

JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

Accommodation and Compliance Series

Accommodation and Compliance Series: Employees with Anxiety Disorder

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Funded by a contract with the Office of Disability
Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor

Preface

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is funded by a contract with the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor. JAN makes documents available with the understanding that the information be used solely for educational purposes. The information is not intended to be legal or medical advice. If legal or medical advice is needed, appropriate legal or medical services should be contacted.

JAN does not endorse or recommend any products or services mentioned in this publication. Although every effort is made to update resources, JAN encourages contacting product manufacturers/vendors and service providers directly to ensure that they meet the intended purposes. This guarantees that the most up-to-date information is obtained.

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Updated 01/24/2019.

JAN'S Accommodation and Compliance Series

Introduction

JAN's Accommodation and Compliance Series is designed to help employers determine effective accommodations and comply with Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Each publication in the series addresses a specific medical condition and provides information about the condition, ADA information, accommodation ideas, and resources for additional information.

The Accommodation and Compliance Series is a starting point in the accommodation process and may not address every situation. Accommodations should be made on a case by case basis, considering each employee's individual limitations and accommodation needs. Employers are encouraged to contact JAN to discuss specific situations in more detail.

For information on assistive technology and other accommodation ideas, visit JAN's Searchable Online Accommodation Resource (SOAR) at <https://askjan.org/soar>.

Information about Anxiety Disorder

Anxiety disorders affect millions of American adults. These disorders include generalized anxiety disorder, acute stress disorder, substance-induced anxiety disorder, anxiety disorder due to a general medical condition, anxiety disorder not otherwise specified, panic disorder with or without agoraphobia, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, social phobia, and specific phobias. Anxiety disorders are clinically distinct from transitional anxiety experienced during events such as a wedding, moving into a new home, dealing with the illness or death of a loved one, or beginning a new job. Individuals with anxiety disorders may experience feelings of panic; extreme physical, mental, or emotional stress; and intense fear. Due to the highly individualized nature of mental health impairments, symptoms can present in numerous ways and significantly impact the functionality of individuals with Anxiety Disorders.

Anxiety Disorder and the Americans with Disabilities Act

The ADA does not contain a list of medical conditions that constitute disabilities. Instead, the ADA has a general definition of disability that each person must meet. A person has a disability if he/she has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having an impairment. For more information about how to determine whether a person has a disability under the ADA, see [How to Determine Whether a Person Has a Disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act \(ADAAA\)](#).

Accommodating Employees with Anxiety Disorder

People with anxiety may develop some of the limitations discussed below, but seldom develop all of them. Also, the degree of limitation will vary among individuals. Be aware that not all people with anxiety will need accommodations to perform their jobs and many others may only need a few accommodations. The following is only a sample of the possibilities available. Numerous other accommodation solutions may exist.

Questions to Consider:

1. What limitations is the employee experiencing?
2. How do these limitations affect the employee and the employee's job performance?
3. What specific job tasks are problematic as a result of these limitations?
4. What accommodations are available to reduce or eliminate these problems? Are all possible resources being used to determine possible accommodations?
5. Has the employee been consulted regarding possible accommodations?
6. Once accommodations are in place, would it be useful to meet with the employee to evaluate the effectiveness of the accommodations and to determine whether additional accommodations are needed?
7. Do supervisory personnel and employees need training?

Accommodation Ideas:

Limitations

Attentiveness/Concentration

- Alternative Lighting
- Applications (apps)
- Apps for Memory
- Behavior Modification Techniques
- Cubicle Doors, Shields, and Shades
- Electronic Organizers
- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
- Flexible Schedule
- Full Spectrum or Natural Lighting Products

- Job Coaches
- Job Restructuring
- Marginal Functions
- Modified Break Schedule
- Noise Canceling Headsets
- Sound Absorption and Sound Proof Panels
- Task Separation
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Timers and Watches
- Uninterrupted "Off" Work Time
- Verbal Cues
- Wall Calendars and Planners
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace
- Written Instructions

Executive Functioning Deficits

- Apps for Concentration
- Checklists
- Color Coded System
- Cubicle Doors, Shields, and Shades
- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
- Job Coaches
- Job Restructuring
- Marginal Functions
- Modified Break Schedule
- Noise Canceling Headsets
- Recorded Directives, Messages, Materials
- Sound Absorption and Sound Proof Panels
- Timers and Watches
- Wall Calendars and Planners
- Written Instructions

ringing in the Ears

- Cubicle Doors, Shields, and Shades
- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
- Hearing Protection
- Noise Abatement
- Noise Canceling Earbuds
- Noise Canceling Headsets
- Real-time and Off-line Captioning Services
- Sound Absorption and Sound Proof Panels

Stress Intolerance

- Apps for Anxiety and Stress
- Behavior Modification Techniques
- Counseling/Therapy
- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
- Flexible Schedule
- Job Restructuring
- Marginal Functions
- Modified Break Schedule
- Supervisory Methods
- Support Animal
- Support Person

Take Medication

- Additional Training Time / Training Refreshers
- Flexible Schedule
- Medication Reminders
- Policy Modification
- Reminders
- Rest Area/Private Space
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

- Verbal Cues
- Voice Recorders

Work-Related Functions

Policies

- Additional Training Time / Training Refreshers
- Aide/Assistant/Attendant
- Flexible Schedule
- Marginal Functions
- Modified Break Schedule
- Periodic Rest Breaks
- Policy Modification
- Reassignment
- Service Animal
- Supervisory Methods
- Support Animal
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

Stress

- Apps for Anxiety and Stress
- Behavior Modification Techniques
- Counseling/Therapy
- Flexible Schedule
- Job Restructuring
- Marginal Functions
- Modified Break Schedule
- Monitor Mirrors
- On-site Mentoring
- Service Animal
- Simulated Skylights and Windows
- Supervisory Methods
- Support Animal

- Support Person
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Uninterrupted Work Time

Situations and Solutions:

A large metropolitan police department employed a records specialist who was finding it increasingly difficult to complete the essential functions of his position.

The increase in violent crime over the last several years had taken a toll on the employee, causing increased anxiety, stress, and emotional breakdowns. Attendance was also becoming an issue. When the employee discussed his options for reasonable accommodation with his supervisor, he was pleased to discover several open positions he was qualified for that would take him out of the particular area that was causing his mental health condition to deteriorate.

A food service worker with an anxiety disorder works in the kitchen of a restaurant, helping with food preparation and cleaning.

She is able to perform all of her essential functions, but she tends to talk to her co-workers incessantly about her personal issues to the point that other employees complain to management. A manager talks with the food service worker about her conduct and explains that it is interfering with work and making coworkers uncomfortable. The employee is a client of a mental health agency and offers to talk with her service coordinator about getting a job coach. The job coach teaches the employee how to talk with coworkers about impersonal topics (like the weather) and how to focus conversations on work tasks she and coworkers are performing. The job coach then helps the employee apply the new skills directly on the job and is able to fade out direct involvement after a couple of months.

Phillipe travels in person to the HR department of a prospective employer in order to pick up an application for employment to take home and complete.

He is told that the application cannot leave the building. Phillipe may need to disclose and ask for a change in policy as an accommodation if the employer does not have an online application process that could be completed at home. Phillipe feels that his anxiety level will escalate and be disruptive to the process if he is required to complete the application in the office setting.

A postal employee with PTSD requested accommodations to help him deal with recurring flashbacks.

His flashbacks were triggered by the smell of gasoline and the noise from the mail truck. The employee tried wearing a respirator to give him a clean air supply. He also tried wearing headphones to reduce the noise from the truck, but he still experienced stress and edginess. JAN suggested a position transfer as an accommodation. JAN also suggested allowing this employee to take a break when he experiences extreme anxiety and allow him to use relaxation and visualization techniques in a private space on the job.

Jude, an applicant with a depression and anxiety, is applying for a customer service position that requires a pre-employment test.

Due to medication that Jude takes for both conditions, his processing speed is a bit

slower. He feels he can only do his best on the test if he has the accommodations of extended time as well as taking the test in a private location to help limit distractions. In order for the employer to even consider those accommodations, the employee will need to disclose the mental health impairments and be prepared to provide medical documentation.

A driver with seasonal affective disorder (SAD) who picks up and delivers clients to various appointments began to forget waiting clients as well as the routes she needed to travel in order to deliver them to the appropriate facility.

When her employer mentioned the mistakes, the driver broke down. She described her depression and anxiety with the change of seasons and how it affected her memory. The use of reminder apps, as well as those to help with directions, were discussed as possible accommodation solutions.

A secretary with PTSD, who had been carjacked several years earlier, experienced significant anxiety during commutes after dark.

This caused difficulty concentrating and irritability. She was accommodated with the ability to have a support animal at work and a flexible schedule with work from home during periods of minimal sunlight.

A counselor with PTSD needed to use a service dog at work to decrease his anxiety.

Even as a veteran, his employer was concerned about having a dog present when clients were being counseled. The employer allowed the use of the service dog, but provided a separate area for the dog to stay in during counseling sessions with clients.

A customer service representative working in a call center was experiencing limitations associated with generalized anxiety disorder and depression.

He began treatment with a new healthcare provider who adjusted his medications and recommended bi-weekly counseling sessions for one month. He exhausted his accrued paid sick leave but was FMLA eligible. He applied FMLA leave intermittently in order to attend counseling appointments.

A veteran returned to his civilian job as a manager of sales for a small employer.

While in the service, he sustained a TBI. His employer had upgraded the office computer system and the veteran had trouble using the new computer system, causing him stress and anxiety. The employer allowed the veteran time for training to learn the new computer system.

An insurance agency employee with multiple sclerosis and anxiety requested that the employer permit her to use a service dog on the job for mobility and stress reduction.

The employer agreed to allow the employee to bring her service animal to work, provided training to staff on service animals as workplace accommodations, and installed new doors that were easier for the individual to open.

A vocational school teacher with PTSD requested accommodations due to anxiety and flashbacks.

She taught in a building separated from the main school, and she had difficulty dealing with large classrooms of unruly students. As an accommodation, JAN suggested training the teacher on special behavior management techniques and providing administrative support for student disciplinary actions. The school also provided the teacher a two-way radio, which allowed her to contact an administrator quickly when she needed immediate assistance in her classroom.

A professor with autism spectrum disorder had difficulty keeping daily office hours and experienced anxiety because the timing of students' consultations was unpredictable.

JAN suggested modifying the schedule as an accommodation, for example the professor could reduce the number of days he has office hours, but have more office hours on those days. JAN also suggested adjusting the method by which students obtain appointments, asking students to schedule at least one day in advance and when possible, allow the professor to conduct consultations electronically, by phone, or by instant messenger. In addition, JAN suggested documenting each student consultation to ease the professor's anxiety about the meeting and to refresh his memory about previous meetings with the student.

A prison guard, recently attacked by an inmate, has PTSD and anxiety.

The prison guard was fearful of returning to the worksite, even to discuss her return-to-work options. A JAN consultant offered the following suggestions: allow the employee to bring a support person or support animal to the meeting, move the meeting to an alternative location, or allow the employee to attend the meeting via telephone.

An employer was notified that the only supervisor he had in a particular department had a phobia towards a specific group of people.

The supervisor asked to be excused from supervising a new employee from this people group. Since she was the only supervisor in that area, the employer could not remove the duty or give it to another. By attending the meetings himself with the supervisor and this particular employee, the employer was able to reduce the anxiety the supervisor was feeling and eventually enable her to meet with the person (and others) without the extra support.

An employer, trying to accommodate an employee returning to work after a leave, had questions about the stress of required travel that escalated the employee's depression and anxiety.

The employer was advised to continue on in the interactive process to discover what specifically about the travel was stressful so they could determine accommodations for those identified issues. Examples of questions to ask could include what particularly about the travel causes the stress that heightens the depression, such as the length of the travel, the distance, the planning process, or even specific modes of travel and/or locations.

An administrative assistant with PTSD works at a museum, which is currently under construction.

Construction workers, who were strangers, caused the employee extreme anxiety. As

an accommodation, a JAN consultant suggested temporarily relocating the employee's work space away from the construction area. The museum also developed an ID badge for construction workers and required them to sign in at their job locations.

A retail manager who travels a fair distance in rush hour traffic asked to be reassigned to a location near her home where she could commute on less traveled local roads that would cause her much less anxiety.

Her request was denied because there were no openings in the store closest to her, and her position in her current location was needed there. She was given the choice of a schedule change as an accommodation so that she could arrive slightly before / after the rush hour.

An employee with anxiety and a driving phobia takes public transportation to work.

After a company restructure, the employee was moved to work in a new location that would necessitate a lengthy commute involving two buses and a train. She disclosed her disability and asked for accommodations. She was accommodated by remaining at her current location, with a change in supervisor to the one who would oversee the employees in that location. Although her current supervisor was going to the new location, her job would remain the same.

A veteran who is now an office employee has PTSD and anxiety.

He is easily frightened when being approached unsuspectingly. This employee works in a structured cubicle environment facing his computer and cubicle walls, with his back to the cubicle entrance. He wants to be alerted when a coworker or supervisor walks into the cubicle behind him. JAN suggested using a monitor-mounted mirror, so he could see the entrance behind him. JAN also suggested placing a sensor mat at the entrance of the cubicle, which will make an audible alert when someone steps on it.

Products

There are numerous products that can be used to accommodate people with limitations. JAN's Searchable Online Accommodation Resource at <https://askjan.org/soar> is designed to let users explore various accommodation options. Many product vendor lists are accessible through this system; however, JAN provides these lists and many more that are not available on the Web site upon request. Contact JAN directly if you have specific accommodation situations, are looking for products, need vendor information, or are seeking a referral.

Resources

Job Accommodation Network

West Virginia University
PO Box 6080
Morgantown, WV 26506-6080
Toll Free: (800) 526-7234
TTY: (304) 293-7186
Fax: (304) 293-5407
jan@askjan.org
<http://AskJAN.org>

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is a free consulting service that provides information about job accommodations, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the employability of people with disabilities.

Office of Disability Employment Policy

200 Constitution Avenue,
NW, Room S-1303
Washington, DC 20210
Toll Free: (866) 633-7365
odep@dol.gov
<http://dol.gov/odep>

The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) is an agency within the U.S. Department of Labor. ODEP provides national leadership to increase employment opportunities for adults and youth with disabilities while striving to eliminate barriers to employment.

American Psychiatric Association

1000 Wilson Blvd
Suite 1825
Arlington, VA 22209-3901
Toll Free: (888) 357-7924
Direct: (703) 907-7300
apa@psych.org
<http://www.psych.org>

The American Psychiatric Association is an organization of psychiatrists working together to ensure humane care and effective treatment for all persons with mental illness, including substance use disorders. It is the voice and conscience of modern psychiatry. Its vision is a society that has available, accessible quality psychiatric diagnosis and treatment.

American Psychological Association

750 First Street NE
Washington, DC 20002
Toll Free: (800) 374-2721
Direct: (202) 336-5500
<http://www.apa.org/>

Our mission is to advance the creation, communication and application of psychological knowledge to benefit society and improve people's lives.

American Tinnitus Association

522 S.W. Fifth Avenue
Suite 825
Portland, OR 97204
Toll Free: (800) 634-8978
Direct: (503) 248-9985
Fax: (503) 248-0024
tinnitus@ata.org
<http://www.ata.org>

Strives to silence tinnitus through education, advocacy, research, and support. This nonprofit organization provides the latest information and resources to tinnitus patients,

promotes tinnitus awareness to the general public and the medical community, and funds the nation's brightest tinnitus researchers.

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

8701 Georgia Ave.
Suite #412
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Direct: (240) 485-1001
Fax: (240) 485-1035
<http://www.adaa.org/>

ADAA is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to the prevention, treatment, and cure of anxiety and mood disorders, OCD, and PTSD and to improving the lives of all people who suffer from them through education, practice, and research.

Anxiety Disorders Association of America

8701 Georgia Avenue
Suite 412
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Direct: (240) 485-1001
Fax: (240) 485-1035
<http://www.adaa.org>

Resources for clinicians, researchers and other treatment providers in all disciplines. Resources for anxiety disorder sufferers, family members, and other interested parties. Fast facts, statistics, news releases and more for media professionals. Search for treatment providers near you.

Brain & Behavior Research Foundation

90 Park Avenue,
16th Floor
New York, NY 10016
Toll Free: (800) 829-8289
Direct: (646) 681-4888
info@bbrfoundation.org
<https://bbrfoundation.org/>

The Brain & Behavior Research Foundation is committed to alleviating the suffering caused by mental illness by awarding grants that will lead to advances and breakthroughs in scientific research.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Rd
Atlanta, GA 30333
Toll Free: (800) 232-4636
<http://www.cdc.gov>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are dedicated to protecting the health and safety of people - at home and abroad, providing credible information to enhance health decisions, and promoting health through strong partnerships.

Freedom From Fear

308 Seaview Avenue
Staten Island, NY 10305
Direct: (718) 351-1717
help@freedomfromfear.org
<http://www.freedomfromfear.org/>

Freedom From Fear is a national not-for-profit mental health advocacy association. The mission of FFF is to impact, in a positive way, the lives of all those affected by anxiety, depressive and related disorders through advocacy, education, research and community support.

Mayo Clinic

13400 E. Shea Blvd.
Scottsdale, AZ 85259
Direct: (480) 301-8000
<http://www.mayoclinic.org/>

The Mayo Clinic's mission to inspire hope and contribute to health and well-being by providing the best care to every patient through integrated clinical practice, education and research.

MedlinePlus

8600 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20894
custserv@nlm.nih.gov
<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/>

MedlinePlus is the National Institutes of Health's Web site for patients and their families and friends. Produced by the National Library of Medicine, the world's largest medical library, it brings you information about diseases, conditions, and wellness issues in language you can understand. MedlinePlus offers reliable, up-to-date health information, anytime, anywhere, for free.

Created by the U.S. National Library of Medicine

Mental Health America

500 Montgomery Street
Suite 820
Alexandria, VA 22314
Toll Free: (800) 969-6642
Direct: (703) 684-7722
Fax: (703) 684-5968
<http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/>

Mental Health America (MHA) – founded in 1909 – is the nation's leading community-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness and to promoting the overall mental health of all Americans. Our work is driven by our commitment to promote mental health as a critical part of overall wellness, including

prevention services for all, early identification and intervention for those at risk, and integrated care and treatment for those who need it, with recovery as the goal.

National Alliance on Mental Illness

3803 N. Fairfax Dr.,
Ste. 100
Arlington, VA 22203
Toll Free: (800) 950-6264
Direct: (703) 524-7600
<http://www.nami.org>

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. NAMI advocates for access to services, treatment, supports and research and is steadfast in its commitment to raise awareness and build a community for hope for all those in need.

National Center for Biotechnology Information

8600 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20894
pubmedcentral@ncbi.nlm.nih.gov
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>

MISSION: IMS brings together an international community of health care professionals, researchers, educators, and others to improve care and transform delivery of treatment to those suffering from soft tissue pain through the promotion and exchange of globally recognized research, education, and innovation in patient care.

National Fibromyalgia & Chronic Pain Association

31 Federal Avenue
Logan, UT 84321
Toll Free: (801) 200-3627
info@fmcpaware.org
<http://www.fmcpaware.org/>

The National Fibromyalgia & Chronic Pain Association (NFMCPA) is a 501(c)3 not for profit organization. We support people with chronic pain illnesses and their families and friends by contributing to caring, professional, and community relationships. Through continuing education, networking with support groups and advocates, and affiliation with professional organizations, the members of the NFMCPA have a place to be informed, get involved, and recognize achievements.

National Institute of Mental Health

6001 Executive Boulevard
Rockville, MD 20852
Toll Free: (866) 615-6464
Direct: (301) 443-4513
Fax: (301) 443-4279
nimhinfo@nih.gov
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

NIMH offers a variety of publications and other educational resources to help people with mental disorders, the general public, mental health and health care practitioners, and researchers gain a better understanding of mental illnesses and the research programs of the NIMH. All publications and educational materials are written by science writers, in collaboration with NIMH scientists and outside reviewers.

National Jewish Health

1400 Jackson Street
Denver, CO 80206
Toll Free: (877) 225-5654
Direct: (303) 388-4461
<http://www.nationaljewish.org/>

National Jewish Health is known worldwide for treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders, and for groundbreaking medical research. Founded in 1899 as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health remains the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to these disorders. *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked National Jewish Health as the number one or number two hospital in pulmonology on its Best Hospitals list ever since pulmonology was included in the rankings.

Office on Women's Health

Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW Room 712E
Washington, DC 20201
Toll Free: (800) 994-9662
Direct: (202) 690-7650
Fax: (202) 205-2631
<http://www.womenshealth.gov/>

The Office on Women's Health (OWH), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), works to improve the health and sense of well-being of all U.S. women and girls. OWH serves as the focal point for women's health activities across HHS offices and agencies and leads HHS efforts to ensure that all women and girls achieve the best possible health.

Remedy's Health Communities

<http://www.healthcommunities.com>

Remedy Health Media is America's fastest growing health information and technology company. We are a leading provider of clinical resources and wellness tools that help millions of patients and caregivers live healthier, more fulfilled lives.

Our mission is to empower patients and caregivers with the information and applications needed to efficiently navigate the healthcare landscape and as a result, to permit better health outcomes through use of our products and services.

The Environmental Illness Resource

162 Bramham Drive
Oakdale Court
Harrogate, North Yorkshire, England HG3 2-2UB
Toll Free: (441) 423-528055
support@ei-resource.org
<http://www.ei-resource.org/>

The Environmental Illness Resource seeks to provide those with environmental illnesses with information of the highest quality in the hope that this will lead to improved

quality of life and perhaps even recovery of good health. In addition, to provide a free and open online community in which members may exchange information between themselves and support each other in their healing journeys.

Tourette Syndrome "Plus"

940 Lincoln Place

North Bellmore, NY 11701-1016

Direct: (516) 785-2653

admin@tourettesyndrome.net

<http://www.tourettesyndrome.net/>

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