

Equal Opportunity in Registered Apprenticeship Programs for Individuals with Disabilities

A Quick Reference Guide for Apprenticeship Sponsors



Office of Apprenticeship

One focus of the Apprenticeship Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) regulations is to increase access to and success in Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAP) for individuals with disabilities. All sponsors are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of disability. As part of this requirement, all sponsors must provide reasonable accommodations, upon request, to applicants and apprentices with disabilities to allow them to perform the essential functions of the job.

RAP sponsors that maintain Affirmative Action Programs must take other specific actions, including inviting apprentices and applicants to voluntarily self-identify as having a disability and measuring the proportion of apprentices with disabilities in their programs against a national 7% aspirational goal.

Voluntary Self-Identification as an Individual with a Disability

RAP sponsors with five or more apprentices that are required to develop Affirmative Action Programs must invite all apprentices and applicants for apprenticeship to voluntarily self-identify whether they have a disability. The self-identification requirement allows you to capture data on the number of individuals with disabilities in, and applying to, your apprenticeship program. Knowing the number of current apprentices with disabilities is a first step toward understanding whether impediments to employment exist and, if so, taking steps to increase the representation of qualified individuals with disabilities in RAPs.

- Sponsors must use the standard [Voluntary Disability Disclosure Form](#) to invite apprentices and applicants to indicate whether or not they have a disability.
- Sponsors must maintain completed forms in a confidential file that is separate from apprentices' personnel files. Program officials involved with hiring, firing, promotion and other personnel decisions may not have access to the information.
- Completed forms may not be used for any employment-related decisions.
- Sponsors are required to invite apprentices to update the form annually, as their disability status may change over time.
- Applicants for apprenticeship are to be invited to self-identify at two points in the hiring process – at the time of application and again once hired into the program, but before they begin their apprenticeship.

The self-identification process must be in place two years after the program registration date.

Disclosure of a disability is **completely voluntary** for apprentices and applicants.

Seven Percent Disability Aspirational Goal

The EEO regulations set an aspirational goal that 7% of a sponsor's apprenticeship workforce consist of qualified individuals with disabilities. For more information on measuring and attaining this goal, read the [Understanding the 7% Disability Utilization Goal fact sheet](#).

Did You Know?

- Approximately 11% of working-age individuals report having a disability.
- Many disabilities are not visible, such as diabetes, heart conditions, Crohn’s disease, learning disabilities, anxiety, and depression.

Best Practices for Encouraging Self-Identification of a Disability

While the choice to self-identify is completely up to each person, you can create an environment in which apprentices and applicants feel more comfortable self-identifying by taking steps such as:

- Emphasizing that providing the information is voluntary and will only be used to measure progress toward greater inclusion of individuals with disabilities.
- Inviting apprentices with disabilities to assist in the program’s recruitment of new apprentices.
- Featuring apprentices with disabilities prominently in the program’s recruitment materials.

Reasonable Accommodations

Apprentices with disabilities must meet the same qualifications and performance expectations as apprentices without disabilities. However, a reasonable accommodation may be needed to assist an apprentice or applicant for apprenticeship in meeting these requirements.

A reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a job, work environment, or the job application process that allows a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of a job. Not all individuals with disabilities will require accommodations. An applicant or apprentice will typically initiate the discussion about the need for an accommodation and may do so at any point in the program. Surveys of employers have found that more than half were able to implement accommodations at no cost. Sponsors do not have to provide an accommodation when it would create an undue hardship on them.

Examples of reasonable accommodations include but are not limited to:

- Making existing facilities physically accessible
- Job restructuring
- Modifying work schedules
- Acquiring or modifying equipment
- Providing a qualified reader or interpreter

Tools and Resources

If you need:

Use these resources:

 Information on apprentices with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• www.apprenticeship.gov/eeo/protected-characteristics/disability
 Information on self-identification of a disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• www.apprenticeship.gov/eeo/protected-characteristics/disability• www.askearn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/EARN-Self-ID-Fact-Sheet-2.pdf• www.dol.gov/ofccp/SelfIdVideo.html
 Resources on reasonable accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• www.dol.gov/ofccp/posters/ReasonableAccommodationPocketCard/index.htm• www.askjan.org• www.askearn.org

A decorative graphic in the top-left corner consisting of a dark blue arrow pointing right, with a red triangle inside it.

Looking for more tools and resources on the EEO regulations? Visit www.apprenticeship.gov/eo.