

Reasonable Accommodation | **FAQs**

What is a reasonable accommodation (RA)?

A reasonable accommodation is assistance provided to an employee with a disability, or changes to a job or workplace environment that enables them to do their job.

What are some examples of RAs?

Examples include telework, flexible schedules, making existing facilities usable by disabled employees, restructuring jobs, or providing ergonomic equipment or furniture. The agency is not required to provide any accommodation that presents an “undue hardship.”

Do I have a right to request an RA?

Yes. Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act covers RAs for federal employees and applies the same standards as Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Requesting an RA is a protected activity—you can’t be retaliated against or penalized because you asked for an RA or have one.

What is a recognized disability?

Only disabilities that meet the definitions in the Rehabilitation Act open the door to the RA process. This includes a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Major activities can be anything from caring for oneself to concentrating to breathing. Disabilities may be permanent (e.g., chronic diseases) or temporary (e.g., broken bones).

How can you determine if an RA is right for you?

An RA might be right for you if your disability is interfering with your ability to do your job or you could better perform essential functions if you had certain equipment or modifications.

What doesn’t fit under the RA process?

RAs are not appropriate for personal use items, like glasses or hearing aids. RAs can’t be used for requesting reassignment without considering other options or requesting a different supervisor before requiring your current one to change their behavior.

What are the steps in an RA request?

1. **INITIATION**—You can make the request orally, in writing or give someone authority to make the request on your behalf.
2. **THE INTERACTIVE PROCESS**—A dialogue between a representative of the agency and the employee about the RA. This step is not required if the agency intends to grant a specific, requested RA without modification.
3. **GRANT/DENIAL**—The Agency should grant or deny the request as soon as possible consistent with the agency’s manual.
4. **IF DENIED**, you can resubmit your request or file a grievance. Your NTEU steward can help determine what will work best for you.

We can help! NTEU stewards can help you navigate the process and provide sample doctor letters, examples of similar cases where an RA was granted and other helpful resources.