

## HR STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES NAVIGATING INTERVIEWS: HOW TO HANDLE DISABILITIES DURING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

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Hanna the HR manager for Tasty Subs, LLC is asked to hire a sandwich artist for their new location. Hanna places her job posting and promptly begins to receive applications. She begins to review the applications and starts calling prospective candidates to schedule interviews. Upon calling one candidate she is prompted to converse with an interpreter through a TTD system. After conversing with the interpreter, she is informed that the candidate is deaf. She continues to schedule the interview and asks if there is any accommodation required for the interview to which the candidate replied, "no." Hanna begins to wonder how this candidate is going to interview for the job, let alone be able to do the job. Let's see what Hanna finds out.



### PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Hanna prepares herself by reviewing the American with Disabilities Act Hiring Guidelines before the interview. Here is what she discovers:

- The ADA defines an individual with a disability as a person who: (1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, (2) has a record or history of a substantially limiting impairment, or (3) is regarded as having a substantially limiting impairment.
- An applicant with a disability, like all other applicants, must be able to meet the employer's requirements for the job, such as education, training, employment experience, skills, or licenses. In addition, an applicant with a disability must be able to perform the "essential functions" of the job either on their own or with the help of "reasonable accommodation."

Additionally, Hanna reviews her interview questions that she asks all candidates as it is important to remain consistent. Review [sample interview questions](#).

### THE INTERVIEW

Hanna is greeted by Elise, the candidate that had indicated she was deaf over the phone. Elise proceeds to tell her that she is deaf however, she is a lip reader so it will be important for Hanna to look Elise face to face during the interview. Hanna obliges and continues with the interview by explaining the essential functions of the job and asked how Elise's past experiences would make her qualified for the job. Elise explained how she had worked at a café in the past and was employee of the month for her customer service skills. Hanna was impressed with Elise during the interview and thought she was well suited for the position based on her past experiences at the café she worked. Elise explained that she would only require a couple of accommodations. 1) She would need to have a sign placed on the counter for customers to read stating, "I read lips. Please make sure I am facing you when you speak." 2) If she is required to answer the phone, (and Hanna confirmed she would be) she would require an interpreting service, which was only a nominal fee to the employer. Hanna assured her that the employer should be able to accommodate these requests in order to do the job.

### INTERVIEW FEEDBACK

Hanna is tasked with assessing all the candidates that she interviewed in order to determine the best candidate for the position. Upon reviewing her notes, she narrows it down to 2 candidates and Elise is one of them. After careful consideration of Elise's qualifications and the essential functions of the job Hanna decides that Elise is the best candidate and offers her the position.

### CONCLUSION

Employers should consider adopting the following best practices when interviewing candidates:

- Use a job description as the basis for interviews
- If possible, give applicants a tour of the work area which can help determine if an accommodation may be necessary for an individual
- Focus on the applicant's skills and abilities
- Do not make assumptions regarding the candidate's ability to do the job based on knowledge of a disability
- Select the best qualified applicant (regardless of whether an accommodation is needed)
- Document your hiring decisions