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Ergonomics professionals can provide valuable input in creating work environments that accommodate workers with disabilities arising from:

- Injuries;
- chronic or progressive diseases; and
- and/or physical changes associated with aging.
The purpose of Title I of the ADA is to remove barriers to employment for qualified individuals with disabilities by:

- prohibiting discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities in the terms and conditions of employment, and
- requiring that employers provide reasonable accommodation for qualified individuals with disabilities.

An individual with a disability is someone who:

- has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities;
- has a record of such an impairment; or
- is regarded as having such an impairment.

42 U.S.C. § 12102

A "qualified individual" (employee or applicant) is an individual with a disability who, with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of the job in question.

42 U.S.C. § 12111 (8)
The ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA)

The ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-325) (ADAAA), liberalized the interpretation of the ADA, making it easier to meet the definition of “disabled,” by:

- Rejecting the standard previously applied by the courts to determine “substantially limits,” and by requiring that such term be construed broadly, and consistent with the findings and purpose of the ADA.
  - Requires a lower degree of functional limitation than the previous standard.

- Expanding the list of major life activities and adding major bodily functions.
  - Individual assessments are required to determine whether a condition substantially limits a major life activity.
  - Mitigating measures, such as medication, cannot be considered (except glasses and contact lenses).
  - Episodic conditions, or those in remission, are disabilities if they substantially limit a major life activity, when active.
An employer is required to make a reasonable accommodation of a qualified employee or applicant

- Unless doing so would be an undue hardship on the operation of the employer’s business.
  - An undue hardship is an action requiring significant difficulty or expense.
  - Considered in light of employer’s size, finances, and the nature of the business.

42 U.S.C. §§ 12111(10)(A), (B); 12103; 12112.
What is a Reasonable Accommodation?

- Any modification or adjustment to a job or work environment which allows a qualified employee with a disability to:
  - Participate in the job application process;
  - Perform the essential function of a job; and
  - Enjoy the benefits and/or privileges of employment.

- The process of reasonable accommodation requires an interactive discussion with the disabled individual.
  - An employer is not required to grant a disabled employee’s request for accommodation, but cannot merely decline a request outright, without exploring other options.

See 42 U.S.C. § 12111(9)(A), (B).
Ergonomics professionals assist in the accommodation process by:

• Modifying or adjusting to the work environment or the manner or circumstances under which the position held or desired is customarily performed
  • To enable the disabled employee to perform the essential functions of the job, and
  • To enable the disabled employee to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment.
Medical advances and new technologies provide individuals with disabilities with more opportunities to work.

Ergonomics professionals can assist in the accommodation process by:

- Identifying a product or service that assists in the accommodation process;
- Modifying an existing product or designing a new product;
- Considering the use of alternative products; and/or
- Preventing injuries and limiting secondary injuries.
Implementing ergonomic principles for an individual with a disability may be very specific to that individual.

- If a mobility aid is used, the mobility aid and its user must be considered one unit
  - Type of mobility aid may change what is considered “ergonomic”, and
  - Special attention should be given to the location and set-up of assistive technology.
- Anthropometric data used to design workstations that adjust to fit the smallest and the largest member of the population.
  - Because a majority of those outside of this range are people with disabilities, an effective analysis may need to go beyond general guidelines
Ergonomic Analysis for Individuals with Disabilities

- Consider other items besides the workstation
  - Barrier free routes of travel
  - Environmental factors
    - Lighting;
    - Noise;
    - Smells; and/or
    - Temperature.