

## **Briefing Document**

### **General Telework Resource Toolkit**

Recommendations from the  
California Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities

#### **Introduction**

The Employment and Training Subcommittee of the California Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (CCEPD) developed this document as an informational toolkit for businesses to use as a guide to developing inclusive telework programs for people with disabilities. The CCEPD is a statewide advisory body that seeks to increase the employment rate of people with disabilities and better coordinate programs and services for people with disabilities.

#### **Access to Internet**

Businesses are encouraged to assess the level of Internet access employees have or need for remote work. Employees will need adequate broadband internet service and possibly WiFi high speed internet connection for multiple devices to participate in telework.

The Department of Social Services developed a [distance learning document](#) that lists a variety of resources employees can use. The document offers information from the California Emerging Fund, created by the Public Utilities Commission, to provide access to free/low cost options for Internet. Several cable and utility providers offer low cost options.

#### **Assistive Technology**

Assistive technology (AT) can be both personal tools and a work accommodation. Employees can borrow various types of equipment from [device lending libraries](#) through the Independent Living Centers or the California AT Act program, [AbilityTools](#), to determine if a type of technology works best. Independent Living Centers and AbilityTools can also refer individuals to specific companies for technology needs.

To ensure the unique needs of the individual are addressed to perform the work, businesses are encouraged to have discussions with employees for telework accommodations. The [Job Accommodation Network](#) provides resources to employers and people with disabilities regarding accommodation needs.

Businesses can also create a procurement list of items that can be used for assistive technology. Disability:IN, a nonprofit resource for business disability inclusion worldwide, has developed [an accessible technology procurement toolkit](#) that can be used by businesses to help create procurement policies for assistive technology.

It is important to ensure that the assistive technology is appropriate for the end user and is compatible with the software and computer equipment utilized by the company.

## **Checklists**

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration has a [Computer Workstations eTool](#) that covers good working positions, workstation components, checklists, work processes, and workstation environment. Additionally, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management has created a teleworking [safety checklist](#).

## **Computer Equipment**

Employees may not have personal computer equipment or have access to technology. When creating a telework policy, businesses are encouraged to incorporate equipment needs for employees.

Government entities and businesses receiving government funding are subject to Section 508 requirements. Private businesses must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Since the ADA does not provide a technical standard, it is recommended that private businesses use the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) as the standard for website and mobile application accessibility, as well as the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA) as a best practice. These guidelines ensure that electronic information and information technology is available and accessible to people with disabilities.

Businesses are encouraged to procure technology that adheres to [Section 508 rules](#) and can be compatible with other assistive technology. Businesses should also refer to [WCAG 2.1 AA standards](#) and the [21<sup>st</sup> Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act](#) (CVAA).

Websites and more advanced communications technology should be accessible to all employees and adhere to federal and state rules for

accessibility. In California, the Department of Rehabilitation has created [a checklist](#) for digital accessibility.

Employees should also be informed of information technology security policies, including the updating of security features in their own personal computers. Employees should be reminded that personnel privacy policies extend to remote working.

Businesses are encouraged to understand accessible features in video platforms, such as text captioning and the need for language interpretation needs. Assistive technology, such as screen readers or other technology, need to be incorporated with the video platforms chosen by the business.

### **Job Coaches for Supported Employment**

People with disabilities who need job coaches can obtain them by opening a case with the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program or the [Department of Rehabilitation](#). Usually, individuals and [businesses](#) work with local service providers (also known as community rehabilitation programs) to have job coaches, who generally taper off their involvement as the individual learns and becomes more comfortable and proficient in their job. While regulations do provide for remote job coaching in some instances, a model policy should consider information on how job coaches could continue to help individuals adapt to the work environment, even if that work environment is accessed remotely.

### **Disability and Inclusion Environment**

The Employer Assistance and Resource Network (EARN) on Disability Inclusion has resources for businesses regarding [disability inclusion](#). Mainly, disability inclusion has many components for companies to consider from organizational culture, reasonable accommodations, training and company policies. An inclusive environment in both remote work and office environment needs to be developed.

The [Workforce Development Section](#), within the Department of Rehabilitation, also works with businesses to develop strategies for inclusive workplace environments.

### **Reasonable Accommodation**

Reasonable accommodations are a continued part of a teleworking policy. There are many resources available from the federal and state government

on reasonable accommodation. Below are some websites to find more information about specific needs.

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) issued [guidance](#) on the topic. The guidance states that while the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not require employers to have telework programs, changing the location where work is performed may fall under the ADA's reasonable accommodation requirement of modifying workplace policies, even if the employer does not allow other employees to telework. The EEOC issued [additional guidance](#) for employers in relation to COVID-19, the ADA and other existing laws.

The [Job Accommodation Network](#) provides resources to employers and people with disabilities regarding accommodation needs. It also provides suggestions on the needs of the disability.

The <https://calcivilrights.ca.gov/> provides guidance to Californians and businesses on civil rights, including people with disabilities. This Department also provides training on many civil rights topics.

The [Disability Access Services](#) program and [Workforce Development Section](#) within the Department of Rehabilitation can offer technical assistance with accommodation.

### **Manager and Staff Training**

Human resources and training offices are encouraged to incorporate the following training for remote work. Many of the trainings mentioned may currently exist within your business or can be found through training providers.

- Organizational skills
- Self-motivation and working alone
- Etiquette using video platforms
- How to set up home office
- Continue to practice wellness
- Digital Literacy Skills, as needed

Management:

- How to manage remotely
- Encouraging wellness and inclusion of all team members
- [Creation and development of an inclusive culture](#) (Workforce Development Section of the Department of Rehabilitation no-cost training for disability awareness and etiquette training.)

The [Disability Access Services](#) program within the Department of Rehabilitation offers classes on the hiring and supervising of a person with a disability, accessibility trainings and reasonable accommodations. This program works in partnership with the local workforce development boards and America's Job Centers of California on specific classes such as how to work with people with disabilities, who have hidden disabilities, and serving customers with disabilities.

### **Social Isolation, Mental Health and General Health Wellness**

With the impact of COVID-19, there has been a greater emphasis on mental well-being and social isolation from business leaders and human resource departments. Businesses are encouraged to use best practices to combat social isolation such as managers reaching out to staff more often, having virtual coffees or lunches with staff or set times for informal meetings to discuss daily life events just like in the office. During this time, businesses may consider incorporating strategies to promote wellness and combat social isolation.

Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) can also help with social isolation and wellness of employees. EAP programs offer consultative and counseling services on a variety of topics such as stress management or emotional needs. Many EAP programs can develop programs and help managers devise strategies to combat social isolation. Companies can work with EAP or a Health and Safety program to devise wellness programs for remote work. California's Surgeon General has developed a [stress relief playbook during COVID-19](#) promoting general wellness. Because many employees are parents, California's Surgeon General created a document on recognizing [stress in children](#).

The Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) has resources for businesses to [help employees](#) during the pandemic. The document has good strategies to help employees cope with

the pandemic and other best practices. The MHSOAC also established a rapid response network to seek [information locally](#). Disability:IN has also developed a resource for [mental health wellness](#).

Businesses can also gain support through the development of Employee Resource Groups, employee-led groups that further foster diversity and inclusion as well as develop leadership. Many companies are using Employee Resource Groups to discuss challenges faced through COVID-19, develop leadership and combat isolation and develop an inclusive, team environment. For businesses seeking to create [Employee Resource Groups \(ERG\)](#) there are organizations offering guidance. Disability inclusion is part of diversity inclusion. Valuing the diversity of our workforce supports an environment for all abilities.

**Note: If you have additional feedback to the resource briefing document, please email [CCEPD@dor.ca.gov](mailto:CCEPD@dor.ca.gov). It was approved by the CCEPD Full Committee on August 20, 2020.**