

HR Professionals Accommodations for Employees' Disabilities

Narrative Report

April 27, 2023

Prepared by:



Prepared for:



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Research Methodology

The research was conducted online in the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of the University of Phoenix among 504 adults ages 18 or older, currently employed full-time or part-time, works for a company with more than one employee, and currently works in the human resources function at their company. The survey was conducted April 4 - 14, 2023.

Data are weighted where necessary by the company's number of employees to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within ± 5.2 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including, but not limited to coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.

Report Notes

Unless otherwise specified, all relationships discussed within sub-groups are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Key sub-groups mentioned are defined below:

- Company size:
 - Small companies – Less than 100 employees (n=96)
 - Medium-sized companies - 100 – 499 employees (n=155)
 - Large companies - 500+ employees (n=253)
- Tenure at Current Company:
 - Less than 10 years (n=325)
 - 10 years or more (n=179)

I. Company Resources & Accommodations for Employees with Disabilities

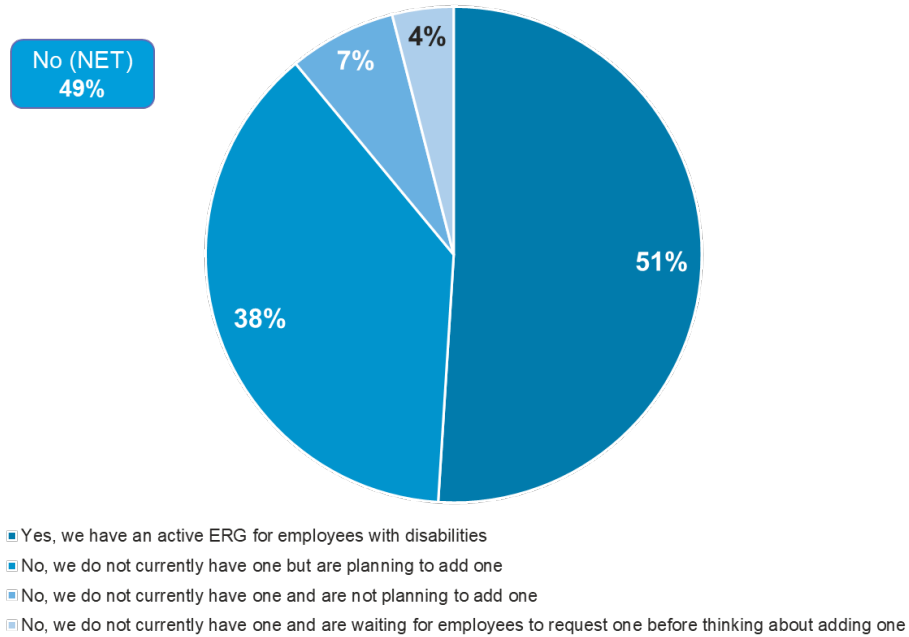
With 9% of employees (on average) disclosing a disability to their company, it is critical that HR professionals are prepared help inform this group about resources and accommodations available to help meet their needs throughout their tenure at the company. Nearly half of HR professionals believe employers don't take the needs of employees with disabilities as seriously as they should, and the majority wish their company would do more. While there are steps to ensure that employees know they can request accommodations, they tend to be focused during the onboarding process; thereby leaving a gap in communication for much of an employee's tenure.

- More than 4 in 5 HR professionals (81%) report that at least one employee at their company has disclosed a disability. On average, 9.1% of employees have disclosed having a disability to their company. Only 19% of HR professionals say that none of their employees have disclosed having a disability. **[Q810]**
- Although more than 3 in 5 HR professionals (62%) say disability is included as one of the protected classes as an aspect of their company's diversity policy, more than a quarter of HR professionals (28%) say it is not specifically mentioned. In addition, only 19% say that disability is intentionally highlighted as an aspect of their company's diversity policy. Yet, under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, discrimination based on a person's disability status is prohibited, making it a protected class.¹ **[Q800]**
 - Perhaps unsurprisingly, HR professionals at large companies (87%) are the most likely to say disability is mentioned in its diversity policy, compared to only 49% for small companies and 66% for medium companies.
- Among HR professionals whose company has ERGs, around half (51%) say their company has an active ERG for employees with disabilities. The remaining 49% report their company does not currently have an active ERG for employees with disabilities, but 38% say they are planning to add one. **[Q805]**
 - Encouragingly, although the majority of small companies who have ERGs don't currently have one for employees with disabilities (75%), nearly 3 in 5 (58%) say they are planning to add one.²

¹ Introduction to the American with Disabilities Act. (2023, April 12). ADA.gov. <https://www.ada.gov/topics/intro-to-ada/#:~:text=The%20ADA%20prohibits%20discrimination%20on,origin%2C%20age%2C%20and%20religion.>

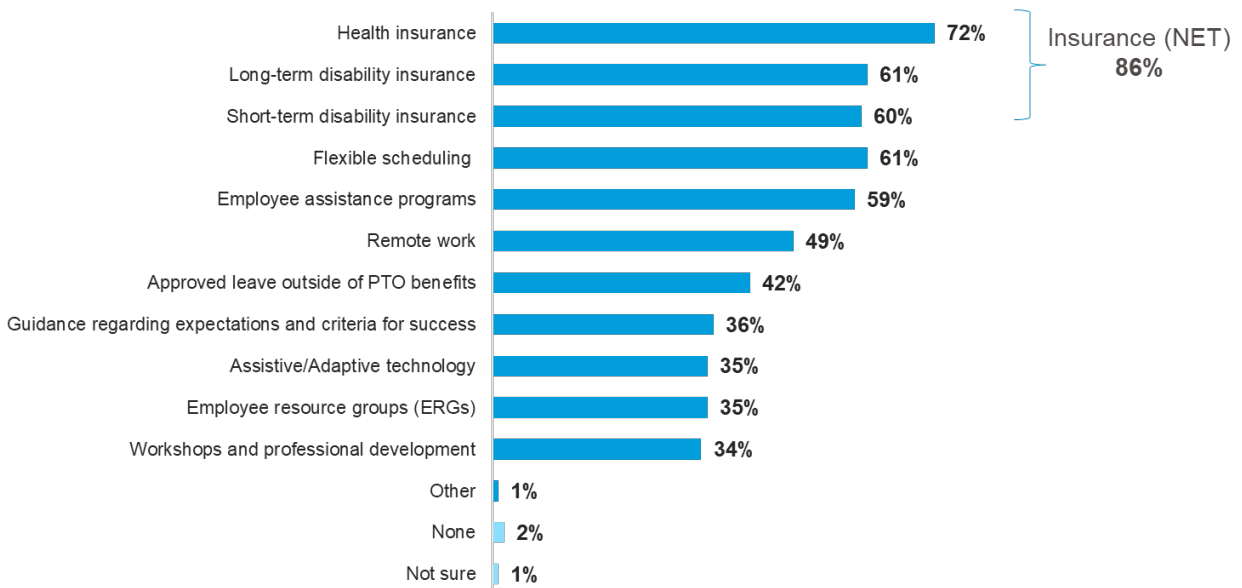
² Caution: Small base size (<100); interpret results directionally instead of statistically.

Company Has ERG For Employees With Disabilities
(among those whose company has ERGs)



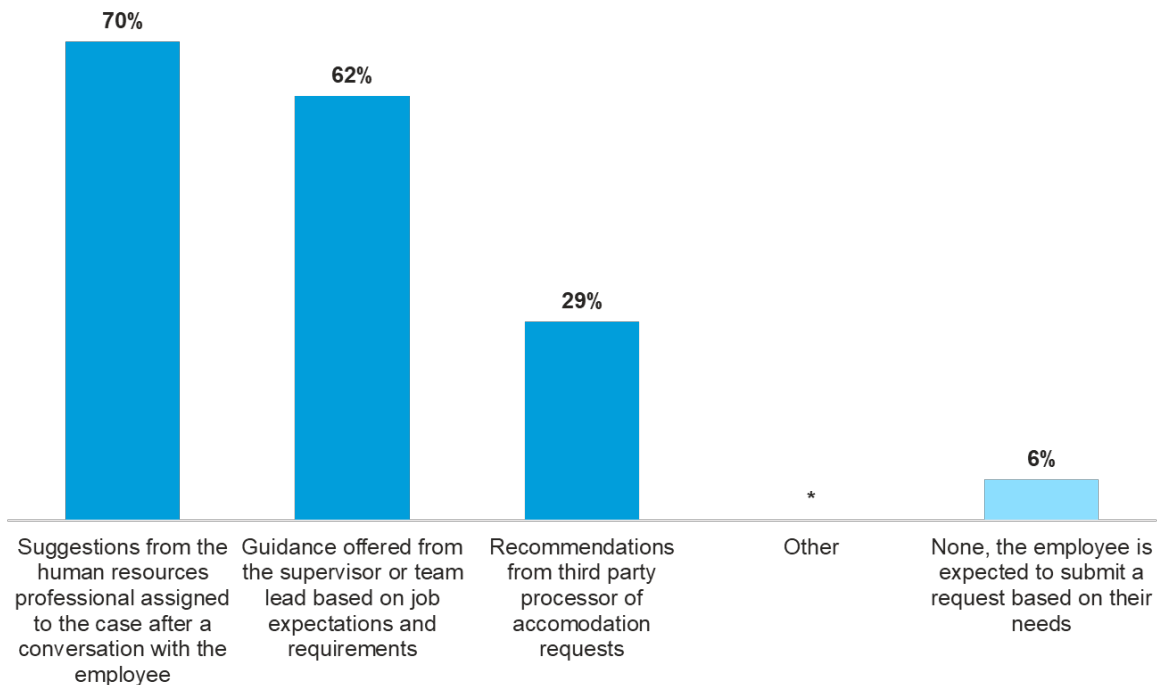
- HR professionals say insurance (86%) – including health insurance (72%), long-term disability insurance (61%), and short-term disability insurance (60%) – is the most common resource or accommodation that a company offers to employees with disabilities to help address their needs. Around 3 in 5 say that their company offers flexible scheduling (61%) and employee assistance programs (59%), while nearly half of HR professionals say their company offers remote work (49%) to help address the needs of their employees with disabilities. **[Q900]**

Resources or Accommodations Offered By Company To Employees With Disabilities



- In addition to offering resources and accommodations to help address the needs of employees with disabilities, most HR professionals (94%) say their company has programs, initiatives, or activities in place to hire, train, and/or retain employees with disabilities. Specifically, around half say there are regular meetings with managers / supervisors (54%), and at least 2 in 5 report job coaching (45%), specific recruitment plans (44%), mentorship partnerships (44%), partnerships with local agencies serving the disabled (43%), or job placement partnerships (40%). **[Q820]**
- To ensure that employees know they can request accommodations, the majority of HR professionals say their company includes it in a company policy/handbook (63%), in benefits information (63%), and in new employee training/orientation (55%) - all steps that appear to be focused during the onboarding of a new employee, thereby leaving a gap in communication throughout the rest of their tenure. Despite this information being vital knowledge for all employees, fewer HR professionals say there are presentations to employees (39%), a dedicated website with information about services and resources provided (34%), a specific communication plan (33%), and/or webinars and workshops to raise awareness (30%) to ensure that employees know they can request accommodations. **[Q910]**
- The overwhelming majority of HR professionals (94%) also say that guidance is provided to employees about the accommodations that may be available to them if they are not sure what to request. Seven in 10 (70%) say employees are provided with suggestions from the human resources professional assigned to the case after a conversation with the employee. More than 3 in 5 HR professionals (62%) say that guidance on available accommodations is offered from the supervisor or team lead based on job expectations and requirements. Some (29%) say recommendations from third party processor of accommodation requests are provided. **[Q915]**

Guidance Provided To Employees About Available Accommodations



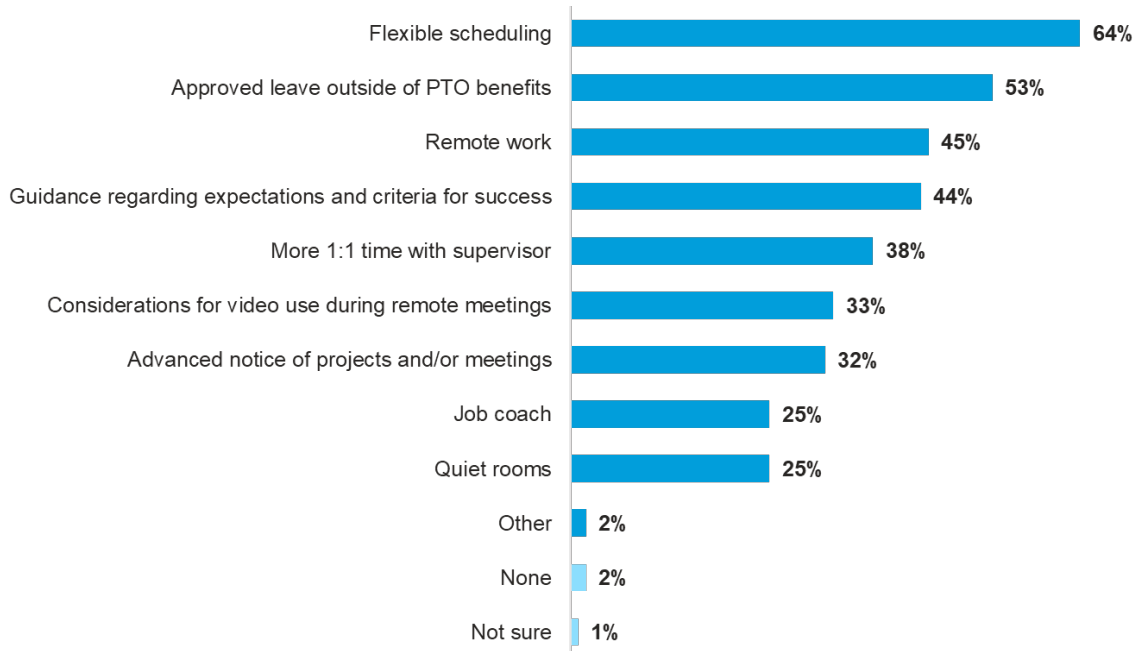
- Nearly all HR professionals (94%) agree that their company provides the necessary resources to help support employees with disabilities at work, with more than half (54%) *strongly agreeing* with this statement. A similar proportion (94%) say managers/supervisors at their company actively work with human resources to ensure their employees with disabilities have the resources they need. However, there appears to be room for improvement. Nearly 3 in 4 HR professionals (72%) wish their company would do more to accommodate their employees with disabilities. In addition, nearly half of HR professionals (47%) believe employers don't take the needs of employees with disabilities as seriously as they should. **[Q815]**
 - Interestingly, agreement with this sentiment is highest among HR professionals at small and large companies, with about half agreeing employers don't take the needs of employees with disabilities as seriously as they should (strongly/somewhat agree: small, 54% and large, 47% vs. medium, 31%).

II. Company Resources & Accommodations for Employee's Mental Health Needs

Although the majority of HR professionals say insurance is a common resource offered to address the mental health needs of their employees, more direct services – including workshops and professional development, partnerships for free or discounted mental health services, ERGs, and onsite counseling services – are less often offered. Still, many HR professionals say their company offers flexible scheduling and approved leave outside of PTO benefits as accommodations for their employees' mental health needs.

- HR professionals say insurance (86%) – including mental health coverage (60%), long-term disability (55%), and short-term disability (53%) – is the most common resource offered to employees to specifically address their mental health needs. Around 3 in 5 say their company offers employee assistance programs (58%). Yet, more direct services to address mental health needs are less commonly provided. Only about a third of HR professionals say their company offers workshops and professional development (38%), partnerships with local or national providers for free or discounted mental health services (38%), employee resource groups (33%), and onsite counseling services (30%). **[Q1000]**
- Nearly all HR professionals (96%) say their company offers accommodations for employees seeking them for their mental health needs -- with flexible scheduling (64%) and approved leave outside of PTO benefits (53%) topping the list. More than 2 in 5 HR professionals also say their company offers accommodations for mental health needs through remote work (45%) and guidance regarding expectations and criteria for success (44%). **[Q1005]**
 - HR professionals at large companies (52%) are more likely than those at small companies (35%) to say that they offer remote work.

Accommodations For Mental Health Needs Offered By Company To Employees



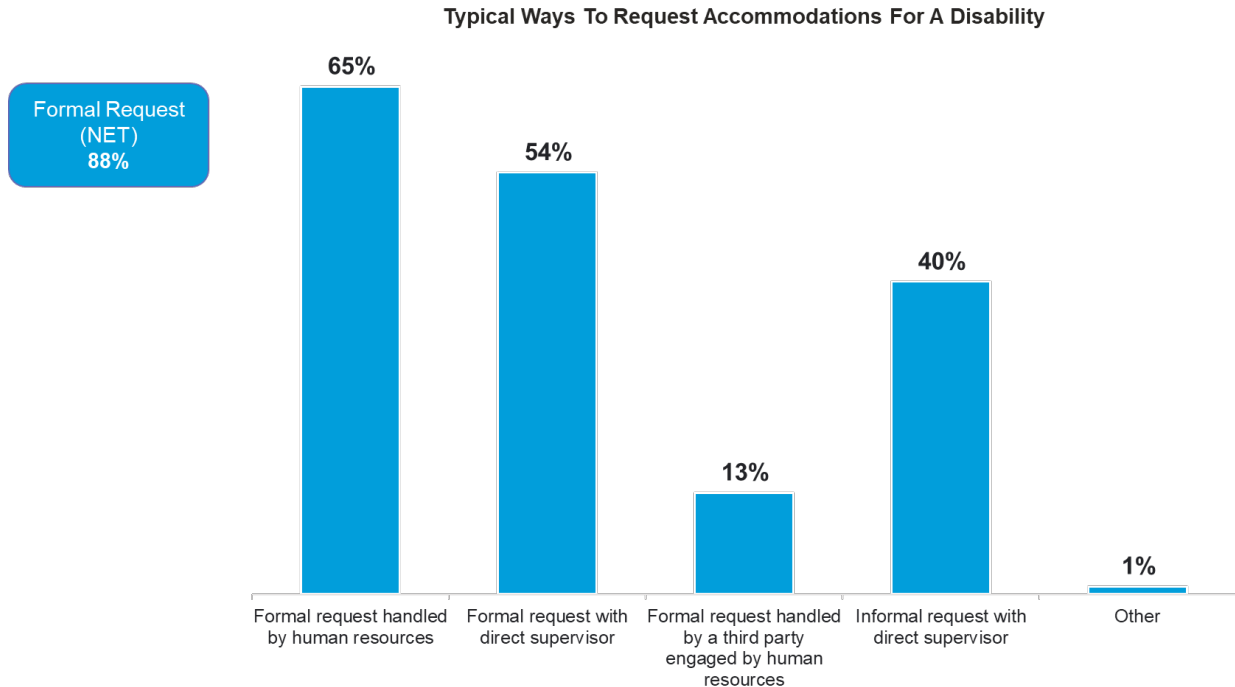
- A majority of HR professionals say their company ensures their employees are aware of the mental health/wellness resources that are offered by including them in benefits information (71%) and/or in new employee training/orientation (61%) – both of which are typically focused at the start of an employee’s time at the company. Less than half say that it is included in meetings with supervisors and managers (46%), there is a dedicated website with information about services and resources provided (38%), there is a specific communication plan (38%), there are webinars and workshops to raise awareness (36%), or there is a monthly newsletter (30%). [Q1010]

III. Company Accommodations Procedures

HR professionals say that employees typically request accommodations for a disability through a formal request, commonly with HR or a direct manager. Both the process to approve or deny accommodations after a request is received and to implement accommodations after the request is approved typically takes one month or less. Still, many HR professionals feel overwhelmed with the steps needed to provide disability accommodations, indicating a need for some improvement in the process.

- A vast majority of HR professionals (88%) say that employees typically request accommodations for a disability through a formal request, commonly with HR (65%) or a direct manager (54%). Much fewer (13%) say accommodations are typically requested through a formal request handled by a third party engaged by human resources. On the other hand, only 2 in 5 (40%) typically rely on informal requests with direct supervisors. [Q905]
 - HR professionals that work at medium or large companies are more likely than those who work at small companies to say that employees typically request accommodations for a

- disability through a formal request with a direct supervisor (medium: 67%, large: 61% vs. small: 40%).
- Nearly 3 in 4 HR professionals at large companies (74%) say their employees typically request disability accommodations through HR.

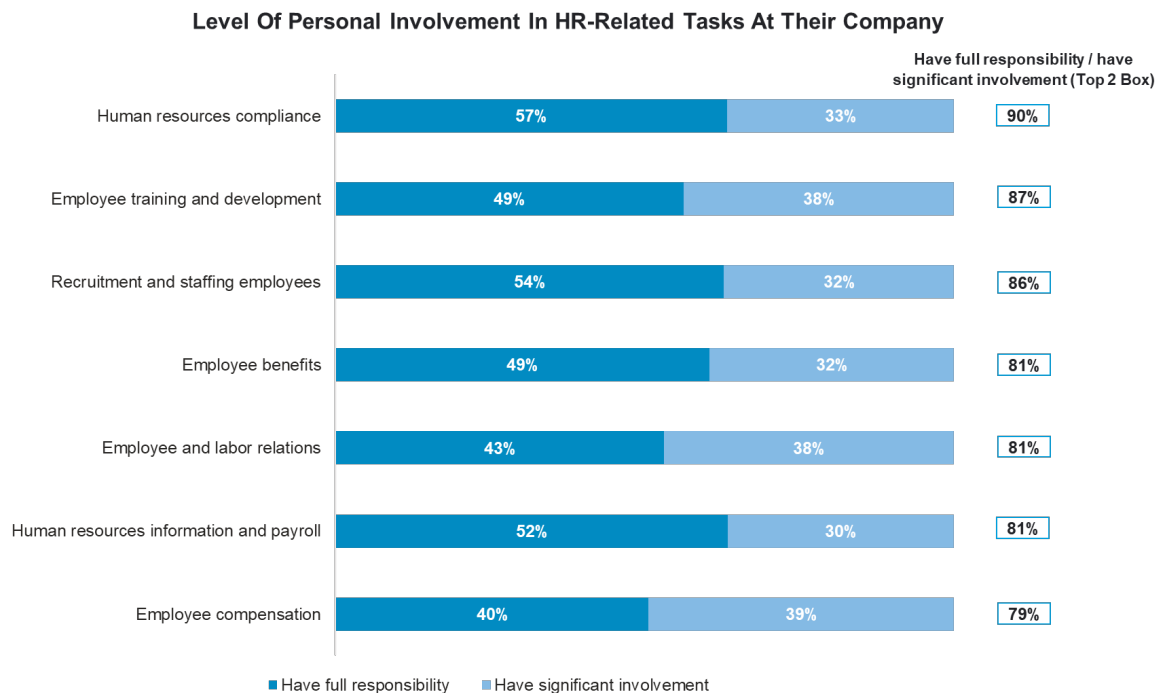


- An overwhelming majority of HR professionals (92%) say that it typically takes one month or less to approve or deny accommodations for a disability after a request is received. More than 2 in 5 (42%) say it typically takes a week or less. **[Q920]**
 - Interestingly, HR professionals who work at medium companies (15%) are twice as likely as those at small (7%) and large companies (7%) to say it typically takes more than one month.
- A similar proportion (91%) say it typically takes a month or less to implement accommodations for a disability after the request is approved, with nearly a third (32%) saying it takes a week or less. **[Q921]**
 - Still, 1 in 3 HR professionals (34%) say that at times, they feel overwhelmed with the steps needed to provide disability accommodations at their company. **[Q1120]**
- Four in 5 HR professionals (80%) say their company evaluates the effectiveness of its disability accommodation program through surveys, including transactional surveys with employees who receive accommodations (55%) and an annual engagement survey with all employees (53%). The majority (60%) say their company evaluates effectiveness of the accommodation program through feedback from supervisors, while around half (51%) say that it evaluates effectiveness through analysis of performance data. **[Q925]**

IV. The Role of the HR Professional

Nearly all HR professionals feel comfortable guiding employees through the disability accommodation process at their company, with many engaging in an interactive discussion about reasonable accommodations and providing guidance regarding potential accommodations. Yet, a majority wish their company provided more training so that they could better guide employees with disabilities, with some HR professionals expressing concern that they don't have the right tools to assist employees throughout the disability accommodations process.

- Most HR professionals have full responsibility or significant involvement in human resources compliance (90%), employee training and development (87%), recruitment and staffing employees (86%), employee benefits (81%), employee labor and relations (81%), human resources information and payroll (81%), and employee compensation (79%). [Q705]

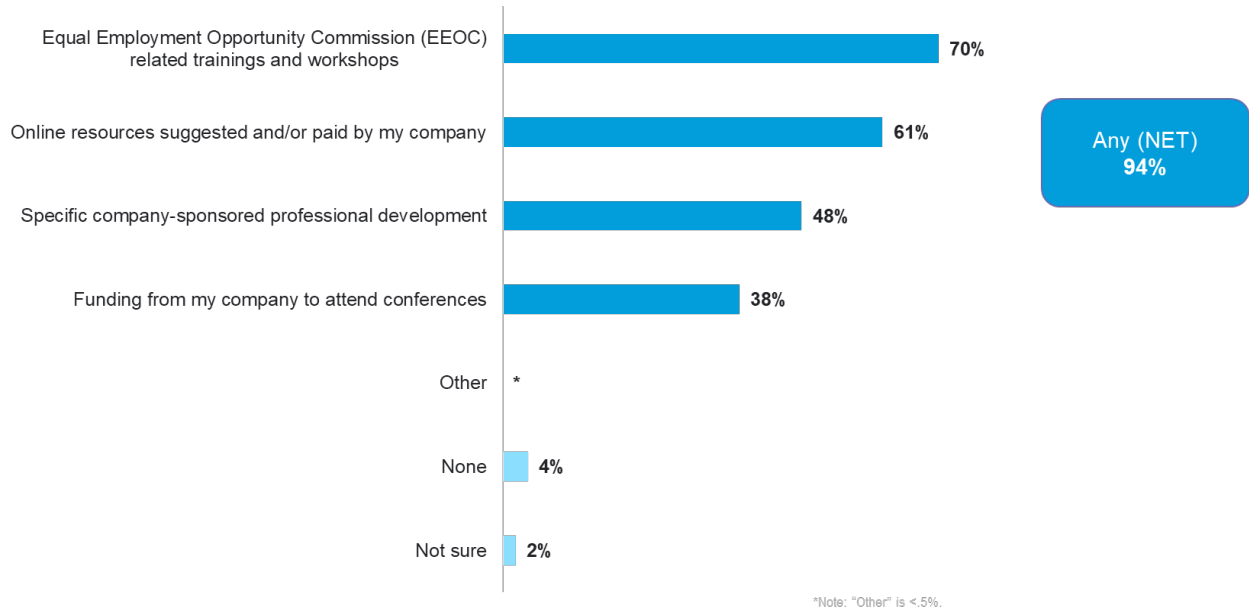


- Nearly 2 in 3 HR professionals say engaging in an interactive discussion with the employee about possible reasonable accommodations (66%) and providing guidance regarding potential accommodations (65%) should be a part of their role in guiding employees through the disability accommodation process. Around 3 in 5 say their role should be providing professional development for supervisors about managing accommodations (62%) and facilitating the disability accommodation process (61%). Slightly fewer believe HR professionals' role should include mediating employees and supervisors about managing accommodations (56%) and communicating program requirements (55%) [Q1105]
- Nearly 3 in 4 HR professionals say that the ability to determine and suggest reasonable accommodations (73%) and having thorough knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities Act and how it protects employees (72%) are necessary skills to assist in the disability accommodation process. Around 2 in 3 say that understanding of disability and how it affects a

person (68%) and empathy for the experiences and barriers employees with disabilities have (66%) are necessary to assist in the disability accommodation process, while more than 2 in 5 (44%) list job coaching as a necessary skill. **[Q1110]**

- HR professionals who work at a large company are more likely than those at a small or medium company to say having thorough knowledge of the American with Disabilities Act and how it protects employees (large: 79% vs. medium: 68% and small: 64%) and empathy for the experiences and barriers employees with disabilities have (large: 74% vs. medium: 60% and small: 58%) are necessary skills to assist employees in the disability accommodation process.
- Nearly all HR professionals (93%) feel comfortable guiding employees through the disability accommodation process at their company, with nearly 2 in 3 (64%) saying they feel *very comfortable*. **[Q1100]**
 - HR professionals who work at small or medium companies are more likely than their large counterparts to say they feel *very comfortable* guiding employees through the disability accommodation process (small: 71%, medium: 70% vs. large: 57%).
- Seven in 10 HR professionals (70%) say the professional development resources about accommodations and disability that are available to them include Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) related trainings and workshops, while 61% say the professional development resources available to them include online resources suggested and/or paid by their company. Only 4% say they do not have any professional development resources available to them generally. **[Q1115]**

Generally Available Professional Development Resources About Accommodations and Disability



- An overwhelming majority of HR professionals (92%) say they are fully prepared to handle employees who disclose their disabilities to them, with nearly 3 in 5 (58%) *strongly agreeing* with this sentiment. Yet, nearly 3 in 4 (73%) wish their company provided more training so that they could better guide employees with disabilities. In addition, more than 1 in 4 HR professionals (29%) are concerned that they don't have the right tools to assist employees throughout the disability accommodations process. **[Q1120]**
 - HR professionals who work at a small or medium-sized company are more likely than those at large companies to *strongly agree* that they are fully prepared to handle employees who disclose disabilities to them (small: 68%, medium: 62% vs. large: 49%).
 - In addition, HR professionals who have worked for their company less than 10 years are more likely than those who have worked at their company for 10 years or more to wish their company provided more training so that they could better guide employees with disabilities (78% vs. 64%).