



Functional Limitations

Disability Law Colorado (DLC) recognizes that the language used in DVR's policies is outdated and based on a medical model of disability. This language comes from federal laws and regulations that DVR is required to follow. While DLC does not support or agree with the use of this language, we have chosen to use it here because it is the language used in DVR policy and by DVR staff. Understanding this language can help DVR clients better advocate for themselves and for the services they need.

1. Communication

Communication is how a person shares and understands information. This can include speaking, listening, reading, writing, sign language, or using assistive technology.

A serious functional limitation in communication exists when a disability makes it hard for someone to communicate well enough to prepare for, get, keep, or move forward in a job without major services or accommodations.

Communication limitations can affect a person's ability to:

- Understand instructions from a supervisor or coworker
- Follow new directions or procedures
- Ask questions or get clarification
- Share information verbally or in writing
- Use the phone, email, or other common ways of communicating

People with communication limitations may need interpreters, assistive technology, or other supports.

Some examples of communication needs that can impact a person's job are:

- Needing speech reading, sign language, real-time captioning, written notes, or visual cues to understand spoken language
- Needing information in formats other than standard print (audio, Braille, large print) or need assistive technology to read
- Needing a phone with special equipment or services such as TTY, relay services, or other assistive devices
- Needing accommodations to read or write
- Needing help in understanding tone, inflection, or meaning in spoken language
- Needing adaptive technology or other modifications to communicate

2. Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills are a person's ability to interact with others and maintain relationships at work and in the community.

A serious functional limitation in interpersonal skills exists when a disability causes ongoing problems with social interactions that affect job performance or job stability, and the person needs substantial services or accommodations to work.

Interpersonal limitations may show up as:

- Ongoing conflict with others
- Social isolation or withdrawal
- Difficulty working with coworkers or supervisors
- Anxiety, suspicion, anger, or aggressive behavior

A person may have a serious interpersonal limitation if they:

- Have trouble understanding or respecting social rules or personal boundaries
 - Have difficulty seeing others' perspectives or working cooperatively
 - Have repeated problems that lead to discipline, conflict, or exclusion at work, school, home, or in the community
 - Avoid social interaction or isolate themselves most of the time
 - Experience extreme anxiety, suspicion, anger, or aggression
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3. Mobility

Mobility is a person's ability to move from place to place, both inside and outside the home.

A serious functional limitation of mobility exists when a disability makes it hard to travel to work, move around at work, or attend job-related activities without major services or accommodations.

Mobility limitations can affect:

- Traveling between home and work
- Using public or private transportation
- Moving around the workplace
- Attending meetings, training, or job-related travel

A person may have a serious mobility limitation if they:

- Have significant difficulty standing, walking, or keeping balance
- Cannot use public transportation
- Need a personal assistant to get around in the community
- Need specialized transportation, vehicle modifications, or adaptive driving equipment

- Use a wheelchair, prosthetic, service animal, or other mobility devices or need special training to move safely
 - Need help adjusting to changes in travel routes or transportation methods
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4. Self-Care

Self-care is a person's ability to take care of daily personal needs so they can participate in work.

A serious functional limitation in self-care exists when a disability makes it hard for someone to manage daily activities that would make it harder to work without significant help or accommodations.

Self-care activities include:

- Bathing
- Using the bathroom
- Dressing
- Eating and preparing meals
- Taking medications
- Managing daily routines and safety

A person may have a serious self-care limitation if they:

- Need help or accommodations to follow or adjust a daily schedule
 - Need assistance with personal care tasks such as bathing, dressing, eating, or medications
 - Need help staying safe, responding to emergencies, or participating in workplace evacuations
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5. Cognition and Learning (Self-Direction)

Cognition and learning (self-direction) is a person's ability to plan, learn, remember, problem- solve, organize tasks, and make decisions independently.

A serious functional limitation in cognition and learning exists when a disability makes it hard to manage these skills without major services or accommodations in order to work.

This can affect a person's ability to:

- Follow instructions
- Remember information
- Solve problems

- Organize tasks Learn new skills
- Judge whether work is done correctly

A person may have a serious limitation if they:

- Cannot follow instructions, concentrate, remember, or complete tasks
- Cannot independently solve problems or make decisions
- Act impulsively or are easily distracted
- Cannot plan or organize tasks on their own
- Need constant or near-constant help to make decisions, stay focused, or complete tasks
- Need intensive or specialized training to learn or keep new skills
- Cannot tell if their work is correct
- Cannot learn or perform basic reading, writing, spelling, or math skills

6. Work Skills

Work skills are a person's ability to perform the tasks needed to do a job. A serious functional limitation in work skills exists when a disability makes it hard to perform job tasks without significant services, supports, or accommodations.

A person may have a serious work skills limitation if they:

- Have difficulty with physical tasks that require strength, coordination, speed, or precision (such as grasping, writing, typing, pushing, or pulling)
- Need specialized teaching methods, repeated instruction, prompts, or adaptive technology to perform tasks
- Need much more supervision or support than others with similar education or experience
- Have a history of job loss related to disability-related work habits (attendance, punctuality, following instructions, etc.)

7. Work Tolerance

Work tolerance is a person's ability to handle the physical and mental demands of a job, including how long they can work and under what conditions.

A serious functional limitation in work tolerance exists when a disability affects stamina, endurance, or the ability to handle normal work conditions without major accommodations.

Work tolerance can include:

- Length of the workday Ability to work continuously Need for breaks Ability to sit,
- stand, lift, or move Ability to tolerate noise, temperature, chemicals, or other
- environmental conditions
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Work tolerance limitations are related to fatigue or physical/mental endurance, not learning or thinking skills.

A person may have a serious work tolerance limitation if they:

- Need a flexible schedule, extra breaks, or job modifications due to their disability or medication side effects
- Need assistive or rehabilitation technology to manage stamina or endurance
- Cannot keep up with required work pace or quality over a full work shift
- Have serious difficulty sitting, standing, bending, reaching, or lifting
- Have strong negative reactions to environmental conditions like heat, cold, chemicals, or scents
- Cannot sustain attention or concentration for long periods