



**Ontario
Health**

Workplace Accommodation for At-Risk Front-Line Health Care Providers

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Ontario is working hard to ensure the safety of front-line health care providers. This guidance document has been developed to support accommodation for employees which may be necessary during the pandemic due to personal health concerns or conditions. Examples might include those who are immune-compromised, pregnant or have other conditions that could increase their risk of serious impact of COVID-19.

The March 13, 2020 [Ontario Human Rights Commission policy statement on the COVID-19 pandemic](#) states that “employers have a duty to accommodate in relation to COVID-19, unless it would amount to undue hardship based on cost, or health and safety.” It highlights the need to consider potential factors and vulnerabilities that may impact employees, such as a compromised immune system.

This document is not intended to address the broader requirements to ensuring a safe workplace including redeployment strategies and infection control measures designed to support employee health and safety and proactively address the risk of work refusals.

Common Principles

The following principles have been developed to assist organizations in supporting front-line health care workers:

- As much as possible, fast-track employee medical accommodations through their manager and/or Occupational Health and Safety departments.
- Medical notes not to be required under the current circumstances. However, medical documentation may be required following the COVID-19 crisis in order to provide continued support to employees.
- Accommodation is a shared responsibility between the employee and the organization. The goal is to address the need in a manner that most respects the employee’s dignity, including their privacy, confidentiality, comfort and autonomy, while meeting the needs of the organization in this unprecedented emergency situation.
- Accommodation plans shall be customized based on an assessment of an individual’s accommodation needs and accommodation measures that are available and reasonable.
- Organizations should share their planned approach with bargaining agents as appropriate.
- Individuals requesting accommodation are responsible for providing relevant information and, if required, documentation to support the accommodation request and to consider and assess all reasonable accommodation option(s) presented to him or her.
- The duty to accommodate shall be met if an accommodation option reasonably addresses the accommodation need through modified duties or reassignment, even if it does not provide the individual with his or her preferred option or a perfect solution.
- No front-line health care worker shall suffer any form of reprisal if he or she, in good faith, requests accommodation.

Proposed Process

The expedited process for requesting workplace accommodation during the COVID-19 crisis will be aligned with organizational practices:

1. The concerned/impacted employee should initiate requests for accommodation with their manager and/or Occupational Health and Safety department.
2. The employee should contact their manager to discuss their concerns. Employees are not required to disclose private or confidential information that has no bearing on the accommodation request.
3. Managers, in consultation with their local health and safety department, should attempt to accommodate by redeploying or reassigning the employee to non-risk areas or other appropriate work.
4. Where accommodation is not possible, employees should stay home and be able to access sick leave, federal employment insurance (EI) benefits or, if needed, other banks such as vacation or overtime banks, consistent with organizational policies and practices.
5. At the conclusion of the COVID-19 crisis, employees receiving workplace accommodations as a result of this direction will be required to return to their normal work assignments.