**Disability and Accommodations**

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Introduction

People with disabilities bring incredible value to medicine, but despite the known benefits to disability inclusion, people with disabilities only represent 3% of the physician workforce. Residency training, however, is seeing an increasing number of physicians with disabilities, 12.7% of whom are pediatric trainees. With this growing number of trainees entering the profession, it is important for programs to be prepared and thoughtful about navigating the disclosure and accommodations processes.

Background and Requirements

Increasing diversity in medical education is a core value of the ACGME, which requires that residents gain competence in “respect and responsiveness to diverse patient populations, including but not limited to diversity in gender, age, culture, race, religion, disabilities, national origin, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation.” GME programs should develop inclusive practices and policies for individuals with disabilities at their institutions and understand the accommodations process and their legal responsibilities, including [ADA employment standards](https://www.eeoc.gov/statutes/titles-i-and-v-americans-disabilities-act-1990-ada). The [definition](https://adata.org/faq/what-definition-disability-under-ada) of disability is widely encompassing, and while increasing numbers of individuals with disabilities are entering training programs, barriers to requesting accommodations still exist. One way to combat some of these barriers is to outline and define clear processes for accommodations requests.

Inclusive Environment

The recruitment process and program information materials are essential components of an environment that is inclusive of learners with disabilities. Including language pertaining to disabilities in [diversity statements](https://www.docswithdisabilities.org/post/communicating-about-disability-inclusion-in-gme) as well as providing links to resources such as disability services and the process for confidential accommodations requests will set a [welcoming and inclusive tone](https://www.docswithdisabilities.org/post/how-to-welcome-residents-who-disclose-disability-in-gme). Utilize a universal design approach to ensure all aspects of the recruitment process are accessible. This includes addressing physical space planning (for in-person visits), handouts and any planned activities.

Accommodations Process

The process for obtaining accommodations can be confusing and varies by institution. Residents may go through a different process as employees compared to students, with the onus of responsibility on the resident. As program leaders, we must direct residents to resources. PDs should not see any medical documentation and do not need to know a diagnosis. Our job is to implement reasonable accommodations. Please see an outline of the process below.

Trainee Responsibilities

* Meet ADA qualifications and technical standards for the position
* Disclose disabilities to ADA specialist and need for accommodations; provide documentation
* Follow institutional guidelines and policies
* As employees, residents may be required to determine their specific needs and engage in the process *(different process than as a student, many may be unfamiliar with the role)*

Institution Responsibilities

* [Disability Policy- ACGME Institutional Requirement](https://www.acgme.org/globalassets/PFAssets/ProgramRequirements/CPRResidency_2022v2.pdf)
* Communicate the process, provide information after match day
* Provide **approved** accommodations, examples may include but are not limited to:
	+ Acquiring or modifying equipment or devices
	+ Modifying training materials
	+ Making facilities accessible
	+ Modifying work schedules- reduced/modified hours, time for appointments
	+ Extended time on ITE
	+ Extended time to complete training

Program Responsibilities

* Refer trainee to appropriate office to request accommodations
	+ Variable locations: HR, GME, disability services office, ADA office
* Structural
	+ Provide clear policies
	+ Normalize help-seeking behaviors
* Culture and Climate
	+ Openness in recruitment
	+ Peer support networks
	+ Commitment to diversity

PD Responsibilities

* Direct residents to resources
* Respect privacy and confidentiality
	+ Do not need to know diagnosis
	+ Discuss accommodations only
* Implement all **approved** accommodations
	+ Only discuss with faculty who need to know for a rotation

Steps to Follow in the Accommodations Process

1. Trainee contacts ADA specialist after match day or upon onset of new disability
2. Trainee provides necessary documentation (e.g neuropsych testing, psychiatrist letter) to specialist
	* NOT to PD directly!
3. Trainee engages in an interactive process with ADA specialist
4. PD reviews proposed accommodation(s) and provides feedback (determine if reasonable). Repeat steps 2-4 until deemed reasonable. The GME office should be involved in this discussion.
5. Implement approved reasonable accommodations.

Resources

**National Reports:**

Accessibility, Inclusion, and Action in Medical Education: Lived Experiences of Learners and Physicians with Disabilities <https://store.aamc.org/accessibility-inclusion-and-action-in-medical-education-lived-experiences-of-learners-and-physicians-with-disabilities.html>

American Medical Association, REPORT 2 OF THE COUNCIL ON MEDICAL EDUCATION (November 2021) A Study to Evaluate Barriers to Medical Education for Trainees with Disabilities. <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/i21-cme-02.pdf>

**Modules:**

Meeks, LM**,** Taylor, N., & Moreland, CJ. (n.d.) Disability Accommodation in GME. [Video]. Equity Matters Video Modules, Module 10.Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. <https://dl.acgme.org/learn/learning-path/equity-matters-video-library>

**Video Resources:**

[DIGME (Disability in Graduate Medical Education)](https://www.docswithdisabilities.org/digme)