



National Disability Coordination Officer Program  
AN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

# Working effectively with people with physical disability

## What is physical disability?

- Physical disabilities affect a person's physical functioning, mobility, dexterity or stamina
- A person may be born with a physical disability, or acquire it later in life
  - Examples include:
    - Cerebral Palsy
    - Spinal Cord Injury
    - Amputation
    - Multiple Sclerosis
    - Spina Bifida
    - Musculoskeletal injuries (e.g. back injury)

## Affects of physical disability in the workplace

- Physical disabilities will have a varied impact on a person's work, and everybody's experience will be different depending on the type of disability, severity, and other factors
- An employee with a physical disability may have difficulties with:
  - Accessing workstations, meeting rooms, bathrooms etc
  - Fatigue
  - Manipulating objects, for example handwriting or using certain tools
  - Using a standard computer keyboard or mouse
  - Holding a telephone handset

## Reasonable adjustments for physical disability

- Reasonable adjustments need to be individualised to meet employees' specific needs.
- It is important to **ask** the employee what would be most helpful for them.
- Some examples of reasonable adjustments that may help employees with physical disability include:
  - Workstation redesign, including provision of appropriate seating, height adjustable work stations etc
  - Access to accessible lifts, bathrooms, kitchens, meeting rooms etc
  - Installation of ramps or stair lifts, widening of doorways
  - Vehicle modifications
  - Speech recognition software - e.g. Dragon NaturallySpeaking
  - Accessible computer keyboard and mouse
  - Telephone headset or speakerphone
  - Installation of automatic doors
  - More frequent and flexible breaks

## Sources

JobAccess

[http://jobaccess.gov.au/ServiceProviders/Assisting\\_job\\_seekers/Supporting\\_jobseekers\\_with\\_different\\_types\\_of\\_disability/Pages/home.aspx](http://jobaccess.gov.au/ServiceProviders/Assisting_job_seekers/Supporting_jobseekers_with_different_types_of_disability/Pages/home.aspx)

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Morosky, F.N., Ulin, S., & Bruyere, S.M. (2000). Workplace accommodations for persons with musculoskeletal disorders. Employment and Disability Institute: Cornell University. [http://works.bepress.com/susanne\\_bruyere/55/](http://works.bepress.com/susanne_bruyere/55/)