

DCIF Project – Accommodations Tool 10: Supporting the Development of Accommodation Passports

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Tags

Who is this for?

High priority:

- Direct managers
- Corporate cross-departmental managers

Practical information:

- HR Professionals

What guidance does it provide?

- How to create and document the requirements of employees who require further accommodations within the workplace
- Guidance on best practices on negotiations, conversations, and privacy

Take home points

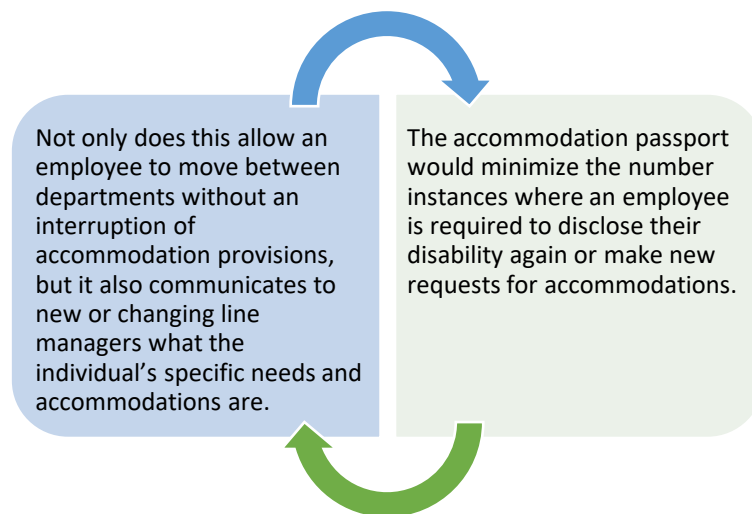
- Accommodation passports are dynamic, confidential documents agreed-upon between an employee and their manager about changes to work, with a built-in review period to ensure they reflect the current situation for the employee in the workplace
- By adopting a ‘yes by default’ approach and asking all employees what they need, you create a fundamental change in workplace culture. The goal is to always support everyone’s needs.
- An employee’s decision to talk to their direct manager about the passport should always be treated sensitively and respectfully.
- At their own discretion, someone with a passport can share it with anyone **they** think needs to know about the barriers they face and the accommodations they need.

What is an accommodation passport?¹

A passport is a formal document that issued by the government which proves an individual's citizenship and enables an individual to travel to and from other countries.

An accommodation passport:¹

- Is a dynamic, confidential document that is agreed-upon between an employee and their manager about any necessary changes to work
- Has a built-in review period to ensure that it reflects a worker's current situation
- Ensures that workplace accommodations are put in place and kept up to date, in line with changes in the job role or fluctuations in the worker's wellness
- Can spell out additional steps regarding short-term flexibility and other requirements within the overall accommodation passport framework for workers who have fluctuating conditions



What is the purpose of an accommodation passport?

There are many reasons why an employer may consider implementing an accommodation passport. For example, they:

- ✓ Clarify what accommodations have been agreed on
- ✓ Serve as a written record of accommodations agreed on
- ✓ Reduce the need to reassess and renegotiate accommodations every time a worker changes jobs, is relocated, or is assigned a new manager
- ✓ Provide a worker and manager with the basis for future conversations about accommodations
- ✓ Minimize the instances requiring an employee to disclose their disability again or make new requests for accommodations

They also allow a worker to:

• Explain the impact of their working conditions on them, given their personal circumstances	• Explain the barriers that they encounter that may stop them participating fully at work	• Suggest adjustments that they think will make it easier for them to fully participate	• Review the effectiveness of accommodations provided and the ongoing impact this has on their work	• Explain any change to their health or circumstances	• Feel reassured that their manager will know what to do if they become unwell, when to contact emergency services, and who to contact if necessary	• Know how and when their manager will keep in touch should they be absent from work due to their disability	• Include any other pertinent information such as medical expertise to support their request
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Intersectionality Avatars

Dante: Have you heard of this thing called accommodation passport? It is amazing. When I first got diagnosed with aphasia, I had difficulty explaining what it was to my colleagues and especially my managers. With this passport, I put in all the information I deem necessary for work once and it transfers to all my new managers, making it an easier and less stressful transition for all. Sometimes, when I realize a new tool may help me, I simply add it to the passport. I do not have to go through answering the same questions over and over again to every new person who joins the team. Being at the company for close to 30 years had created a shift in the culture, where I am comfortable disclosing what I need, and I am happy to see that my younger colleagues have been inspired by it as well. Some have even realized what their needs are and feel a lot more open to expressing them. This is a major win for everyone!

How do I implement an accommodation passport?

Get the ball rolling with an initial consultation during the onboarding phase.² Employers must make all employees aware of the company's accommodation policies and processes. Conversations should take place in a quiet and confidential space. It is important that managers create an open and supportive environment where employees feel they can share that they have a disability, mental health condition, or long-term injury that may benefit from a workplace accommodation.

An employee's decision to talk to their direct manager about the passport may require courage and should be always treated sensitively and respectfully. Questions to ask during this phase may include:³

- What specific barriers do you face at work? What solutions would make it easier for you to do your job?
- Have your workplace accommodations needs been assessed previously? Were any solutions provided?
- What additional supports would enable your success in the workplace?

Employees are not required to self-identify or disclose a disability in order to use the passport.

When is the accommodation passport used?

Although the introduction of an accommodation passport should be universal and accessible to all employees at the time of onboarding, some workers may not request an accommodation until the later phases of the employee life cycle.

- For example, if at the time of onboarding, a new worker does not indicate that they require a workplace accommodation, their passport will not have any agreed upon adjustments documented. Later, if a worker discloses a disability, they will be able to pull up their accommodation passport, fill in the necessary information, and engage in the accommodation process with their direct manager and other personnel who may support the process.

If an employee requests an accommodation after the onboarding phase, ensure the necessary steps are taken to provide accommodations and supports, and if needed, track using the accommodation passport.

Please see a sample [Workplace Accommodation Passport Template](#)

Creating an accommodation passport is a step in the right direction. However, it is not much use if no one in the organization knows about it.²

After early consultations, make sure your organization helps to plan and promote accommodation passports. Similar to [Recruitment Accommodation Form Template](#), there should be a simple link to the passport for easy access and/or a readily accessible physical copy in the workplace.

How often should the passport be reviewed?

The direct manager will follow up on any agreed actions to implement workplace adjustments for the employee. If someone has a passport, they can share it at their own discretion with anyone **they** think needs to know about the barriers they face and the accommodations they need. The passport also reduces the likelihood of the employee having to repeat potentially difficult conversations or renegotiate their accommodations every time they move roles or change manager, something that is both unnecessary and stressful, as the passport can be part of the handover documents.²

The passport and any agreed upon accommodations should be reviewed six months after the adjustments have initially been put in place for two reasons:¹

- To ensure they remain effective in removing any identified workplace barriers
- Where they are found no longer to meet that requirement, to allow a timely conversation to take place to identify accommodations that will address the issues faced by the worker.

Further reviews will be at the worker's request, and/or when there is a change to a worker's job.

Who has access to the information in the passport?

Accommodation passports¹ should only be shared with the current or incoming direct managers once the worker gives their written permission. Although the worker has control of the information and who it is shared with, it is recommended for the manager to have a signed copy, and sometimes the organization's HR or personnel team.

The content of the passport is strictly confidential. The direct manager holds a copy, which is kept in the employee's personal file. The employee is provided with a copy, and ensures they have a copy of any

reasonable adjustments/supports that are agreed on. Nobody else has access to the content. For more information on privacy and confidentiality,⁴ please visit [Accommodations Tool 3 - Navigating Disclosure Situations](#) and [Accommodations Tool 4 - Protecting Workers' Confidentiality and Privacy](#)

It is essential to refrain from sharing personal information about an employee. A worker's decision to share their accommodation needs is up to them; further, the potential for negative reactions from other employees can undermine an accommodation plan.

Ensure any and all direct managers involved in supporting the accommodation passports are well informed and trained in the passport system. When considering, keep in mind communication etiquette, chain of custody of the passports and any new changes in policies or requests are clearly communicated. For more information on types of communication, please visit [Communication Tool 3 - Exploring Diverse Types of Communication](#)

Adopting Accommodation Passports in the Government of Canada

The concept of an accommodation passport has landed at home, with the Government of Canada's development of a 'Workplace Accessibility Passport' as a key component of its accessibility strategy.

[video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7JPUNTzJRA>]
[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sz5LkfzLut8>]

The Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport is currently in its first phase and is designed to facilitate conversations between employees and their managers about the tools and supports employees need to succeed in their jobs.³ It supports employee mobility and career development by ensuring portability of adaptive tools and support measures between federal organizations.

To date, there are approximately 20 early-adopter departments using the paper or demonstration phase version of the passport. Paired with the passport are instructions and guidance, including a conversation guide and a frequently asked questions document.

A Case Example of Accommodation Passports¹

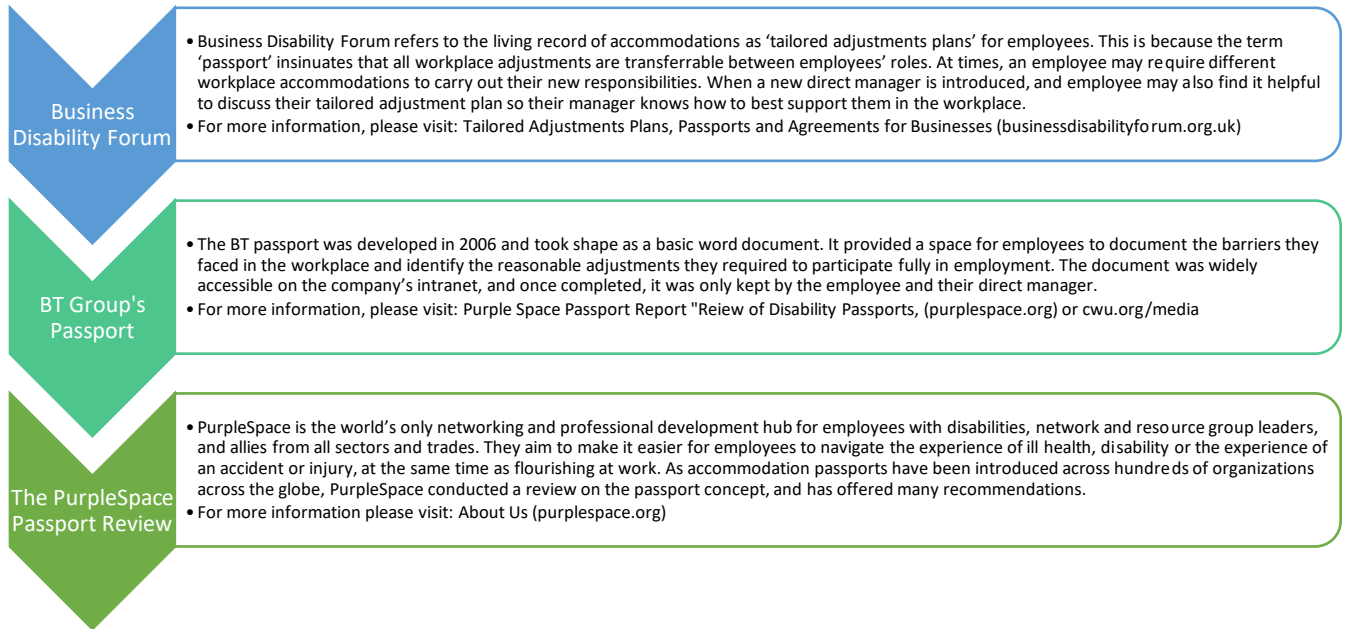
Jason is a Financial Analyst who is also autistic. In collaboration with his direct manager, Jason has identified specific accommodations to reduce his anxiety in the workplace. The agreed upon accommodations include changes in the way his direct manager communicates with him and how formal performance management meetings are conducted. These changes were recorded in Jason's passport, which was signed by Jason and his manager.

Jason found that his passport became a useful tool for him and his direct manager. They could both refer to it when routinely discussing the effectiveness of the agreed upon accommodations. If changes needed to be made, they were recorded within the passport. All the information about Jason's accommodations were documented in one place, and on one form.

Jason also found that his passport has ensured that his accommodations stayed in place when his direct manager changed. Jason is confident that if he moves to a different role or the people around him change, his passport will be a useful guide to the best way to support him.

Other Developments of Accommodation Passports

In the disability space, the concept of an accommodation passport has emerged within the last few decades. Companies around the world are co-developing accommodation passports with employees with disabilities to document their agreed upon workplace accommodations:^{2,4,5}



References

- ¹ Trades Union Congress & GMB Union (2019). *Reasonable adjustments disability passports*. https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Reasonable_Adjustments_Disability_Passports_2019_WIP5_Model_Passport%20secure.pdf
- ² PurpleSpace & Microlink (2018). *Purple passport, destination – success: A review of disability passwords (Ed. 1)*. <https://www.purplespace.org/home?myhub&selected=3363>
- ³ Government of Canada (2022). *Workplace accessibility passport*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/diversity-inclusion-public-service/accessibility-public-service/government-canada-workplace-accessibility-passport.html>
- ⁴ The Communications Union (2020). *The BT passport scheme: Information for CWU members*. <https://www.cwu.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/529017-bt-passport-scheme-1.pdf>
- ⁵ Business Disability Forum (2021, March 31). *Tailored adjustments plans, passports, and agreements*. <https://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/knowledge-hub/resources/tailored-adjustments-plans-passports-and-agreements/>