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Invis-ABLE Me:

Empowering Inclusion for Invisible Disabilities

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Welcome

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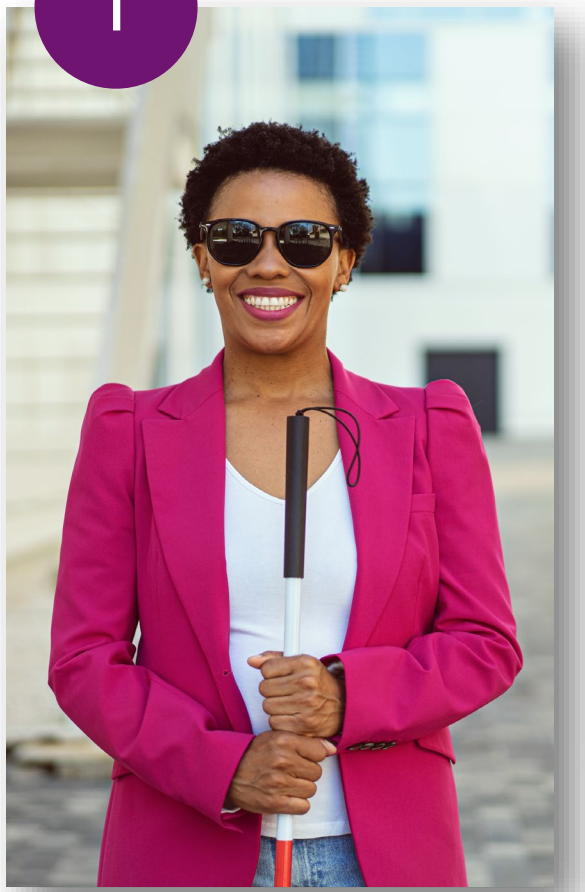

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Defining a Disability

> A person with a disability is someone who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; has a history or record of such an impairment; or is perceived by others as having such an impairment.

Source: ADA, Introduction to the Americans with Disabilities Act, https://www.ada.gov/topics/intro-to-ada/, July 29, 2024. Viewed on 6/9/25.

Defining an *Invisible* Disability

> “Many disabilities, including those associated with mental health, autoimmune and neurological conditions, or chronic pain, can be *'invisible'* or less apparent to those around the person with the disability.”

Source: CDC, *Celebrating the Americans with Disabilities Act: Improving Health for All*, https://www.cdc.gov/minority-health/features/disability-inclusion-as-a-cornerstone-for-health-equity.html, July 29, 2024 Viewed on 6/9/25.

The Numbers

Approximately

1 in 4

adults in the U.S. live with a disability.[1]

10%

of the 61 million Americans with disabilities have invisible disabilities.

[1]Centers for Disease Control, *Disability Impacts All of Us*. https://www.cdc.gov/disability-and-health/articles-documents/disability-impacts-all-of-us-infographic.html. July 15, 2024. Viewed on 6/23/25.
[2]Consortium for School Networking (CoSN), *Beyond the Visible: Recognizing and Accommodating Invisible Disabilities.* https://www.cosn.org/beyond-the-visible-recognizing-and-accommodating-invisible-disabilities/#:~:text=Of%20the%2061%20million%20people,their%20presence%20through%20visual%20clues, March 5, 2024. Viewed on 6/23/25.

What are some examples of invisible disabilities?

Invisible Disabilities

- Chronic pain
- Dizziness
- Learning disabilities
- Dyslexia
- Depression
- Lupus
- Cognitive dysfunctions
- Migraines
- Chronic fatigue
- PTSD
- Debilitating pain
- Brain injuries
- ADHD
- Anxiety
- Bipolar disorder
- Hearing & vision impairments

What are some common assumptions or misconceptions?

Assumptions & Misconceptions

- Disabilities are always visible
- People with disabilities are dependent
- Disability equals inability
- Disabilities need to be fixed
- Disabilities define a person
- Accommodations are special favors
- People with disabilities are inspirational by default

Performance issues vs. accommodation need: What's the difference?

Identifying the Difference

Scenario:

An employee is experiencing challenges in consistently meeting established performance standards or expectations associated with their job.

Is it a performance issue or is there an accommodation need?

- Don't assume – ask the questions.
- Document the process.
- Solution for the accommodation need.
- If related to disability, employer is obligated to make the process interactive with employee.

What are some challenges you have faced in managing accommodation needs?

Challenges

- Disability stigma
- Manager awareness and training gaps
- Employee education/understanding benefits
- Administrative burden and legal complexity
- Inconsistent and complex accommodation
- Implementation delays
- Lack of follow up and monitoring

What are your best practices?

Laying the Foundation for Success

ADA Compliance Practices

- Structured program
- Empower managers
- Document, monitor, report
- Provide accommodations

Employee Support

- Promote inclusion
- Open dialogue
- Vocational & clinical resources
- Adjust accommodations when needed

Digital & Communication Accessibility

- Translate thoughtfully
- Screen reading
- Accessible colors, fonts, & visuals

Thank you!