

# REASONABLE WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL IMPAIRMENTS

## WHAT ARE INTELLECTUAL IMPAIRMENTS?

Intellectual disabilities (ID), also called intellectual impairments or intellectual developmental disorder (IDD), affect learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and adaptive functioning. Approximately 2-3% of the general population has an intellectual disability, with causes ranging from genetic disorders to unknown factors. Appropriate accommodations support inclusion, dignity, and participation in daily life, education, and work.

Intellectual disabilities vary widely. Some individuals have developmental conditions such as autism, Down syndrome, dyslexia, or ADHD, while others experience mental disabilities including anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, schizophrenia, or memory loss.

In the workplace, employees with intellectual impairments may require accommodations to support understanding, communication, and task performance. Each person's abilities and support needs are unique, and reasonable accommodation enables inclusion, dignity, and productivity.

## 1. LANGUAGE

Respectful language supports dignity and avoids negative assumptions.

- Use terms such as person with an intellectual disability, person with a learning difference, or person with Down syndrome..
- Avoid terms that imply incapability, such as mentally retarded or slow learner.

## 2. WORK SCHEDULE & TASKS:

Workplace accommodations can improve understanding, communication, and job performance.

- **Simplified Instructions:** Provide clear, step-by-step guidance in written or visual form.
- **Repetition and Reinforcement:** Allow opportunities to practice and review information.
- **Assistive Technology:** Provide devices, apps, or software to support reading, writing, memory, or communication.
- **Memory Aids:** Provide checklists, calendars, reminders, and visual schedules.

### 3. ENVIRONMENTAL ADJUSTMENTS

Workplace environments should reduce distractions and promote focus.

- **Quiet Workspace:** Provide areas with reduced noise or overstimulation.
- **Structured Layouts:** Keep tools, resources, and materials in consistent locations.
- **Accessible Materials:** Offer large print, visual supports, or audio versions for training and workplace resources.

### 4. TASK AND JOB MODIFICATIONS

Tasks can be adapted to match individual strengths and reduce barriers.

- **Task Simplification:** Break complex tasks into smaller and manageable steps.
- **Flexible Pacing:** Allowing extra time to complete assignments or work duties.
- **Role Adjustments:** Reassigning tasks that require skills not yet developed, while maximising strengths.

### 5. SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Positive workplace relationships improve confidence and participation..

- **Mentoring or Buddy Systems:** Assign peers or supervisors to provide guidance and day-to-day support.
- **Positive Feedback:** Recognise progress and encourage effort.
- **Access to Counselling or Support Services:** Offer mental health or emotional support services when needed.

### 6. ORGANISATIONAL ATTITUDES AND POLICY SUPPORT

Awareness and inclusive policies are essential for equitable participation.

- **Awareness Training:** Educating staff, teachers, and peers about intellectual impairments.
- **Non-Discrimination:** Ensuring equal opportunities in education, work, and community life.
- **Participation in Decision-Making:** Including individuals with intellectual impairments in planning accommodations and support.

Reasonable workplace accommodations for persons with intellectual impairments ensure access to employment, dignity, and independence. By adapting tasks, environments, and support systems, employers create inclusive workplaces where all employees can contribute meaningfully. Such adjustments are not only about compliance with the Employment Equity Act, they strengthen teams, foster diversity, and benefit the organisation as a whole.

Contact the NCPD: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: 011 452 2774 | 82 Andries Pretorius Rd, Edenvale, Johannesburg, 1609

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