

**National Science Foundation
Office of the Director
Office of Diversity and Inclusion
Arlington, VA 22230**

ODI BULLETIN NO. 15-02

June 16, 2015

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

SUBJECT: Reasonable Accommodations

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is fully committed to complying with all federal disability laws including providing reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, not only for employees and applicants but also for individuals conducting business at NSF. A reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to the work environment or work process that enables a “qualified person with a disability” to perform the essential functions of the job. For purposes of reasonable accommodation, a “qualified person with a disability” is an individual with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, or an individual with a record of such impairment. Qualified persons include employees, applicants, panelists, advisory committee members, participants in workshops held at NSF, speakers, and visitors with appointments with NSF staff. Reasonable accommodations are provided through a central fund managed by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI).

The reasonable accommodation process begins by contacting ODI via phone or email, at which point the request is referred to the Disability Program Manager (DPM). Requests may be verbal or in writing, and there is no specific terminology for requesting an accommodation. An employee may make a reasonable accommodation request to his/her supervisor or to another supervisor or manager in the immediate chain of command. Similarly, such requests may be made by an employee’s representative, medical provider or family member on behalf of the employee if the employee is unable to make the request personally. In all cases, the requesting party should be directed to ODI. If the supervisor has any questions, please contact ODI. Employees should only provide medical documentation for a reasonable accommodation to ODI.

Procedures for requesting reasonable accommodations:

Interpreting Services

To enable interpreting services to be provided in an economical and efficient manner, please adhere to the following:

- interpreting services requests should include:
 - name of the individual(s) requiring the service;
 - a description of the activity;

- date, time, location, and address of the activity;
- name and telephone number of the contact person; and
- preferred usage, i.e., American Sign Language, Signed English, Pidgin Signed English, Oral (lip-reading) or real-time captioning.
- interpreting services for meetings or events that last one day or less can only be guaranteed when ODI receives two weeks advance notice;
- interpreting services for meetings or events that last more than one day require a minimum of 30 days advance notice to allow the Division of Acquisitions and Cooperative Support (DACS) time to procure the services;
- requests for interpreting services that are made to ODI with less than three business days advance notice carry a surcharge fee and cannot be guaranteed. If an Interpreter cannot be guaranteed, the meeting or event may need to be rescheduled;
- cancellations for any reason - with less than three business days advance notice – are still billed the full amount. It is necessary to provide timely notifications of such cancellations to ODI to avoid unnecessary costs; and
- interpreters are not required to stay if the assignment runs over the specified contractual time. ODI must approve additional time.

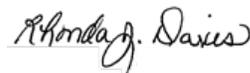
All Other Reasonable Accommodations

All other reasonable accommodation requests should adhere to the following:

- Once a request is received, ODI will commence the process, which involves forwarding a copy of Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Form 557 to the requester to obtain basic information about the request. EEOC Form 557 is primarily for recordkeeping purposes and will not delay or suspend the process.
- ODI will review the request and determine if medical documentation is required. Note that if the disability is clear and the need for accommodation is obvious, generally, ODI will not request medical documentation. However, it may request medical documentation related to the functional impairment and/or in instances where the disability and/or the need for accommodation is not obvious or already known. In that case, the requester will be asked to complete a Medical Documentation Request form.
- Incomplete or insufficient information provided by the medical provider will result in a request for supplemental medical documentation, in which the DPM will explain specifically to the requester what additional information is needed.
- Upon receipt, NSF has the right to have the medical information reviewed by a medical expert.
- The information provided in support of a reasonable accommodation request is confidential and available only to the designated agency staff that is responsible for providing and/or coordinating accommodation services.
- Failure to provide appropriate documentation, or failure to cooperate with ODI, may result in denial of the accommodation request.

- Decisions on reasonable accommodations are made by the DPM, in concert with applicable agency officials and based on the information submitted.
- Throughout the process, the DPM will engage in an interactive process with the requester and the requester's first-line supervisor to determine the best accommodation for a particular situation. Note that the desired request is not always the accommodation provided, and agencies are not required to provide an accommodation that imposes an "undue hardship" on the operation of the organization.
- Undue hardship is defined as significant difficulty or expense incurred when considered in light of a number of factors, inclusive of (1) the nature and net costs of the accommodation; (2) overall financial resources of the facility; (3) overall financial resources of the covered entity with respect to the number of employees and type of facility; (4) the type of operations of the covered entity; and (5) the impact of the accommodation on the operation of the facility.
- Communications between ODI and other applicable parties, inclusive of supervisors, is **confidential** and shall not be discussed with other employees. If other employees raise questions about a particular accommodation, a supervisor or manager should **not** indicate that a reasonable accommodation is being provided, as Federal law prohibits disclosure of medical information of this nature. Instead, supervisors and managers are encouraged to convey the fact that NSF makes an effort to assist any employee who encounters difficulties in the workplace, but that the particulars of any specific case are confidential.
- ODI strives to make decisions on most requests for reasonable accommodations within 30 business days. However, the 30 days are tolled pending the receipt of required information from the requester or the requester's medical provider.
- ODI notifies all employees in writing of its decision on a request for accommodation.
- If an employee is not satisfied with a decision, a request for reconsideration must be made to the ODI Director within 10 business days upon receipt of the decision letter.

For more detailed information on NSF's reasonable accommodation process, see NSF's Guidelines on the internal website at www.nsf.gov/od/odi under the icon "New Resources" or call (703) 292-8020. To request interpreting services, or for additional information, please contact ODI at 703-292-8020. Requests by e-mail should be addressed to Pamela Smith, Disability Program Manager, at pjsmith@nsf.gov. All confirmations will be forwarded to the requester via e-mail.



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ORIGINATING OFFICE: Office of
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Replaces: ODI Bulletin 13-01 and 13-2