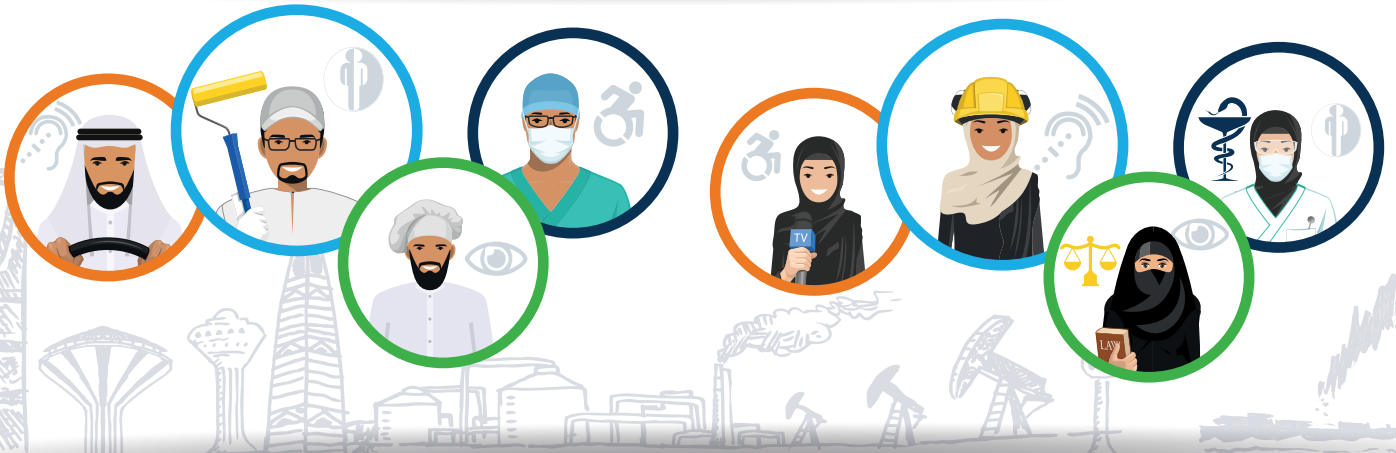


JOB ACCOMMODATIONS FOR Persons with Speech and Language Disorder

Edition 1



April 2017

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Contents

Page

1. Introduction	6
What is speech and language disorder?	6
2. What is an accommodation?	9
Accommodations and best practice	9
3. How common is SLD?	10
4. Etiquette and inclusive communication	11
A word on language when speaking about disability	11
5. Making accommodations	12
Recruitment and selection	12
Job descriptions	13
Advertising and attracting applicants	14
Application forms	14
Interviews and tests	15
Induction and training	18
Retention	20
Working arrangements to retain employees	22
Telephone work	22
Harassment	23
6. Regulatory Framework in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	25
7. Useful organizations	28
8. Collaborative Partners	31



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. It will be particularly useful for human resources managers, line managers, Taqat centers, Recruitment Offices and any services promoting the employment of persons with disabilities.

What is speech and language disorder (SLD)?

Speech and language disorder (SLD) - often called stammering or speech impairment - is a speech/fluency difficulty, which causes the person to have speech blocks, prolongations, or repetitions of sound.

Stammering does not indicate anything about a person's personality or intelligence. People who stammer know what they want to say. SLD varies tremendously from person to person and is highly variable for the person who stammers who may be fluent one minute and struggling to speak the next.

The difficulty is in the physical production of speech. This can lead to frustration and the person with SLD avoiding certain words or situations. It is rare to completely lose SLD; most people stammer to a greater or lesser extent at different times. SLD can improve within a supportive environment and also through speech therapy.

What causes SLD?

Research suggests that a combination of factors is involved. Stammering is at root a neurological condition, based in the wiring of the brain. Studies have shown differences in the anatomy and functioning of the brain of those who stammer compared with most other people.

Genetics are relevant, at least in many cases. Someone with SLD in the family seems more likely to develop the condition themselves.

As an issue that affects communication, SLD can have a deep and lasting psychological impact - which in turn can affect and aggravate stammering.¹

1. <https://www.stammering.org/help-information/topics/what-stammering/basic-information-stammering>



What are the affects of SLD?

SLD affects people in different ways and can vary according to the situation in which the person finds themselves: to whom the person is talking; how they are feeling about themselves and their speech; and what they want to say.

SLD is not simply a speech difficulty but is a serious communication problem. For the child or adult with SLD, it can undermine their confidence and self-esteem, and affect their interactions with others as well as their education and employment prospects.

A person with SLD may have particular difficulties with:

- Interviews
- Presentations and meetings
- Tiredness, time pressure or anxiety
- Using the telephone

The individual facts should always be considered in consultation with the person. Assumptions should not be made, such as assuming the person is just nervous or shy. The pressure to speak quickly and the attitude and response of the listener often cause difficulties.

Managers who work with people who stammer need to be sensitive to the person, while at the same time exploring what it is about the job that may initially be considered by the person and employer to be problematic.

By making accommodations and communicating effectively with people who stammer, your organization can benefit from highly effective communicators who stammer. Employees who stammer can make a valuable contribution to the workplace as they are likely to be more aware of the need to prepare for meetings and presentations, and of customer needs and communication issues. Focused listening, clear thinking, approachability and an interest in people are qualities that do not depend on fluent speech.



Because they know they will have to try harder with the spoken word, people who stammer may be more likely to:

- Plan better what they want to say.
- Think before they speak.



2. What is an accommodation?



Accommodations are a way of removing barriers that get in the way of a person with a disability 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.

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 organisation. 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 organisation 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 SLD?

According to the Stuttering Foundation of America, more than 70 million people worldwide have SLD, which is about 1% of the population².



2. <http://www.stutteringhelp.org/faq>



4. Etiquette and inclusive communication

A word on language when speaking about disability



When speaking about disability, it is important to use the term ‘person (or persons) with a disability’. The words ‘person’ or ‘persons’ and ‘disability’ are deliberately separated by the word “with”, to stress that the disability does not define or describe the entire person.

When referring to someone who has SLD therefore, you should refer to a ‘person with speech and language disorder’ or a ‘person who stammers.’

For more information on etiquette and communication, see the Human Resources Development Fund’s ‘Guide for etiquette and rules of communication with persons with disabilities’.

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



5. Making accommodations

Recruitment and selection



Candidates who stammer may be prevented from demonstrating their abilities and potential by conventional recruitment processes.

You need to make sure that you do not discriminate against a job applicant with a disability during the recruitment process. For example, people with SLD should not be refused a job or an interview on the grounds that the job requires ‘excellent communication skills’. If you use external recruitment agencies, ask for evidence that they make reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities.

Assumptions should not be made, as people who stammer may well have excellent oral and communication skills. People who stammer have succeeded in many areas, including sales and customer service. There is no justification for arguing that customers won’t like being served by someone who stammers.

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 do the job. Every candidate should be given the opportunity to request accommodations to each stage of the recruitment process. Remember that requirements will vary between individuals. Always consult with the individual to identify the right accommodation from them.



Job descriptions



When drawing up job descriptions and candidate specifications:

- Be specific about what skills are needed and what the job involves.
- Be flexible. Very often minor changes can make a significant difference, e.g. if the person has difficulties with telephone 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.
- Do not needlessly exclude someone who stammers. Concentrate on what is to be achieved in a job rather than on how it is achieved. Someone who stammers may simply do things differently, e.g. communicate externally using email, or in writing.
- Be specific about what skills are needed and what the job involves.
- Ensure that the job description clearly describes the purpose and scope of the role, as well as management support associated with the post.
- Identify any inherent risks associated with the demands of the post including unreasonable or conflicting demands. Ensure you can support the successful candidate with adequate training and resources when appointed.
- Distinguish between essential and desirable criteria, so that you can be flexible when considering accommodations.
- Do not place undue emphasis on formal qualifications or work experience where they are not essential to a role.

It may be appropriate to communicate to prospective candidates that there is a particular level of pressure or responsibility attached to some roles. However such statements in job descriptions should not be regarded as an abdication of responsibility. Employers should still manage the pressure and levels of stress to which they expose their employees. Generalities such as: “Must be able to work under pressure” or “must be able to work in stressful situations” should be avoided.



Advertising and attracting applicants

When advertising a job:

- Use positive wording like “we welcome applicants with disabilities.”
- Provide a point of contact for people who require accommodations for the recruitment process, using a range of contact methods (e.g. email, phone, text-to-speech software, 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 and through the web.
- Post the vacancy on Taqat National Labor Gateway.
<https://www.taqat.sa/web/guest/employer/home>

Application forms



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

- Have gaps in their CV due to their disability.
- Have gained experience outside of paid employment, e.g. work experience and voluntary work.



Interviews and tests



As you want to recruit the best person, you need to ensure that all candidates are able to demonstrate their capacity to do the job. Focus on the person's abilities, not on the person's SLD. If you have any doubts about a person's ability to do an intrinsic function of the job simply ask how they would do it.

When you invite applicants for an interview, make sure you ask all candidates if they require any accommodations to be made. With accommodations, the interview allows you to assess the ability of candidates who stammer. Ensure that reception and security staff know how to welcome and assist visitors who stammer.

A job interview can be the single most difficult speaking situation for someone who stammers. Their stammer may increase, particularly when the person is enthusiastic. As well as being under pressure, like every other applicant, a person who stammers has the added stress created by trying to get their point across while worrying about the interviewer's reactions. The person may unintentionally come across as reticent, hesitant or confused by pausing before words.

As stammering can vary depending on how the person and listener interact, it is useful to adopt the following communication tips:

- Listen to the person and allow them to finish what they are saying. Do not interrupt and/or attempt to finish their words or sentences. Give the person time to deal with speech blocks (when words are difficult to get out).
- Maintain eye contact as much as possible.
- Speak normally in a relaxed manner. If you speak quickly this may increase the applicant's stammering.
- Allow extra time for communication.

Remember that the interview situation is an artificial and tense environment. Once in post and after a proper induction, the individual is likely to stammer significantly less than in the interview.



In conjunction with the interview, written evidence could also be used as evidence of the person's competencies for the post.

Be careful if you use telephone interviews, as these may not allow someone who stammers a fair interview. Ask if the applicant is happy with a telephone interview and be prepared to offer an alternative interview process, for example a face-to-face interview.



If selection normally involves a test, be sure that it does not discriminate against someone who stammers:

- Discuss the test with the test publisher and seek guidance on possible accommodations.
- Consult candidates who stammer so that necessary accommodations can be made.
- Allow more time for an oral test if a person's stammer increases significantly under stress, or allow it to be in a written form.

If specific oral skills are required, e.g. public speaking or customer service, consider the applicant's work history in conjunction with the test for evidence of those skills.



Case Study 1 - Part 1



Ahmed and the interview process



Ahmed has recently applied for a job as a stock assistant in a large department store. Ahmed has a stammer and finds telephone conversations more difficult than speaking to someone face-to-face.

Ahmed receives an email telling him he has been successful in gaining an interview; however the interview is to take place over the telephone.



The email states that candidates should let the hiring manager know if they require any accommodations during the interview process.



Ahmed emails the hiring manager Abdul to ask if he could have a face-to-face interview instead as he finds it easier to speak to people in person because of his stammer.

Abdul replies to Ahmed saying he can come to the department store for a face-to-face interview instead and asks if he requires any additional accommodations.

Ahmed replies asking if he could have some more time at the interview so he can fully express himself and answer questions to the best of his ability.

Abdul replies saying this is fine and that the interview will not be timed.





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 someone who stammers has the same information about, for example, the organization's Health and Safety policies and procedures:

- Allow more time and greater flexibility for induction and training.
- Brief the trainer and training group on basic 'disability communication' – this will help to ensure the person who stammers can participate fully in any training as well as others. It should also generally improve communication between colleagues.
- Use the same basic etiquette as described in 'Interviews and tests' when the person is in post, i.e. listening to the person and allowing them to finish what they are saying, maintaining eye contact, etc.
- Ensure employees who stammer also have equal access to further in-house and external training, meetings and career development opportunities.

The employee may have valuable skills that you are unaware of or be able to develop skills and expertise in areas that you have not considered. Talk to the employee and encourage training and work opportunities in areas that the person may have previously avoided. For example, the employee may be reluctant to participate in meetings because of their stammer.

It may be necessary to help build the person's self-confidence for this task as part of their professional and personal development. Indeed, personal development and performance plans could include goals for improving important communication skills, in agreement with the employee. You could agree on certain tasks that can be monitored, for example, talking at meetings, greeting clients and company visitors, and giving in-house or external presentations.

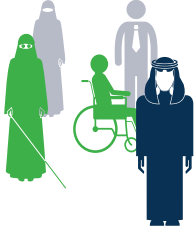


Further accommodations that you should consider include:

- Ensuring the employee has an opportunity to speak at meetings.
- Encouraging the employee to take part in meetings and give presentations.
- Encouraging the employee to arrive a few minutes early for meetings. This will enable time to relax and to slow their rate of speech.
- Allowing extra time in face-to-face meetings.
- Organizing a training course in communication skills or telephone skills for the employee.
- Sponsoring the employee for a speech course. This often increases fluency and has long-term gains in communication skills and confidence.
- If the person is to give a presentation, making sure they have the support and preparation they need in order to feel confident about their material.
- If an employee's preferred method of communicating is via email or writing then allow them to do this freely.



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 stammering, may be especially useful for the candidate’s team so they know best how to communicate with someone who stammers.

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.

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



Case Study 1 - Part 2



Ahmed and the interview process



Upon arriving at the interview, Abdul greets Ahmed at reception and shows him to the meeting room where the interview will take place.

During the interview, Abdul ensures that he maintains eye contact with Ahmed and doesn't interrupt him when he is speaking.

When Ahmed stammers over certain words, Abdul is patient and doesn't finish Ahmed's sentences or attempt to guess what Ahmed is trying to say.

When asking questions, Abdul does not ask Ahmed about his stammer and focuses on Ahmed's skills and experience gained from working in a department store in the past.



After the interview, Abdul emails Ahmed to let him know that his application has been successful.



Working arrangements to retain employees

Further accommodations to ensure the employee can work effectively include:

- Making sure the person has support and preparation time and is confident in undertaking a role.
- Reallocating minor or subsidiary duties, e.g. making or answering occasional phone calls.
- Awareness training for those who interact with the employee.

By investing in the development of employees who stammer you will gain as the person is able to contribute more to your organization. You may also benefit from more effective communication across the team as colleagues also learn valuable communication skills.

As good communication techniques are shared, you will also learn as an organization how to better serve customers who don't speak fluently or, for example, whose first language is not Arabic.

Telephone work

People who stammer usually have more difficulty on the telephone, as information is solely through verbal cues. Accommodations could include:

- Allowing extra time, particularly if there are targets for employees to speak to a certain number of clients in a specified time period.
- Using other forms of communication, e.g. email.
- Using a script for some key parts of a call or allowing time to prepare notes before the call.
- Modifying a script if one is used, e.g. in a call centre, so the employee can avoid certain words that are particularly difficult.



Harassment

A person who has a stammer may be particularly vulnerable to harassment from their colleagues. As an employer, you should take all reasonable steps to deal with harassment. Harassment includes not only physical or verbal abuse, but also anything which violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading humiliating or offensive environment.

Harassment stems from stereotyping, lack of understanding, intolerance of difference and fear. To prevent bullying and harassment of anyone you should ensure your organization has clear policies on workplace bullying and harassment and that complaints are investigated promptly and effectively. Ensure these policies are communicated across the organization through campaigns and awareness raising initiatives:

- Make it clear that any harassment, including on grounds of disability, will not be tolerated; and that offenders will be dealt with through the organization's disciplinary procedures.
- Ensure management understands that people who stammer experience increased risk of harassment, and provide training for line managers to help them to identify and manage incidents connected to bullying and harassment in the workplace.
- Make the employee aware of their right to equal treatment and their entitlement to make a complaint and to initiate a grievance.
- Allow employees access to support networks internally or externally from work. If possible ensure employees who have experienced bullying or harassment have access to professional and confidential counseling.



Case Study 2

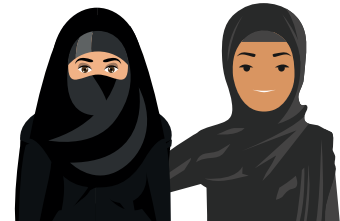


Nadia and workplace accommodations



Nadia has recently started a new job as a communications officer at a law firm. Nadia has had a stammer since she was five years old and often takes long pauses at the beginning of a sentence. Nadia rarely stammers when speaking to individuals or when using the telephone, however her stammer can become worse during meetings when she has to speak to large number of people.

Nadia's line manager Sara has noticed that Nadia appears anxious in the weekly team meeting and seems to avoid contributing even when it is her turn to update the team on her weekly activities.



During their weekly catch-up, Sara asks Nadia why she doesn't contribute more in team meetings. Nadia explains to Sara that she has a stammer and that this makes it difficult for her to contribute in larger meetings.

After exploring all of the issues, Sara and Nadia agree on a few simple accommodations that might make it easier for Nadia to contribute:

- As the Chair of the meeting, Sara will ask Nadia to give her update first so that she has less time to feel anxious about contributing key information.
- When Nadia wants to say something during the course of the meeting, she will notify Sara by raising her hand slightly and Sara will invite her to join the discussion.

In addition to these accommodations, Sara asks Nadia if she might feel less anxious about contributing to the meetings if her team mates knew about her stammer. Nadia thinks that this would help and it is agreed that Sara will let colleagues know prior to the next team meeting.



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;



- 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-to-work 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



Ministry of Labor
and Social Development
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Definition of disability by the Ministry of Labor and Social Development

Who is a person with 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 persons with disabilities 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 organisations listed are not necessarily endorsed by HRDF.

▲ Jeddah Institute for Speech and Hearing

The Jeddah Institute for Speech and Hearing (JISH) is a not-for-profit institution, devoted to speech-language and hearing service delivery.

Tel. +966 12 667 5311

Fax. +966 12 667 5233

Web. www.jish.com

Service Region Region 2



▲ **King Salman Center for Disability Research**

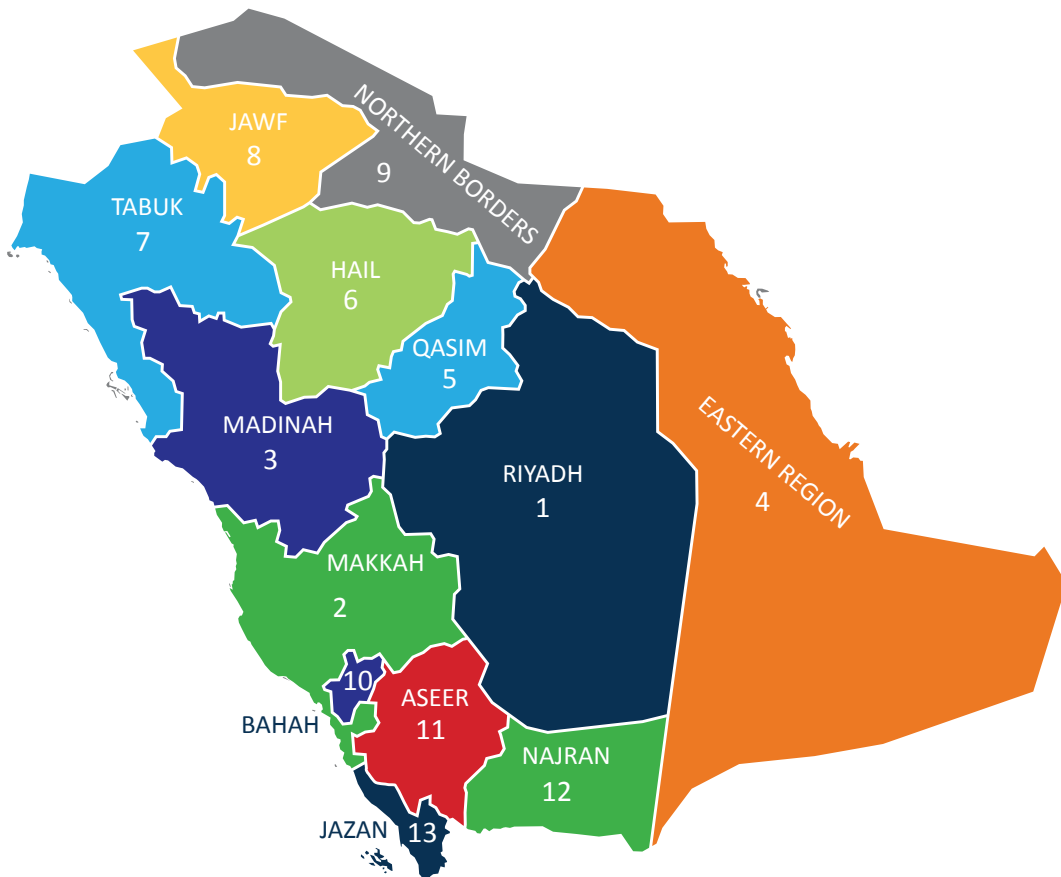
Research, lectures, programs and conferences relating to disability issues.

Tel. +966 11 488 4401
Fax. +966 11 482 6164
Web. www.kscdr.org.sa
Service Region Region 1-13

▲ **Business Disability Network (Qaderoon)**

Provides guidance, advice, training and best practice to employers to recruit, retain and include employees with disabilities through inclusive work environments.

Tel. +966 11 698 6116
Web. www.qaderoon.sa
Email. info@qaderoon.sa
Service Region Region 1-13





▲ World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)

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

Web. www.w3.org
Service Region International

▲ 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

▲ 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 Region International



Collaborative Partners

HRDF welcome feedback on this job accommodations guide from interested individuals, organisations 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 August 1st, 2017



