

PRIDE PROVIDER : MODULE 4

WORKPLACE ACCOMODATIONS & ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY



WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS AND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY CASE EXAMPLE – PART 1

Magda, a young refugee from Bosnia with spina bifida, is working as a bagger at a grocery store. She has been offered the opportunity to get promoted to work as a checker at the same store. Her new job will require her to scan and bill items while standing at the register. Magda experiences difficulty standing for long periods of time without support. She also has a hard time reaching for items and the scanner. She has heard about workplace accommodations and wonders whether she is eligible.



WHAT ARE “WORKPLACE ACCOMODATIONS”?

- **Workplace accommodations** refer to any changes or adjustments to work-related tasks, the work environment, or the way tasks are usually done that would allow an individual with a disability to secure and maintain employment or to be successful in their current employment.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires employers with 15 or more employees to provide “reasonable accommodations” to job-seekers and employees with disabilities.¹

EXAMPLES OF WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS

Workplace accommodations may include:

-  Physical changes, such as installing a ramp at the building's entrance or mounting Braille and raised print signage on doors.
-  Changes in communication systems and processes, such as providing sign language interpreters during meetings or installing amplified phones.
-  Policy changes such as making exceptions to allow service animals in the workplace, permitting flexible work schedules to accommodate frequent doctor visits.
-  Assistive technologies such as videophones for deaf employees or adapted computer hardware for an employee with dexterity problems.¹

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “ASSISSTIVE TECHNOLOGY”?

✓ Assistive technology refers to devices, equipment, software programs, or other products that can support someone with a disability to participate in activities of his/her choice.



✓ Assistive technology can help to maximize an individual's independence at home, in the community, or at work as well as enhance the individual's employment options.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Common examples of **assistive technology** include mobility aids such as wheelchair controls, devices such as modified computer keyboards, screen magnifiers, communication boards, and software such as text-to-speech.



WORKPLACE ACCOMODATIONS AND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY CASE EXAMPLE – PART 2

Magda approached the UIC ATU for help with her workplace concerns. After evaluating her worksite and identifying her unique needs, the ATU recommended a cart with rails and trunk support. Using this equipment, Magda is able to successfully complete all work tasks in her new role.



WHAT IS THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY UNIT (ATU)?

- The Assistive Technology Unit at UIC, a PRIDE partner, is an interdisciplinary team of architects, occupational therapists, physical therapists, rehabilitation engineers, speech-language pathologists, and case managers.
- The team helps people with disabilities find, select, and learn to use a variety of assistive technology equipment.²



CORE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE ATU

Activities of daily living

- Identification of equipment that will help clients to perform activities such as dressing, bathing, cleaning, and cooking

Adaptive equipment

- Modification of existing equipment or custom-designed devices such as specialized grip for holding utensils

Augmentative communication

- Identification of strategies and tools to improve communication such as communication boards and electronic devices

CORE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE ATU (CONT'D)

Computer access

- Examination of alternative computer input hardware, such as modified keyboards, and adaptive software, such as text-to-speech, to support educational and work goals

Electronic aids to daily living

- Exploration of handheld devices and smartphone apps to help with scheduling and traveling in the community

Environmental control

- Identification of assistive technology for independent control of phones, appliances, and other electronics within the client's environment

CORE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE ATU (CONT'D)

Environmental modification

- Identification of ways to make the client's home, workplace, or community environment more accessible.

Specialized seating and mobility

- Assessment and delivery of specialized seating and mobility equipment such as customized wheelchairs

Worksite modification

- Determination of equipment or changes to existing equipment to improve the work environment²

PERSON-CENTERED ATU ASSESSMENT FOR CLIENTS WITH DISABILITIES

- 1. Collaborative goal-setting**
- 2. Identification of abilities**
- 3. Identification of issues and barriers**
- 4. Development of AT recommendations**
- 5. Implementation of AT recommendations**
- 6. Follow-up**

MOBILE SERVICES

9 mobile units bring assistive technology services to clients.

- School
- Home
- Workplace
- Recreational or spiritual facilities
- Community and social events



HOW CAN THE ATU ASSIST JOB-SEEKING REFUGEES WITH DISABILITIES?

- **The ATU can conduct individualized assessments of the job-seeker's assistive technology needs in various settings.**
- **The ATU can recommend assistive technology equipment or reasonable accommodations to help the individual perform his/her job.**

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR ATU SERVICES?

- The ATU serves individuals of all ages, including refugees, with a wide range of disabilities.
- Individuals seeking services from the ATU must have an open case with the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) - Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), another PRIDE partner.

ATU CASE EXAMPLE 2

Carlos, a middle-aged man with cerebral palsy from Colombia, approached the ATU about modifying his work equipment so he could consider a promotion at work. He had the opportunity to be hired as a file clerk. His new job involved drop filing, requiring the use of a cart and a ladder. Although he was ambulatory without the need for a mobility aid, he was concerned about losing balance due the instability of the cart and ladder.



ATU CASE EXAMPLE 2 (CONT'D)

The ATU set Carlos up with a mobile cart and handrail system. He was instructed in how to use the cart when working off of low shelves and to use the handrail system for high shelves. He was able to lean against the rails, thus freeing his arm for filing.



ATU CASE EXAMPLE 3

Khin, a refugee from Burma, works as a mail clerk at a large office. He consulted with the ATU regarding reasonable accommodations within his job tasks. Khin has an intellectual disability along with early onset arthritis. He was experiencing difficulty with sorting the office mail. His supervisor also expected him to work at a faster pace, as he often spent a lot of time transitioning from one job task to another.



ATU CASE EXAMPLE 3 (CONT'D)

The ATU recommended a mail holder that Khin could wear around his neck to make it easier for him to use his fingers to sort the mail. As a reasonable accommodation, the client's supervisor also agreed to provide him on-the-job feedback on pace of work using a set of headphones and a chart with required daily tasks.



HOW TO CONNECT REFUGEES WITH THE ATU

The ATU is located at:
1640 W. Roosevelt Rd.
415 DHSP (MC 726)
Chicago, IL 60608

Appointments can be made by phone or email.
Phone: 312-413-9065
Email: atu@uic.edu

[Link to ATU website](#)
[Link to ATU referral form](#)

SOURCES

1. Department of Labor

<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/Accommodations.htm>

2. UIC Assistive Technology Unit

<https://ahs.uic.edu/assistive-technology-unit>