Maximizing Employee Effectiveness through Use of Personal Assistance Services at the Workplace


Article Summary

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) includes Personal Assistance Services (PAS) as a reasonable accommodation that will allow employees with disabilities to perform the essential functions of their jobs. PAS may take various forms including adjusting an employees schedule, assigning a co-worker to assist an employee with a disability, or hiring a workplace personal assistant (WPA), to name just a few. A WPA can assist an employee with a visual, hearing, speech, or mobility impairment to perform job-related functions. However, it is not the responsibility of an employer to provide a WPA for Activities of Daily Living (ADL) either inside or outside of the workplace. Although the ADA does not prohibit the employer from providing such services.

This article includes answers to those questions that employers frequently raise regarding the utilization of WPAs. Being able to address the concerns of potential employers will benefit vocational rehabilitation placement counselors and job coaches who may be working with an employee in need of personal assistance services. The authors include a step-by-step process for how an applicant or employee should request accommodations. The employer may consider the demands of the job, employees skill level and limitations, available technology, and cost when determining the reasonableness of the request. The employer and employee will meet to determine the most appropriate accommodation while keeping its economic cost in mind. Its important to understand that, under the ADA, the employer is required to provide an effective accommodation, not necessarily that which the employee or applicant considers most desirable.

Personal Assistance Services cover a wide range of possible accommodations for the individual with a disability who is either seeking work or already on the job. Effective utilization of PAS will benefit the employer in being able to hire and retain dedicated and capable individuals who might otherwise be unemployable were it not for simple modifications to the workplace.