

Cambridge Public Schools Administrative Procedures Regarding Reasonable Accommodations for Employees and Applicants with a Medical Disability

The purpose of these administrative procedures is to provide school administrators with information on their responsibilities for providing reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with disabilities who are employees or applicants for employment in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Massachusetts state law. The law requires an employer to provide qualified individuals with disabilities with reasonable accommodations unless to do so would cause an undue hardship.

There are three categories of “reasonable accommodations”:

- “(i) modifications or adjustments to a job application process that enable a qualified applicant with a disability to be considered for the position such qualified applicant desires; or
- (ii) modifications or adjustments to the work environment, or to the manner or circumstances under which the position held or desired is customarily performed, that enable a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of that position; or
- (iii) modifications or adjustments that enable an employee with a disability to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment as are enjoyed by its other similarly situated employees without disabilities.”

29 CFR 1630.2(o)(1)(i-iii)

The steps for processing a request for a reasonable accommodation are as follows:

- A. An individual (employee or job applicant) or someone on their behalf (e.g., family member, health care provider, etc.) may initiate a request for a reasonable accommodation. All requests for accommodations – whether verbal or written - that are received should promptly be directed to the attention of the Office of Human Resources of the Cambridge Public Schools for processing. The request will be reviewed in a timely manner and the individual may be asked to fill out a form and/or provide additional information in connection with the request. The type of documentation that may be requested will depend on the disability, what, if any, documentation accompanied the initial request, and may, among other things, include a request for documentation from a health care provider regarding the disability and its functional limitations in order to establish that the person is a qualified person with a disability and that the disability necessitates a reasonable accommodation. In almost every requested accommodation, information from the employee’s medical provider will be required.

- B. Upon receipt of this documentation, it will be reviewed in a timely manner. If an interactive process is needed in order to determine the precise type of reasonable accommodation, then the Office of Human Resources will initiate an interactive process with the individual (employee or job applicant) to clarify what they need and to identify the appropriate reasonable accommodation, if any. The exact nature of the dialogue will vary in each situation. In many instances, there may be a need to ask questions concerning the nature of the disability and the individual's functional limitations in order to identify an effective reasonable accommodation. While an individual does not have to be able to specify the precise accommodation being sought, they will need to be able to describe problems posed by the workplace barrier and provide a clear explanation of the link from the disability related limitation to the reasonable accommodation being requested. During this informal interactive process, options will be explored and a determination made of what occurs next.

- C. On occasion, if an individual provides insufficient documentation, the Cambridge Public Schools may request the individual to provide a medical release in order to obtain additional medical documentation directly from the individual's medical provider. The individual may be directed to go to an appropriate health professional of the Cambridge Public Schools' choice to substantiate that the individual has an ADA disability and needs a reasonable accommodation. Any such examination will be limited to determining the existence of an ADA disability and the functional limitations that require reasonable accommodation.

- D. Medical information, the interactive process itself, and all accommodations will be documented by the Office of Human Resources and maintained in a confidential medical file separate from the Office of Human Resources personnel files.

- E. All accommodation requests will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Depending upon the specific factual situation, a reasonable accommodation provided to one individual may not be provided to another. An accommodation request will be denied if it is not reasonable or necessary, poses an undue hardship on the District, or threatens the safety of the individual or others, including staff and students. Please note that a reasonable accommodation acceptable to the District may differ from the individual's requested accommodation. Also, a reasonable accommodation may be acceptable for a certain period of time only. Individuals who are approved for a reasonable accommodation have an obligation to keep the Office of Human Resources timely informed of any positive or negative changes in their medical disability status and/or ability to perform the essential functions of their position, with or without a reasonable accommodation.

Last updated: July 13, 2023

Employee Accommodation Request for a Medical Disability

Name: _____ Date of Request: _____

Work Location: _____ Position: _____

1. State the job function(s) which you think require(s) accommodation:

2. Why are you having difficulty or unable to currently perform those job functions:

3. What suggestions do you have as possible accommodations that the District may consider:

4. Comments/Additional Information:

Please attach adequate documentation (e.g., medical, psychological, diagnostic, etc.) of the disability. Although Cambridge Public Schools is not subject to the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act ("HIPAA"), any documentation in connection with this request for accommodation, including any medical documentation from a doctor or other medical provider, will be maintained by the Office of Human Resources in a confidential medical file separate from the Office of Human Resources personnel files.