

# Accessible Workplace Programs and Activities for Individuals with Disabilities

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) is committed to ensuring its programs and activities are accessible to all individuals, including persons with disabilities. As we work towards ensuring the DOT's goal of being a model employer by ensuring that our sponsored activities, events, and electronic information technologies (EIT) meet the required workplace accessibility standards, we want to take the opportunity to remind DOT employees about their program accessibility responsibilities, as well. It is important to remember that the DOT has three offices that assist with facilities, assistive technology, and equal employment access issues. These offices are available to help your staff through the disability accommodation process. Please distribute this memorandum to all senior management and supervisory personnel. In addition, take the time to advise your employees about their rights and obligations under the applicable workplace disability laws. Everyone needs to be informed about these important references, services, and procedures mentioned in this memorandum, because we are all individually responsible for ensuring that accessibility standards are met and that the DOT sponsored activities comply with the law.

This memorandum contains five sections, which are as follows:

- [Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Reasonable Accommodations](#)
- [Pregnant Worker's Fairness Act](#)
- [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Accessible Programs](#)
- [Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Technology Accessibility](#)
- [Contact Information and Resources for Assistance](#)

Thank you for all of the hard work you do. Please let any of us know if you have any questions regarding the following material, or any suggestions on what we can do in order to ensure equal access to our workplace and programs.

# Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Reasonable Accommodations

Under Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. § 791), DOT must provide reasonable accommodations to the known physical and mental limitations of qualified applicants and employees with disabilities in the workplace, unless it can demonstrate that an undue hardship would be imposed on the operation of the agency's program.

Managers and supervisors need to engage interactively with the person requesting a reasonable accommodation as stated in [DOT Order 1011.1B](#), "Procedures for Processing Reasonable Accommodation Requests from Employees and Applicants for Employment with Disabilities," when processing a request for reasonable accommodation. Listed below are some important facts to remember about reasonable accommodation requests:

- A reasonable accommodation request does not explicitly have to include the phrase "reasonable accommodation."
  - Example: If due to a medical condition an individual has raised an accessibility concern, such as wheelchair access to the office, this is a valid reasonable accommodation request.
  - Example: If an individual has requested a change or modification in the work environment or standard procedures to enable that individual to enjoy equal employment opportunities, which includes a benefit of employment, this request is the first step in the informal interactive process.
- The interactive process involves the manager and the employee and identifies reasonable accommodations that are effective. A manager or supervisor may ask the individual relevant questions that will help in making an informed decision.
- Failure to engage in the interactive employment accessibility process and/or not meeting required timeframes for providing reasonable accommodation could subject the DOT to liability and could result in appropriate disciplinary action against the responsible manager.

If a manager or supervisor needs accessibility guidance with respect to their roles, obligations, and responsibility, they should contact the Operating Administration's

(OA) Disability Program Manager, or a representative from their human resources, legal, or civil rights offices. In addition, supervisors and managers may also contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) for technical assistance and process support. The [DRC Handbook](#) also provides guidance.

## **Pregnant Workers Fairness Act**

Under the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA), 29 CFR Part 1636, a covered employer must provide a “reasonable accommodation” to a qualified employee’s or applicant’s known limitations related to, affected by, or arising out of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions, unless the accommodation will cause the employer an “undue hardship.” To request a reasonable accommodation due to a known limitation, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC). You can find more information about PWFA on [EEOC’s website](#).

## **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Accessible Programs**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, (29 U.S.C. § 794) requires the DOT to ensure that no otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities are excluded from or discriminated against under any DOT-conducted or DOT-funded program or activity solely by reason of their disabilities. DOT-conducted and DOT-funded programs and activities must be accessible and usable to qualified individuals with disabilities, including any aid, benefit, or service.

DOT must take proactive steps to ensure events and programs are accessible to persons with disabilities. These steps may include but are not limited to the following:

- Captioning videos (web-based streaming videos, and DVDs);
- Hosting events in locations that are close to public transportation and accessible to people who use wheelchairs;
- Scheduling sign language interpreters when the Secretary or Deputy Secretary is speaking to all DOT employees, and upon request;
- Providing meeting handouts in alternate formats; and
- Ensuring all voice mail broadcast announcements is distributed via e-mail or other written means of communications.

DOT-conducted programs and activities might include, but are not limited to:

- DOT sponsored events in and outside of DOT property, such as management-sponsored meetings;
- Special emphasis observances;
- Announcements of reports or major initiatives; and
- Training programs, conferences, receptions, and office social functions, such as retirement celebrations, employee funerals or memorial services, and holiday parties. This includes meetings sponsored by DOT employee associations established and recognized under the Departmental Personnel Manual, Chapter 1000-4.

When announcing an event or meeting, program offices are required to include an accessibility statement explaining how individuals with disabilities may request a reasonable accommodation or program modification. The following statement is recommended as standard language to use for inclusion in all event announcements:

**“The U.S. Department of Transportation (or name of the Operating Administration or office) is committed to providing equal access to this meeting (or event) for all participants. If you need alternative formats or services because of a disability, please contact (name of person) at (telephone number) or via email (email address) with your request by close of business (deadline).”**

DOT must ensure that employees who are blind or have low vision have equal access to posted information. The DOT Intranet, DOTNet, provides an accessible venue for posted information. Event planners or sponsors should forward event announcements in a text only format to [dotnetfeedback@dot.gov](mailto:dotnetfeedback@dot.gov), including the following information:

- Name and description of event;
- Event date, time, and location;
- Event point-of-contact, phone number, and e-mail address;
- Accessibility statement

Event information will be posted to <http://dotnet.dot.gov>. In addition, DOTNet will post any requests sent to [posterdisplays@dot.gov](mailto:posterdisplays@dot.gov) to the Intranet as well, provided the same information is given.

While individuals with disabilities are responsible for notifying event planners of required accommodations, event coordinators should not wait to receive requests for interpreters. Rather, they should request services from the DRC at least five business days in advance of the event. The DRC is authorized to provide sign language interpreters for all events at which the Secretary or Deputy Secretary will speak. In addition, DRC may provide sign language interpreters for DOT sponsored events that are open to the public and all DOT employees.

If an employee requests a reasonable accommodation that the DRC is unable to provide, the event sponsor is responsible for providing the accommodation. Otherwise, the event should be postponed until the accommodation is made available to ensure equal access for all participants and guests.

## **Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Technology Accessibility**

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. § 794 (d)) requires the DOT to ensure that electronic and information technology (EIT) purchased, developed, maintained or used by DOT meets the provisions of Section 508 unless an undue burden would be imposed on the agency. U.S. Access Board standards apply to the following:

- Software applications and operating systems;
- Web-based intranet and internet information and systems;
- Telecommunication products, video and multimedia products;
- Self contained/closed products;
- Desktop and portable computers, and;
- Other information technology, including support activities.

Guidelines for technological accessibility can be found at <https://www.section508.gov>.

The use of appropriated funds to provide for accessibility expenditures is a proper use of funds when acting under the authority of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. §§ 791, 794 and 794 (d)) and its regulatory requirements. Each Secretarial, Departmental Office and OA is responsible for making provision in its budget to cover services, assistive technology or work productivity tools that are not available through the DRC; employee and public access to DOT-conducted

programs and activities; and accessible EIT. Services may include CART, and assistive technology tools may include screen readers and speech recognition software.

Contact your OA's Disability Program Manager for questions on making technology and documents Section 508 compliant. You may also contact LaVette Sydnor, the Departmental Section 508 Compliance Program Manager, at (202) 836-1303, or [lavette.sydnor@dot.gov](mailto:lavette.sydnor@dot.gov).

## Contact Information and Resources for Assistance

### Disability Resource Center

Website: <https://www.transportation.gov/drc/disability-resource-center>

E-mail: [drc@dot.gov](mailto:drc@dot.gov)

Phone: (202) 493-0625\*

### DRC Headquarters Interpreting Services

E-mail: [drc.interpreters@dot.gov](mailto:drc.interpreters@dot.gov)

Phone: (202) 366-9433\*

### OA Disability Program Managers

<b>Office of the Secretary (OST)</b>	Mandy Haltrecht <a href="mailto:mandy.haltrecht@dot.gov">mandy.haltrecht@dot.gov</a> 202-493-0187
<b>Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)</b>	Michael Looney <a href="mailto:michael.looney@faa.gov">michael.looney@faa.gov</a> 202-385-8127
<b>Federal Highways Administration (FHWA)</b>	<a href="mailto:FHWA-Raassist@dot.gov">FHWA-Raassist@dot.gov</a>
<b>Federal Motor Carriers Administration (FMCSA)</b>	Carolyn Butler <a href="mailto:carolyn.butler@dot.gov">carolyn.butler@dot.gov</a>

	202-366-3559
<b>Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)</b>	<a href="mailto:civil.rights@dot.gov">civil.rights@dot.gov</a>
<b>Federal Transit Administration (FTA)</b>	<a href="mailto:FTAELR@dot.gov">FTAELR@dot.gov</a> (Reasonable Accommodations)
<b>Maritime Administration (MARAD)</b>	<a href="mailto:civilrights.marad@dot.gov">civilrights.marad@dot.gov</a>
<b>National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)</b>	Regina Morgan <a href="mailto:regina.morgan@dot.gov">regina.morgan@dot.gov</a>
	202-366-8046
<b>Office of the Inspector General (OIG)</b>	Joanne Pittman <a href="mailto:joanne.m.pittman@oig.dot.gov">joanne.m.pittman@oig.dot.gov</a>
	202-366-6239
<b>Pipeline Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA)</b>	CG Garrard <a href="mailto:christina.garrard@dot.gov">christina.garrard@dot.gov</a>
	202-713-7572
<b>Office of research, Development &amp; Technology (OST-R)</b>	Lori Putman <a href="mailto:lori.putman@dot.gov">lori.putman@dot.gov</a>
	202-366-5336
<b>Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation (SLSDC)</b>	Sylvonica Madlock <a href="mailto:sylvonica.madlock@dot.gov">sylvonica.madlock@dot.gov</a>
	202-366-6158

**LaVette Sydnor, Departmental Section 508 Compliance Program Manager**

Email: [lavette.sydnor@dot.gov](mailto:lavette.sydnor@dot.gov)

Phone: (202) 836-1303

## DOTNet Publicity for Programs and Events

Event planners or sponsors should forward event announcements in a text only format to [dotnetfeedback@dot.gov](mailto:dotnetfeedback@dot.gov), including the following information:

- Name and description of event;
- Event date, time, and location;
- Event point-of-contact, phone number, and e-mail address;
- Accessibility statement.

**cc:** Director, Departmental Office of Human Resource Management; Operating Administrations' Chief Counsels; Civil Rights Offices; and Human Resources Directors

For additional information, you may contact the Departmental Office of Civil Rights at [usdot.civilrights@dot.gov](mailto:usdot.civilrights@dot.gov).

\* If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, please dial 7-1-1 to access telecommunications relay services.