

# ADHD Accommodatio

## ADHD IS NOT ALWAYS THE CHILD WHO CANNOT SIT STILL

or the highly distracted adult who is totally unorganized. These are only the well-known symptoms. Individuals with ADHD are often very hard on themselves and have trouble setting realistic expectations of themselves. They might be the ones who are at work late and take work home because they are hyperfocused on getting every detail right. They might be the student who only gets one sentence of a writing assignment complete because they are hyperfocused on making sure the spacing of words is perfect.

This is where some simple accommodations can be implemented to support individuals with ADHD. Not all individuals need the same accommodations, and some might not need any. However, it is important to know that accommodations are available in all settings for children and adults.

What are accommodations? In general, accommodations are an alteration of environment, curriculum format, or equipment to allow an individual with a disability to access content or complete assignments. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides for accommodations for individuals in grades K-12 through an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides for accommodations for individuals in K-12 through a 504 Plan, as well as for individuals in college and the workforce.

Most individuals think of ADA accommodations as wheelchair ramps, braille on buttons, blinking lights for fire alarms, or any other accommodation that helps with a physical disability. However, accommodations are available for any medical issue, even ADHD.

In the K-12 education setting, basic accommodations for ADHD are:

- preferential seating to minimize distractions
- frequent breaks
- extra time on assignments and tests
- small groups for instruction and testing

## Kindergarten to Grade 12, College, and the Workplace

Frances Shefter, Esq





# ns Across All Settings

However, it is important to note that accommodations are not limited to the drop-down menu or checklist that are so often included in IEPs and 504 plans. An accommodation can be anything a child needs. For example, an accommodation could be that the teacher pre-alerts the child to important topics. This can be as simple as the teacher just walks over and taps the desk to tell the child, *This is important, pay attention here*. Fidgets are often used but not limited to the handheld ones. I often hear teachers complain that the ones in the hands can be distracting or used incorrectly. A great fidget to solve that issue is the wobble cushion or wiggle seat cushion. These are relatively light, and the child can carry to desk to floor or from class to class.

In the college setting, accommodations are similar to those in the K-12 setting. Most, if not all, colleges have an office dedicated to assist students with accommodations. You can search your college's website for "office for student disabilities services." A student just needs to connect with that office to discuss how to start the accommodation process. Some accommodations that can be put in place are:

- providing all instructions for assignments in writing
- a note taker
- exams taken in an alternative, quiet setting
- extra time for assignments and exams

ADHD is a recognized disability in the ADA. Therefore, employers are required to provide reasonable accommodations that do not cause undue hardship. An

employee can request an accommodation at any point in time during the interview process or after the hiring process. A simple statement asking for a reasonable accommodation for a medical reason is all that is needed to start the process. Individual employers then determine whether additional information is needed about the medical condition to determine what accommodations are reasonable. Some reasonable workplace accommodations for ADHD can include:

- structured breaks built into the workday
- provide a quiet workspace
- use of noise cancellation headphones
- assistance in developing to-do lists and prioritizing tasks

An employee can request any accommodation that would assist them in completing the job. However, there are some limitations. An employer is not required to eliminate an essential function from a job or reduce production standards. If an employer denies an accommodation request, the employee can request the reason for denial to determine the next steps they can take. Next steps could be providing more documentation, negotiating appropriate accommodations or potentially, litigation.

The most important thing to remember is that there are no limitations on what accommodations you can request in any setting. Any reasonable accommodation that is needed to compensate for ADHD can be requested. The setting determines what is reasonable and required. There are specific laws that must be followed. If your requested accommodation was denied, request the reason for denial. Each setting has its own rules for the appeal process. In any event, or any setting, work with an attorney who will guide you through the appeal process. **A**



**Frances Shefter, Esq.** is an education attorney and advocate based in Maryland. She is a former teacher who now specializes in special education law. Her firm's focus is to assist families in Washington, DC, and Maryland to have a Stress-Free IEP™ experience. To learn more about her, visit her webpage at [shefterlaw.com](http://shefterlaw.com).

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For workplace: Job Accommodation Network, [askjan.org/index.cfm](http://askjan.org/index.cfm).