources Manager, who will make the decision within 10 business days, at the following address:

  Social Security Administration
  Office of Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity
  Attention: Mrs. Linda Jackson
  P.O. Box 17712
  Baltimore, MD 21235-7712

An individual's participation in the independent review process does not satisfy the requirements for bringing a claim under the discrimination complaint process, the agency grievance procedure, or the negotiated grievance procedures. Also, pursuing this option does not extend the time limits for initiating statutory claims or claims based on a collective bargaining agreement.

Information Tracking and Reporting

CDS maintains a database of information for internal use only. Data is collected for all reasonable accommodation requests for which CDS has the delegated decision making

authority. This information helps CDS provide equipment and software upgrades, provide maintenance to equipment, and provide specialized training to employees. The data is confidential and the names of the employees who requested accommodation are not disclosed. This data should be maintained for 3 years. The CDS database can provide the following information about requests for which CDS has the delegated decision making authority:

1. The number and types of reasonable accommodations that have been requested in the application process and whether those requests have been granted or denied;

2. The jobs (occupational series, grade level and agency component) for which reasonable accommodations have been requested;

3. The types of reasonable accommodations that have been requested for each of those jobs;

4. The number and types of reasonable accommodations for each job, by agency component, that have been approved, and the number and types denied;

5. The number and types of requests for reasonable accommodations that relate to the benefits or privileges of employment, and whether those requests have been granted or denied;

6. The reasons for denial of requests for reasonable accommodation;

7. The amount of time taken to process each request for reasonable accommodation; and

8. The sources of technical assistance that have been consulted in trying to identify possible reasonable accommodations.

Each region/component is also responsible for tracking all of the information (1-8) shown above for requests for which they have the delegated decision making authority. The Associate Commissioner for the Office of Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity will request this information from components and regions on an annual basis and will provide the format in which the data is to be submitted.

Supporting Reasonable Accommodation - A Total Approach

Selective Placement

The SSA Selective Placement Program is a special employment program designed to assist qualified individuals with disabilities to obtain employment consistent with their level of skills and abilities. The Selective Placement Program promotes hiring, retention, and advancement of persons with disabilities and considers the individual's capacity for safe and efficient job performance. The CDS Selective Placement Coordinator is responsible for nationwide program leadership, and provides direction and guidance to his or her counterparts nationwide. These individuals work closely with agencies concerned with the rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities.

Individuals with disabilities may be hired under both competitive and noncompetitive appointing authorities. To qualify for a noncompetitive appointment under Schedule A Appointing Authority, 5 CFR 213.3102(u) (t), an individual:

- Must have a severe physical or mental disability; and

- Must be certified by a state rehabilitation agency or the Department of Veterans Affairs.

If an individual with a disability is hired noncompetitively through the Selective Placement Program, the Selective Placement Coordinator will discuss any necessary accommodations with the employee's management.

Employees with Disabilities (EWD) Intercomponent Workgroup

Key personnel from all SSA components serve on the SSA EWD Workgroup. This workgroup meets bi-weekly (or more often as needed) to address issues that affect employees with disabilities. The workgroup has the responsibility for:

- Formulating strategies for providing assistive technologies and improving customer service;

- Developing or recommending standards for assistive devices and software upgrades; and

- Acting as advocates for employees with disabilities by ensuring that they are included, or considered, in agency-wide contracts, identifying necessary resources, promoting awareness of accessibility needs, and maintaining the EWD Intranet Web Site.

Employees with Disabilities Intranet Web Site

The EWD Intranet Web Site contains a wealth of information about training, assistive devices, accessibility standards, and also contains a library of other technical documents.

Employees with Disabilities Help Desk

The Office of Telecommunications and Systems Operations maintains an EWD Help Desk. This help desk performs the following services: answers telephone calls; keeps a record of problems and responds to questions from employees agency-wide; forwards requests for hardware maintenance; and answers software questions.

Research and Development

The Assistive Technology Center in the Office of Telecommunications and Systems Operations performs the following functions to ensure that employees with disabilities can operate in the SSA environment with state-of-the-art assistive technologies:

- Certifies and tracks the accessibility of software and web applications through the Office of System's "Change Control Board;"
- Develops and maintains Windows NT system policies for EWD;
- Develops installation instructions for changes/updates to assistive software;
- Performs downloads/retrofits to adaptive workstations;
- Tests new SSA applications and updates; and
- Develops system management server scripts to remotely update software.

Usability Testing

The Office of Automation Support in the Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Operations (DCO) has an assistive devices lab that tests software for accessibility, furnishes consultation services for software developers, and evaluates software application training curriculum plans and develops customized training.

Section 508 Advisory Council

The Social Security Administration Section 508 Advisory Council was established for the purpose of complying with the extensive reporting requirements of Section 508. The council is working to establish agency-wide plans and processes that will ensure that electronic and information technology that the agency procures, develops, maintains, or uses will be accessible to persons and employees with disabilities.

SSA's National Advisory Council for Employees with Disabilities

The SSA National Advisory Council for Employees with Disabilities (NACED) serves in an advisory capacity to the Commissioner of Social Security and SSA executives about issues of concern to SSA employees with disabilities and customers with disabilities.

Accessible Building/Workplace Modifications

At headquarters, the Office of Facilities Management is responsible for making necessary workplace modifications (site preparation) to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities. The Office of Publications and Logistics Management, Office of Property Management UNICOR Team provides for customization of furniture (workstations) in support of necessary reasonable accommodations. The Office of Facilities Management and Office of Publications and Logistics Management work together to reconfigure worksites and workstations. Decision makers should direct headquarters reasonable accommodation requests for accessible worksites and building modifications or workstation customization to the Office of Facilities Management, Office of Publications and Logistics Management, or the Office of Property Management. Reasonable accommodation requests for accessible worksites, building modifications, or workstation customization outside headquarters should be directed to the appropriate regional staff.

Ergonomic Chairs

The Office of Property Management provides ergonomic chairs for employees who have medical conditions requiring specific features in a chair. An ergonomic chair can be provided based on a written statement provided by a physician who identifies the specific requirements needed by the employee; e.g., adjustable lumbar support, upper back support, etc. The requests are evaluated on a case-by-case basis with input from the SSA Medical Director, as needed. The Office of Property Management’s ability to fill these requests is limited to the available inventory of chairs. If no suitable chairs are available, funding becomes the responsibility of the employee’s component.

Braille Materials/Alternate Formats

The Braille Services Team (BST) in the Office of Publications Management produces and distributes materials, in alternative media formats, that are accessible to employees who are blind or who have low vision. Documents for individuals who are visually impaired are produced in hardcopy Braille, large print, on audiocassettes, and computer disks. If BST cannot produce Braille copies of a document, a contractor will be used to print the documents and the requesting component is responsible for paying the cost of the contract services. BST can duplicate audiocassette copies of documents but cannot narrate material onto audiocassettes. Public information pamphlets are also available in alternative media formats. BST maintains a list of publications that are available in alternative media format at http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/alt-pubs.html.

Distribution

These procedures will be available to all SSA employees. Print copies will be available from SSA, Office of Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity (OCREO), Center for Disability Services. These procedures will also be available from OCREO in alternative formats.

Inquiries

For further information about these procedures, please contact the Center for Disability Services at DCHR.OPE.CDS@ssa.gov.

APPENDIX A

REQUEST FOR REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

See Administrative Instructions Manual 19.01.00

PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

Read this statement before submitting your request

The Social Security Administration is authorized to collect the information requested on this form by title 5, USC 4501 et seq. Disclosure of this information is voluntary; however, failure to fully complete the form may make it impossible for SSA to process the request. The information provided by you will be used to facilitate the processing of your request. SSA will not make any disclosure of this information to agencies or individuals outside this department unless required by law or with your written consent.

We may also use the information you give us when we match records by computer. Matching programs compare our records with those of other Federal, State, or local government agencies. Many agencies may use matching programs to find or prove that a person qualifies for benefits paid by the Federal government. The law allows us to do this even if you do not agree to it.

Disclosure by you of your Social Security number (SSN) is required under Executive order 9397 and is necessary to obtain the services, benefits or processes that you are seeking. The SSN is used as an identifier in the Federal Service because of the large number of present and former federal employees and applicants whose identity can only be distinguished by use of the SSN.

1	TO (Immediate Supervisor)		DATE OF REQUEST
2	DISABLED EMPLOYEE		
	NAME	SOCIAL SECURITY NO.	PHONE (Include Area Code)
	POSITION TITLE AND GRADE	ORGANIZATION	TIMEKEEPER
	OFFICE ADDRESS	OFFICE CODE	FAX (Including Area Code)
3	DISABLING CONDITION		
4	ACCOMMODATION REQUESTED		
5	JUSTIFICATION (Briefly describe your current employment situation and state the reason you need the accommodation you are requesting)		
6	SIGNATURE		
	SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR DISPOSITION OF REQUEST		

SSA-501-F3 (10-05)

DISPOSITION OF REQUEST

INSTRUCTIONS: This portion should be completed for each written request for reasonable accommodation submitted by a disabled individual. The management official with the authority to approve or deny the request is the "Approving Official." For guidance, see AIMS Instruction 19.01.

REQUEST RECEIVED BY (Name of Supervisor)	TITLE OF SUPERVISOR	DATE RECEIVED

7	ACTION BY IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR	
	Where the immediate supervisor has the authority, he/she will either approve or deny the request. If the request is denied, this form should be submitted to the next higher supervisor for concurrence or reversal before a final decision is given to the requester. If the immediate supervisor does not have final authority a brief recommended decision is made to the next higher supervisor. The individual with final authority (Approving Official) should sign and date this form in the appropriate space below. ☐ Approved ☐ Recommend Approval ☐ Denied ☐ Recommend Denial	
	COMMENTS (Explain the reason for denial or recommend action to the next higher supervisor.)	
	SIGNATURE	DATE

8	ACTION BY SUBSEQUENT REVIEWERS		
	☐ Concur ☐ Recommend Approval ☐ Nonconcur ☐ Recommend Denial		
	COMMENTS		
	SIGNATURE	TITLE	DATE
	☐ Concur ☐ Recommend Approval ☐ Nonconcur ☐ Recommend Denial		
	COMMENTS		
	SIGNATURE	TITLE	DATE
	☐ Approved ☐ Denied		

SIGNATURE (Approving Official)	TITLE	DATE

DATE ACCOMMODATION PROVIDED