



Edition 1



July 2017





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1 Introduction

This is one of a series of guides, published by the Human Resources Development Fund, which provide practical guidance for employers on specific topics relating to the employment of persons with disabilities and persons with health conditions. It will be particularly useful for human resources managers, line managers, HRDF branches, TAQAT centers, Recruitment Offices and any services promoting the employment of persons with disabilities and persons with health conditions.

What is Multiple Sclerosis?

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is an autoimmune disease that affects the central nervous system. In MS the body's immune system attacks and damages the myelin sheath, which is the insulating cover of nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord. This damage disrupts the ability of parts of the nervous system to communicate.

There are four different forms of MS and it affects different people in different ways.

- **Relapsing-Remitting MS (RRMS)**. About 85% of people with MS are initially diagnosed with this type. People with RRMS have temporary periods called flare-ups or exacerbations. Between attacks, symptoms may disappear completely; or they may lesson in severity.
- Secondary-Progressive MS (SPMS). In SPMS, symptoms worsen more steadily over time, with or without the occurrence of relapses and remissions. Most people who are diagnosed with RRMS will transition to SPMS at some point.
- **Primary-Progressive MS (PPMS)**. This type of MS is not very common, occurring in about 10% of people with MS. PPMS is characterized by slowly worsening symptoms from the beginning, with no relapses or remissions.
- **Progressive-Relapsing MS (PRMS)**. A rare form of MS (5%), PRMS is characterized by a steadily worsening disease state from the beginning, with acute relapses but no remissions, with or without recovery.¹

1. Atlas of MS 2013, Mapping Multiple Sclerosis around the world, Multiple Sclerosis International Federation https://www.msif.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Atlas-of-MS.pdf





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In a global survey in 2010 by the Multiple Sclerosis International Federation the most common presenting symptoms were found to be sensory (40%) and motor (39%) and the least common were pain (15%) and cognitive issues (10%)



Each person will experience multiple sclerosis in different ways.



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What causes multiple sclerosis?

The exact cause of MS is not known but scientists think it is likely to be a combination of genetic and environmental factors. It is an autoimmune disease, which means the immune system mistakes part of the body for a foreign substance and attacks it.

Some risk factors for MS have been identified as:

- **Genetics** MS is not a hereditary condition but a person who has a parent of sibling with the conditions is more likely to develop it.
- Lack of sunlight and vitamin D MS is more common in countries that are further from the equator which could mean that a lack of sunlight and low vitamin D levels may play a role in the condition.
- Viral infections it has been suggested that some viruses may make a person more predisposed to the condition.
- Smoking some research has shown that smoking increases a person's risk of developing MS.²

Treatments for multiple sclerosis

There is no current cure for multiple sclerosis. Treatments for the condition focus on speeding recovery from attacks, slowing the progression of the condition and managing symptoms. People who have mild symptoms may not require any treatment at all.

There is a number of options used to control multiple sclerosis symptoms. Medication may be prescribed for pain, depression and other uncomfortable symptoms.

Physical therapy is also often used as a treatment to relieve multiple sclerosis symptoms. Stretching and strengthening exercises can help maintain limb and body strength.

Persons with multiple sclerosis may use a range of mobility aids and assistive technology to help with tasks of daily living. These can include wheelchairs, walking frames, canes, leg braces and orthotics. A range of other assistive devices may be used to make daily tasks like dressing and eating less challenging.

2. http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Multiple-sclerosis/Pages/Causes.aspx





2. What is an accommodation?



Accommodations are a way of removing barriers that get in the way of a person with a disability or a person with a health condition doing their job. For example, changing where they work, the way in which they do their job or providing equipment to help them.

An accommodation is not special treatment, but a way of treating people differently to give everyone the same opportunity to succeed. Accommodations may well be simple, inexpensive and make good business sense. Without accommodations, good candidates may not apply for jobs and good employees could be lost. Precise requirements vary from one individual to another. Always ask the person who has MS what they need.

Accommodations and best practice



Employers should make accommodations for any employee who might be facing barriers at work because of a disability or long term injury or health condition – even if it has not been diagnosed as a disability or accepted as such by the individual.

The best practice approach is to make 'reasonable' accommodations for anyone who needs them in order to work effectively and contribute fully to your organization.

Most employers will want to know what is 'reasonable'. Doing what seems fair for the individual and others who work for you given the size and resources of your organization is a good place to start.

This guidance will help you deliver best practice.

In order to demonstrate best practice:

- Involve the individual in generating solutions and respect their right to confidentiality.
- You might need to treat people differently in order to treat them fairly.
- Don't make assumptions about what people can and can't do.
- Ensure that everyone knows who is responsible for doing what and when it must be done.





3. How common is multiple sclerosis?

Global

The MS Foundation estimate that there are around 2.5 million people living with MS across the world. It is estimated that the condition affects around 30 people per 100,000. People of Northern European descent have the highest risk of developing Multiple Sclerosis, no matter where they live. The lowest risk appears to be among Native American, African, and Asian populations.³



3. http://www.healthline.com/health/multiple-sclerosis/facts-statistics-infographic





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Employers often regard persons with MS as particularly hard to employ. Misconceptions include the belief that they are restricted to certain jobs. However, people with MS, with training and support can demonstrate the same employment potential as anyone else. Therefore people with MS represent an undervalued and untapped pool of talent.

Do not make assumptions about what people can or cannot do. Most people with MS have lived with their condition for years and have a good understanding of their own functional capabilities and limitations. Consider the skills, abilities and aspirations of each individual and implement appropriate and reasonable support so that everyone can maximize their potential.





4. Etiquette and inclusive communication

A word on language when speaking about disability and health conditions



When speaking about disability or health conditions, it is important to use the terms "person (or persons) with a disability" or "person (or persons) with a health condition".

The word "person" or "persons" is deliberately separated by the word "with", to stress that the disability or health condition does not define or describe the whole person.

When referring to someone who has MS therefore, you should refer to a 'person with MS'. It is also important not to say that people are suffering from or afflicted with MS.

If a person uses a wheelchair then the acceptable term is "wheelchair user" or "person who uses a wheelchair". Avoid terminology that suggests the person is restricted by their wheelchair, for example "he is confined to a wheelchair." In reality, the wheelchair enables a person to have increased independence and mobility.

For more information on etiquette and communication see the Human Resources Development Fund's "Guide for etiquette and rules of communication with person with disabilities".

https://www.hrdf.org.sa/Page/Tawafuq_EN

Responding to disclosure

A candidate may choose to disclose his or her health condition during interview and recruitment. Similarly, an existing employee in the company may approach you or another member of management to disclose a diagnosis of a health condition. Where possible, liaise with your Human Resources (HR) department for guidance on how you can appropriately respond to an employee's disclosure. It's helpful for you to have an understanding of what to say and what not to say when a candidate or employee discloses a health condition to you.





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Below are some suggestions for how you can respond sensitively and appropriately to a person's disclosure of a health condition:

- Don't give advice. Just listen.
- Avoid specific questions about the candidate or employee's health condition, but feel free to clarify his or her ability to work. For example: "How do you think your treatment might impact your work?" or "What kind of supports and accommodations do you think the company could provide to assist with your work?"
- When expressing your concern empathize but avoid pity. For example, you could say: "This must be a difficult situation for you" or "I'm sure this is difficult to deal with"
- For an existing employee you could say "You're a valuable member of the team. Let's work together to figure out how to make this work." or "Tell me what you think we can do to make your workload more manageable."
- Don't try to cheer him or her up. Although you may mean well, telling your employee to cheer up may minimize the employee's feelings. Avoid sayings like, "things could be worse" or "time heals all".
- If you are uncertain as to how to respond to an employee's disclosure, mention that you need to consult with or include HR in discussions. For example: "I'm not sure how to respond to this situation. I would like to include HR to ensure we address your needs".⁴

4. http://workplacetransitions.org/support/support-the-diagnosed-employee





5. Making accommodations

Recruitment and selection



You need to make sure that you do not discriminate against applicants with a disability or applicants with a health condition during the recruitment process. You may also have to make

reasonable accommodations. It is important not to make assumptions about what the applicant can and cannot do. Instead, ask applicants about accommodations as part of the recruitment process. If you use external recruitment agencies, ask for evidence that they also make accommodations for applicants with disabilities and applicants with health conditions and work to the standards that underpin this guidance.

It is not good practice to ask candidates questions about health or disability prior to offering the job unless the question relates directly to an intrinsic aspect of the role for which the person is applying, or is for the purpose of making accommodations to the application or interview process. This is because, information about a candidate's health or disability gained during the application and assessment stage might encourage recruiting managers to make negative assumptions about a candidate's ability before they have the opportunity to demonstrate that they can to do the job.

Job descriptions



When drawing up candidate specifications:

- Ensure that the job description clearly describes the purpose and scope of the role, as well as management support associated with the post.
- Be specific about what skills are needed and what the job involves, e.g. if the job involves a lot of travel make sure this is specified.

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- Be flexible. Very often minor changes can make a significant difference, e.g. if the person has difficulties with an aspect of work, consider whether it is essential or only a small part of the job and whether these duties can be easily allocated to another member of the team.
- Concentrate on what is to be achieved in the job as opposed to how it is to be achieved. This opens up the possibility of flexible working arrangements.
- Do not place undue emphasis on formal qualifications or work experience where they are not essential to a role.





Case Study 1 - Part 1



Nada – Finding an accommodation that works for employer and employee

Nada is 29 years old and is an office administrator with a medium sized distribution company. Nada has recently had a baby and has been on maternity leave.

In the early stages of pregnancy, Nada began to experience some numbness in her feet and arms. Initially, doctors thought this was connected to her pregnancy however after some tests Nada was diagnosed with MS.





After the birth of her baby, Nada's symptoms worsened. Her vision became blurred and her balance and coordination at times was difficult. Nada received a course of medication to help with her symptoms.

The medication helped but Nada now finds that she fatigues easily. Nada would like to return to work but is worried she may not be able to keep up with her duties.









Advertising and attracting applicants

When advertising a job:

- Use positive wording like "we welcome applicants with disabilities and applicants with health conditions."
- Provide a point of contact for people who require accommodations for the recruitment process, using a range of contact methods (e.g. email, phone, SMS, MMS).
- State that applications will be accepted in alternative formats, e.g. on paper, audio or by email.
- Advertise in more than one medium. In addition to mainstream press, advertise on local radio, talking newspapers and through the web.
- Post the vacancy on TAQAT National Labor Gateway .

https://www.taqat.sa/web/guestemployer/home

Application forms



Accommodations may need to be made to the short-listing process, because an applicant may:

- Have gaps in their CV due to their disability or health condition.
- Apply for a job for which they are over qualified because they need to gain experience.
- Have gained experience outside of paid employment, e.g. work experience and voluntary work.



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Interviews and tests



As you want to recruit the best person for the job, you need to ensure that every candidate is able to demonstrate their capacity to do the job.

Focus on the person's abilities. If you have any doubts about a person's abilities to carry out a particular function of the job, simply ask how they would do it.

When you invite applicants for an interview, make sure you ask all the candidates if they require any accommodations to be made for the interview. With accommodations, the interview allows you to assess the ability of the candidate with MS.

- Ensure that reception and security staff know how to welcome and assist visitors with disabilities.
- Ensure that walkways and corridors are clear so that wheelchair users and people using walking aids can make their way through the building with ease.
- Ensure all lifts are in working order.
- Ensure that you have a fire evacuation procedure in place that accommodates for wheelchair users and people with limited mobility.
- Consider how the candidate will reach the interview venue and what accessible transport options are available.
- Arrange the layout of the interview room so the candidate can get around ask the candidate where they would like to sit for the interview.



Case Study 1 - Part 2

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Nada – Finding an accommodation that works for employer and employee



Nada called her supervisor Ahood and arranged a meeting. She explained her concerns to Ahood that she may not be able to keep up with her work as a result of her MS.

She told Ahood that she was worried if she became over-tired her symptoms could worsen.

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Ahood asked Nada if she felt that part-time work would be a good accommodation. Nada was surprised by the suggestion because the company only employed people full time.

There were no part-time staff in the office.

Nada told Ahood that she thought this would be a perfect solution.

Ahood asked Hadeel, the employee

who covered Nada's maternity leave, if she would stay on with the company in a part-time capacity.

Hadeel agreed to this and Nada and Hadeel are now job-sharing.



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Induction and training



Disability awareness and the need to make accommodations should be embedded in all policies, for example, policies on sickness, training, and appraisals. New recruits should be made aware of these policies during the induction procedure.

It is important that your standard induction and training programme is accessible, so that employees with disabilities and employees with health conditions have the same information about your organization's Health and Safety policies and procedures.

Whether an employee with a disability or a health condition is returning to work or starting work for the first time, ensure they have a thorough induction:

- Ensure that all employees are trained on workplace risks and how to report them, by designating a health and safety officer.
- Implement a buddy system during fire alarms and building evacuations whereby a trained employee is selected to assist employees, who use wheelchairs or walking supports, out of the building.
- Inform training staff when they have participants with mobility or psychomotor disabilities on a programme, and ensure they know how to make their training accessible. Using a larger room with adjustable desks for example.
- Ensure employees who have MS have access to further in-house and external training, meetings and career development opportunities.







Accommodations that may be considered for an employee with MS could include:

- Flexible working hours, e.g. if it is particularly difficult to travel during busier times, allow the employee to start and finish work outside of busy hours. Similarly, medication can have an impact on working hours, allow flexibility for this.
- A variable height desk so the employee can adjust this to their required position.
- Moving the employee's workstation to a more accessible area of the building.
- Ensuring the employee's workstation is close to accessible bathroom and canteen facilities.
- Part-time working or job sharing if their condition does not make full-time work possible.
- Restructuring an employee's role if their condition means they are no longer able to complete certain tasks.
- Redeployment to a different role if the employee's condition worsens and they can no longer fulfil current job requirements.
- If an employee requires the support of a person assistant, providing a private suitable space so an assistant can deliver the personal care the employee requires.

Retention



Once someone has been offered a job, you may need to put in accommodations to ensure they can perform to their highest capability. Start getting the accommodations in place as soon as practicable after you have made an appointment – it may take time. Consult the individual and make sure that the employee's manager or supervisor

understands the agreed accommodations. Disability awareness training that includes neuromuscular disorders like MS may be especially useful for the candidate's team.

Build in regular reviews of accommodations, for example at the end of the probationary period, in supervision sessions and appraisals to ensure that the accommodations are still effective. A tailored accommodations agreement is a good way of recording and reviewing reasonable accommodations.

Ensure that you take the same approach to accommodations when an employee with MS applies for promotion, again not making assumptions about what the employee can or cannot do.





Case Study 2 - Part 1

CASE STUDY
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Jamal - Introducing accommodations to retain valuable employees



Jamal is a systems analyst who has worked in a manufacturing company for 12 years.

He progressed through the company and now holds the role of senior systems analyst.

He is well regarded by the directors who feel Jamal makes a valuable contribution to the organization.

10 years ago Jamal was diagnosed with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis.

For the first 8 years Jamal experienced a number of flare-ups and had to take time off work and receive treatment. Post treatment Jamal's symptoms reduced.



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Premises

Make sure that someone who has a disability or health condition has time to become familiarized with the building, including any changes to the layout of the workplace. Ensure that employees know simple health and safety practices to prevent hazards that can disadvantage an employee with a disability or health condition.

For more information on accessibility for the built environment see the Universal Accessibility Built Environment Guidelines Manual:

http://www.kscdr.org.sa/media/16933/uap-be-en.pdf

Health and Safety



In the vast majority of cases health and safety presents no barriers to the employment of persons with disabilities or health conditions. However, health and safety is frequently used as the rationale for the non-recruitment or dismissal of a person with a disability or health condition.

Employers often have a mistaken belief that the employment of persons with a disability or health condition will present an unmanageable risk to the health and safety of both the person with the disability or health condition and their colleagues. If you do have health and safety-related concerns regarding an employee with MS, in order to achieve best practice, you should:

- Adopt a case management approach.
- Make an individual, objective and competent assessment of any risks associated with employment of the person with MS.
- Implement accommodations which would reduce or remove risks for the individual.
- Do all that is reasonably practicable to remove or reduce risks associated with the environment or work activities and to uphold safe working practices.
- Deal reasonably with any cases involving residual risks.



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Emergency evacuation



Employers should also provide a means of escape and have related safety precautions in place to ensure the preservation of life of all employees in the event of a fire.

Employers should work with employees with a disability or employees with a health condition to develop a personal plan regarding what will happen in the event of an emergency.

Considerations for persons with MS might include:

- Allowing additional time to practice evacuation
- Use of a fire evacuation lift if one is available
- Additional checks by fire wardens





Case Study 2 - Part 2



Jamal - Introducing accommodations to retain valuable employees



Over the last 2 years Jamal's flare-ups became more frequent and his symptoms more severe.

He lost some power in his legs and now uses a walking frame. He regularly experiences spasms and chronic pain. Jamal notices this is worse when he is tired.

Doctors have told Jamal that his condition has transitioned to secondary progressive multiple sclerosis.

Jamal meets with his director, Abdulrahman. The company is eager to keep Jamal in his position. He has developed great expertise that they would find difficult to replace.



Abdulrahman suggests that they examine Jamal's role and delegate certain tasks to other staff members. They also agree a flexible working arrangement so as Jamal can work from home for part of his week, so he can rest when he needs to. He will attend the office for meetings and briefings. These accommodations will be reviewed in a month to see if they are making Jamal's job more manageable.







6. Regulatory Framework in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The rights of Persons with Disabilities have been clearly stated, globally, in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and, locally, in the definition of Disability by the Saudi Ministry of Labor and Social Development.

A. Global



In 2008 the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability which states the following:

Article 27

Work and employment

- 1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation, to, inter alia:
- a. Prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability with regard to all matters concerning all forms of employment, including conditions of recruitment, hiring and employment, continuance of employment, career advancement and safe and healthy working conditions;



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- b. Protect the rights of persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, to just and favourable conditions of work, including equal opportunities and equal remuneration for work of equal value, safe and healthy working conditions, including protection from harassment, and the redress of grievances;
- c. Ensure that persons with disabilities are able to exercise their labour and trade union rights on an equal basis with others;
- d. Enable persons with disabilities to have effective access to general technical and vocational guidance programmes, placement services and vocational and continuing training;
- e. Promote employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labour market, as well as assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment;
- f. Promote opportunities for self-employment, entrepreneurship, the development of cooperatives and starting one's own business;
- g. Employ persons with disabilities in the public sector;
- h. Promote the employment of persons with disabilities in the private sector through appropriate policies and measures, which may include affirmative action programmes, incentives and other measures;
- i. Ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities in the workplace;
- j. Promote the acquisition by persons with disabilities of work experience in the open labour market;
- k. Promote vocational and professional rehabilitation, job retention and return-towork programmes for persons with disabilities.
- 2. States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are not held in slavery or in servitude, and are protected, on an equal basis with others, from forced or compulsory labour.





B. National



Definition of disability by the Ministry of Labor and Social Development

Who is a person with a disability in the workplace?

The Executive Regulations to the Labor Law via Royal Decree No. 1982 specifies the definition of disability and employment and recommendations for minimal accommodations and services. The regulation defines a person with a disability as a person who has one or more of the following permanent disabilities: a visual impairment, hearing impairment, cognitive impairment, physical impairment, mobility impairment, learning disability, communication disorder, behavioral disorder, affective disorders, autism or any other disability that is substantiated by a medical diagnosis and report by entity that is authorized by the Ministry of Labor and Social Development. The report should state that the person with disability requires minimal accommodations and/or services to enable him/her to perform his/her tasks and maintain the job.

For the official legal document refer to the Executive Regulations of the Labor Law and its appendices (the official copy is only available in Arabic).





7. Useful Organizations

If you are an employer that is interested in recruiting talented and skilled employees including disabilities and persons with health conditions the following services, organizations and companies can facilitate your business need.

TAQAT - National Labor Gateway

TAQAT the national labor gateway is a major national initiative to build the largest virtual labor market platform in KSA across both, private and public sectors. TAQAT's mission is to offer and facilitate employment and training services, efficiently and effectively, to further sustain and develop the labor force.

Web https://www.taqat.sa/web/guest/about-taqat

HRDF Branches and TAQAT Centers

Web https://www.hrdf.org.sa/Locations

Non-HRDF services or organizations listed are not necessarily endorsed by HRDF.

Saudi Multiple Sclerosis Advisory Group Provides information about multiple sclerosis and aims to increase awareness and raise cultural, social and health standards.

Web.www.saudims.saService Region1- 13 Regions





Arfa MS Society

Support and guidance for persons with multiple sclerosis. Providing education to families and communities to enhance inclusion of persons with MS in all aspects of society.

Tel.	+966 13 864 9887
Fax.	+966 13 864 9884
Web.	www.arfams.org.sa
Email.	info@arfams.org.sa
Service Region	Region 4







MS Care Society

Top priorities as MS care founders is to care for MS patients and to increase the awareness, particularly among their families and the society in general, which helps them to cope with their illness, return to society, interact with its changes and to enable them to have their rights as a citizens.

Web.	www.mscarergypt.org
Service Region	Egypt

Association of Lebanese Friends of People with MS (ALSEP)

ALSEP pledges to service people with MS in Lebanon by acting on their behalf with the relevant authorities and national and international bodies.

Web.	https://www.facebook.com/groups/ALSEP/
Service Region	Lebanon

MS Society

Charity that provides information and support to people with MS.

Tel.	+44 (0)20 8438 0700
Web.	https://www.mssociety.org.uk
Email.	supportercare@mssociety.org.uk
Service Region	UK

MS Ireland

Multiple Sclerosis Ireland is the only national organization providing information, support and advocacy services to the MS community.

Tel.	+44 1-800-344-4867
Web.	http://www.ms-society.ie/home
Service Region	Ireland

National Multiple Sclerosis Society

Charity that funds research and provides information about MS.

Tel.	+44 1-800-344-4867
Web.	http://www.nationalmssociety.org
Service Region	USA



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Multiple Sclerosis Association of America

Provide an extensive library of on-demand video programming and webcasts providing information on MS.

Tel.+1 800-532-7667Web.https://www.msif.org - https://www.msif.org/contact-us/Service RegionInternational

Multiple Sclerosis International Federation

Provide an extensive library of on-demand video programming and webcasts providing information on MS.

Tel.+44 (0)20 7620 1911Web.https://www.msif.orgEmail.https://www.msif.org/contact-us/Service RegionInternational

▲ World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)

W3C is an organization created to develop and maintain standards on the internet that allows users to access pages on the web without display issues.

Web.www.w3.orgService RegionInternational

World Health Organization

WHO staff work with governments and other partners in more than 150 countries to ensure the highest attainable level of health for all people.

Web. http://www.who.int/en/

Service Region International

A International Labour Organization's Global Business and Disability Network

The ILO Global Business and Disability Network is a network of multinational enterprises, employer organizations, business networks and organizations representing persons with disabilities.

Web.http://www.businessanddisability.org/index.php/en/Service RegionInternational





8. Collaborative Partners

HRDF welcome feedback on this job accommodations guide from interested individuals, organizations and employers.

Please contact HRDF Tawafuq at Tawafuq@hrdf.org.sa with feedback and suggestions.

- Edition 2 of the guide will incorporate feedback and include the name of organizations and employers who were part of the review.
- Deadline to feedback on Edition 1 is 1st September, 2017





