

# Reasonable Accommodations in the Lodging Industry

Region 3 ADA Center

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# Background

- About 1 million employees work in the Lodging Industry
- Less than 10% are estimated to be people with disabilities
- Recent studies have explored employer perceptions and hiring practices in the hospitality industry

# Brief Findings from Prior Studies

- Employers skeptical about the capacity of people with disabilities to perform the work in this sector
- Employers concerned about costs of accommodations & liability issues
- “Physical appearance” represents a hiring bias in this sector
- Larger companies report being more open to hiring and accommodating workers with disabilities

# The Current study

- Our previous work has explored business factors contributing to employer decisions to accommodate employees with disabilities
- These studies have explored attitudes across business sectors; the current study drilled down into the hospitality sector, specifically the lodging industry

# Current Study

- Our aim is to describe employer practices in accommodating workers with disabilities in the lodging sector
- Method was an online survey nationally disseminated via ADA Centers, national hotel/motel associations, industry representatives
- We had **175** respondents from across the country

# Methods

- Online survey
  - Brief 35 items
  - Adapted from our prior published studies using the Reasonable Accommodation Factor Survey (RAFs) to identify what influences employers in their response to accommodation requests
  - Also looked at type of property, size, respondent role

# Results

- Majority of respondents were from independently owned & operated hotel properties
- Number of employees within these properties ranged from 2 – 12,000; **Mean** = 444 and **Median** = 75
- **70%** of respondents had at least one employee with a disability
- **85%** had responded to an accommodation request from an employee

# Results

We asked: What is the purpose of providing an accommodation to an employee with a disability?

- **47%** believed it was to make the employee more competitive in the workplace
- **40%** believed it was to enable the employee to perform the essential functions of the job
- **14%** believed it was to make the workplace more tolerable for employees with disabilities



# Results

- We gave respondents a list of **15 factors** influencing the decision to provide an accommodation derived from our prior studies.
- These factors included issues regarding:
  - Company factors (size, resources)
  - Accommodation factors (type, cost, ease)
  - Person factors (nature, severity)

# Top 5 Factors: All Companies

- Formal company policies regarding the ADA and RA
- Anticipated effectiveness of the accommodation
- Type of accommodation requested
- Perceived support of coworkers
- Role of the individual handling the request

# Top 5 Factors: Small Companies

- Whether supervisor involved in the request
- *Company policies on ADA and RA*
- Cost of requested accommodation
- Overall company resources
- Structural modifications required

# Implications

- Need for training and technical assistance in the industry to increase understanding of ADA and accommodations
- Need for training and TA to dispel persisting myths and stereotypes about disability & accommodations
- Tailor training and TA to company characteristics

# References

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