ACCESSIBILITY FOR SCIENTISTS WITH DISABILITIES

The purpose of this document is to formalize a set of reasonable accommodations of special relevance to NIH intramural scientists with disabilities. These reasonable accommodations are intended to conform to the NIH Policy for Reasonable Accommodation in Manual Chapter 2204, which applies to all employees and applicants for employment at the NIH.[1] In the event of any conflict between this policy and Manual Chapter 2204, the manual chapter prevails.

Reasonable Accommodation

A Reasonable Accommodation is "any change in the work environment or in the way things are customarily done, including a change or exception to applicable individual office rules and/or procedures, which would enable a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of a position and/or enjoy equal employment opportunities."[2]

The NIH Reasonable Accommodation Program

The NIH has a Reasonable Accommodation Program (RAP) managed by the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), Office of the Director (OD). The RAP is staffed by Accessibility Consultants who will assist employees and supervisors with inquiries regarding reasonable accommodation and with processing of reasonable accommodation requests.[3]

"The reasonable accommodation process begins when an employee or applicant makes a request for reasonable accommodation either orally or in writing. Employees are not required to use any specific words, such as "reasonable accommodation" to initiate the process. When an individual decides to request an accommodation, the individual or his/her representative must let the employer know that s/he needs an adjustment or change at work for a reason related to a medical condition."[4]

Reasonable Accommodations for Intramural Scientists with Disabilities

At the September 16, 2009 meeting of the Scientific Directors (SDs), three recommendations to address some specific barriers encountered by NIH intramural scientists with mobility impairments were presented by Dr. Michael Gottesman, Deputy Director for Intramural Research (DDIR), and endorsed by the SDs in attendance. Based on these recommendations, set forth below are a set of reasonable accommodations of special relevance to NIH intramural scientists, which are intended to be consistent with the NIH Reasonable Accommodation policy:

1. In response to a request for reasonable accommodation made by a scientist with a disability that involves office or lab space, the SD is responsible for ensuring that the

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[1] https://policymanual.nih.gov/2204
[2] Manual Chapter 2204, section E.10.
[3] https://www.edi.nih.gov/consulting/reasonable-accommodation/about
[4] Manual Chapter 2204, section C.

accessible space is provided and is accessible to the scientist with the disability. The renovated space also should be accessible to the scientist's supervisor and research group. The Office of Research Facilities (ORF), OD, is responsible for funding and executing the work within common areas of buildings and in outdoor areas of the NIH campus that provides accessibility to the renovated space.

2. Sufficient supplemental funds should be included in the research budget of the scientist with the disability or their supervisor's budget to address the reasonable accommodation, such as the purchase of adaptive equipment, assistive technology, extra costs for travel to scientific meetings, and other related expenses.[5]

3. In response to a request made by a scientist with a disability to their SD, an extension for the BSC review or to the tenure-track clock will be provided if such an extension would be an effective accommodation for the scientist.

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[5] The NIH is committed to digital accessibility and conforming to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act which requires federal agencies to ensure that their information and communication technology is accessible for individuals with disabilities.