
REASONABLE WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR PERSONS WITH INVISIBLE IMPAIRMENTS

WHAT ARE INVISIBLE IMPAIRMENTS?

Invisible impairments refer to conditions that are not immediately apparent but may significantly affect work performance, daily life, or wellbeing. Examples include chronic pain, diabetes, epilepsy, mental health conditions such as depression or anxiety, neurological disorders, hearing loss, and visual impairments not obvious to others. Because these impairments are not outwardly visible, such conditions are often misunderstood or overlooked.

Employers have a responsibility to ensure that appropriate accommodations are provided so that employees with invisible impairments can participate fully, safely, and with dignity.

1. LANGUAGE

- Use terms such as person with a chronic illness, person with a mental health condition, or person with hearing loss.
- Avoid dismissive phrases such as it's all in your head, you don't look disabled, or everyone feels that way sometimes.

2. WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

Flexibility allows employees to manage health conditions while remaining productive.

- **Flexible Scheduling:** Adjusted start and finish times, or breaks to accommodate fatigue, medication, or therapy appointments.
- **Remote or Hybrid Work:** Work-from-home arrangements when commuting or office environments present challenges.
- **Reduced Hours/Phased Return:** Options for part-time work or gradual reintegration after illness.
- **Meetings:** Provide options for remote participation in meetings.

3. PHYSICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ADJUSTMENTS

Work environments can be adapted to reduce barriers and improve wellbeing.

- **Quiet Spaces:** Provide areas or rooms free from noise and distraction for employees with sensory sensitivities or anxiety; or provide noise-cancelling headphones if possible.

- **Lighting Adjustments:** Non-fluorescent or adjustable lighting to reduce strain for persons with migraines or visual sensitivities.
- **Ergonomic Equipment:** Specialised chairs, keyboards, or screen adaptations to support physical comfort.
- **Air Quality Considerations:** Fragrance-free policies or ventilation for persons with asthma or allergies.

4. JOB MODIFICATIONS

Adjustments to job tasks can help employees maintain productivity while safeguarding health.

- **Task Reallocation:** Reassign duties that involve triggers such as prolonged standing, heavy lifting, or overstimulation.
- **Clear Communication:** Provide written instructions, reminders, or checklists to support employees with memory or concentration challenges.
- **Pacing of Work:** Break tasks into smaller, manageable steps to reduce stress and improve focus.

5. ORGANISATIONAL ATTITUDES AND POLICY SUPPORT

Positive attitudes and clear policies reduce stigma and discrimination.

- **Confidentiality:** Respect privacy when employees disclose an invisible impairment.
- **Awareness Training:** Provide training or educational programmes on invisible impairments to counter misconceptions.
- **Non-Discrimination:** Ensure policies that guarantee equal opportunities regardless of visibility of impairments.
- **Supportive Culture:** Encourage open dialogue and reassure employees that seeking support will not result in judgement or penalties.

Invisible impairments may not be outwardly visible, but their impact on work and wellbeing can be profound. By providing reasonable accommodations—such as flexibility, environmental adjustments, and supportive policies—employers create inclusive workplaces where employees with invisible impairments can thrive. Recognising and addressing these needs not only protects dignity and rights but also strengthens organisational productivity and culture.

The NCPD offers various workplace services, including: Recruitment & Placement, Reasonable Accommodation, Workplace Policies, Disclosure Support, Assistive Devices, Womens Programmes, and Enterprise Development.

Contact the NCPD:

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

Visit our websites: www.ncpd.org.za | www.casualday.co.za







 @theNCPDZA



 National Council of & for
 Persons with Disabilities



 with Persons with Disabilities



 Children with Disabilities. Deserving of Dignity.





 DEABILITY GENDER-BASED
 VIOLENCE PROGRAMME



 Association of & for
 Persons with Disabilities