

JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

Accommodation and Compliance Series

Accommodation and Compliance Series: Employees with Back Impairments

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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 Back Impairment

Back injuries account for many of the musculoskeletal disorders in the workplace. The major symptom of most back impairments is back pain, which can be localized or widespread radiating from a central point in the back. If ligaments and muscles are weak then discs in the lower back can become weakened. With excessive lifting, or a sudden fall, a disc can rupture. With years of back abuse, or with aging, the discs may simply wear out and a person may live with chronic pain for several years. However, back pain caused by a muscle strain or a ligament sprain will normally heal within a short time and may never cause further problems. Poor physical condition, poor posture, lack of exercise, and excessive body weight contribute to the number and severity of sprains and strains. Degeneration of the spine, due to aging, is also a major contributor to back pain.

Back Impairment 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 Back Impairment

People with back impairments 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 back impairments 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

Carrying

- Healthcare
 - Adjustable Exam Tables
 - Patient Lifts (General)
 - Transfer Aids
 - Transfer Sheets
- Industrial
 - Aerial Lifts
 - Ball Transfer Tables
 - Carts

- Compact Material Handling
- Compact Mobile Cranes
- Lightweight Ladders
- Stairclimbing Handtrucks
- Truck Mounted Cranes
- Vacuum Lifts
- Winches and Chain Hoists
- Other
 - Accessories for Scooters
 - Ergonomic Equipment
 - Evacuation Devices
 - Independent Living Aids
 - Lift Gates
 - Lifting Aids
 - Modified Break Schedule
 - Periodic Rest Breaks
 - Walk-up Changing Tables
 - Wheelchair Accessories

Climbing

- Aerial Lifts
- Compact Ladders
- Elevators
- Evacuation Devices
- Extended Tractor Steps
- Folding Steps
- Ladders (General)
- Large-Rated Ladders
- Large-Rated Small Step Ladders
- Large-Rated Wheelchair Lifts
- Lightweight Ladders
- Rolling Safety Ladders

- Stair Assists
- Stair Lifts

Decreased Stamina/Fatigue

- Aide/Assistant/Attendant
- Anti-fatigue Matting
- Elevating Wheelchairs
- Ergonomic Assessments
- Ergonomic Equipment
- Flexible Schedule
- Job Restructuring
- Periodic Rest Breaks
- Scooters
- Stand-lean Stools
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Walkers
- Wearable Anti-fatigue Matting
- Wheelchairs
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace

Lifting

- Agriculture/Farm
 - Animal Lift Tables
 - Carts
 - Compact Mobile Cranes
- Industrial
 - Aerial Lifts
 - Ball Transfer Tables
 - Battery Powered Lift Tables
 - Drum Handling
 - Engine Lifts and Lift Plates
 - Lift Gates

- Lift Tables
- Rolling Safety Ladders
- Stairclimbing Handtrucks
- Truck Mounted Cranes
- Vacuum Lifts
- Vehicle Lifts and Manipulators
- Winches and Chain Hoists
- Work Platforms
- Office or Retail Goods
 - Carts
 - Compact Material Handling
 - Ergonomic Assessments
 - Ergonomic Equipment
 - Height Adjustable Table Legs
 - Low Task Chair
 - Stairclimbing Handtrucks
- Other
 - Drywall and Wallboard Lifts
 - Ergonomic Equipment
 - Independent Living Aids
 - Job Restructuring
 - Lifters and Carriers for Mobility Aids
 - Lifting Aids
 - Manhole Cover Lifts
 - Periodic Rest Breaks
 - Power Lift IV Stands
 - Proper Lifting Techniques
- People
 - Accessible Baby Changing Stations
 - Adjustable Exam Tables
 - Adult Changing Tables

Pain

- Bath Chairs
 - Evacuation Devices
 - Large-Rated Wheelchair Lifts
 - Patient Lifts (General)
- Industrial
 - Adjustable Workstations for Industrial Settings
 - Anti-fatigue Matting
 - Anti-vibration Gloves
 - Anti-vibration Seats
 - Anti-vibration Tool Wraps
 - Carts
 - Ergonomic Assessments
 - Ergonomic Equipment
 - Fans
 - Stand-lean Stools
 - Wearable Anti-fatigue Matting
 - Workstation Space Heaters
 - Office Equipment
 - Adjustable Workstations for Office Settings
 - Alternative Keyboards
 - Alternative Mice
 - Anti-fatigue Matting
 - Automatic Door Openers
 - Carts
 - Chairs with Head Support
 - Compact Material Handling
 - Ergonomic and Adjustable Office Chairs
 - Ergonomic Assessments
 - Ergonomic Equipment
 - Fans

- Forearm Supports
- Gooseneck and Other Telephone Holders
- Headsets
- Scribe/Notetaker
- Scooters
- Speech Recognition Software
- Stand-lean Stools
- Supine Workstations
- Wearable Anti-fatigue Matting
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace
- Workstation Space Heaters
- Writing Aids
- Other
 - Aide/Assistant/Attendant
 - Flexible Schedule
 - Modified Break Schedule
 - Service Animal
 - Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

Pushing/Pulling

- Automated Filing Systems
- Automatic Door Openers
- Ball Transfer Tables
- Cart Dumpers
- Carts
- Compact Material Handling
- Ergonomic and Pneumatic Tools
- Ergonomic Equipment
- Janitorial Carts
- Lift Tables
- Linen Carts
- Motorized Carts

- Multi-Purpose Carts
- Patient Lifts (General)
- Power Assist for Manual Wheelchairs
- Stairclimbing Handtrucks
- Tool Balancers
- Vacuum Lifts
- Wheelchair Push Bars
- Wheelchair Push Extension Handles
- Wheelchair Pushers

Sitting

- Adjustable Pedicure Chairs
- Adjustable Workstations for Industrial Settings
- Adjustable Workstations for Office Settings
- Chairs and Stools for Medical Services
- Clean Room Stools
- Ergonomic and Adjustable Office Chairs
- Ergonomic Assessments
- Ergonomic Equipment
- Forward Leaning Chairs
- Headsets
- Large-Rated Chairs
- Low Task Chair
- Periodic Rest Breaks
- Stand-lean Stools
- Supine Workstations
- Treadmill / Pedal Workstations

Walking

- Aide/Assistant/Attendant
- All-Terrain Scooters
- All-Terrain Wheelchairs

- Anti-fatigue Matting
- Foldable / Transport Wheelchairs
- Large-Rated Scooters
- Large-Rated Wheelchairs
- Personal Transportation and Mobility Products
- Reclining Wheelchairs
- Rollators and Rolling Walkers
- Scooters
- Scooters for Small Stature
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Walkers
- Walkers for Tall Individuals
- Walkers with Seats
- Wearable Anti-fatigue Matting
- Wheelchairs
- Wheelchairs for Small Stature
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace

Work-Related Functions

Move Items/People

- Adjustable Exam Tables
- Aerial Lifts
- Animal Lift Tables
- Ball Transfer Tables
- Battery Powered Lift Tables
- Carts
- Compact Material Handling
- Compact Mobile Cranes
- Lifting Aids
- Multi-Purpose Carts
- Proper Lifting Techniques

- Vacuum Lifts
- Vacuum Pickup Tools
- Walk-up Changing Tables

Parking

- Accessible Parking Space
- Flexible Schedule
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Wheelchairs

Work Site Access

- Accessible Toilets and Toilet Seats
- Adjustable Workstations for Office Settings
- Anti-fatigue Matting
- Building Accessibility Products
- Door Knob Grips and Handles
- Flexible Schedule
- Portable Ramps
- Ramps
- Scooters
- Service Animal
- Support Animal
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Wearable Anti-fatigue Matting
- Wheelchair Lifts
- Wheelchairs
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace

Work Station Access

- Adjustable and Ergonomic School Desks and Equipment
- Adjustable Desk Top Workstations for Office Settings
- Adjustable Workstations for Industrial Settings
- Anti-fatigue Matting

- Articulating Keyboard Trays
- Assist Lift Cushions
- Chair Mats
- Chairs for Little People
- Chairs for People who are Tall
- Dual Monitors
- Elevating Lift and Office Chairs
- Ergonomic and Adjustable Office Chairs
- Ergonomic Equipment
- Expanded Keyboards
- Forearm Supports
- Forward Leaning Chairs
- Large-Rated Chairs
- Monitor Mirrors
- Monitor Risers
- Mousing Surfaces
- Stand-lean Stools
- Supine Workstations
- Work Platforms
- Zero Gravity (reclining) Chairs

Situations and Solutions:

A volunteer at a food bank had a lifting restriction from a back condition and had trouble moving heavy donation deliveries to the sorting area.

A supply of small containers was provided so he could divide the deliveries into smaller amounts for sorting.

A meat processor with a back impairment had difficulty lifting materials from a storage area to his work area.

The inspector was accommodated with a cart and lifts.

A chemical process plant worker was limited in his ability to turn large wheel valves due to a back injury.

The worker was accommodated with a specialty tool designed to decrease torque on wheel valve handles.

A systems administrator with a back impairment is required to move, lift, and carry computers throughout the office.

The person was accommodated with a compact, adjustable height lifting device with straps to secure the load.

A hotel manager with a back condition was having problems working full days.

She experienced pain after being on her feet for long periods of time. As a reasonable accommodation, the agency provided a flexible schedule. The employer reported the accommodation was extremely effective, eliminating the need of training someone else to do the job and improving morale.

A mechanic with a bending restriction due to a low back impairment has problems accessing the engine compartment and low task areas of vehicles.

The mechanic was accommodated with a tire lift, a mechanic's low task chair, and a specialty creeper designed to support the body while accessing engine compartments.

A clerical worker with scoliosis has sitting and standing restrictions.

Because the worker is required to work at a desk a majority of the time, the worker was accommodated with an ergonomic workstation evaluation, ergonomic chair, and a sit/stand computer workstation.

A grocery check-out person had a standing restriction due to a back injury.

He was accommodated with a sit/lean stool and anti-fatigue mats.

A customer service agent for an insurance company was pregnant and experiencing significant leg and back pain when sitting for long periods of time.

She also needed to use the restroom frequently. The employer provided an adjustable workstation to enable the employee to alternate between sitting and standing positions. The employer also allowed her to take more frequent rest breaks by dividing her

existing thirty-minutes of break time into several smaller increments of time so she could use the restroom as-needed.

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 Industrial Hygiene Association

3141 Fairview Park Drive,
Suite 777

Falls Church, VA 22042

Direct: (703) 849-8888

Fax: (703) 207-3561

infonet@aiha.org

<http://www.aiha.org>

AIHA promotes, protects, and enhances industrial hygienists and other occupational health, safety, and environmental professionals in their efforts to improve the health and well-being of workers, the community, and the environment.

American National Standards Institute

1899 L Street, NW, 11th Floor

Washington, DC 20036

Direct: (202) 293-8020

Fax: (202) 293-9287

info@ansi.org

<https://www.ansi.org/>

The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) enhances both the global competitiveness of U.S. business and the U.S. quality of life by promoting and facilitating voluntary consensus standards and conformity assessment systems, and safeguarding their integrity.

American Physical Therapy Association

<http://www.moveforwardpt.com/Default.aspx>

MoveForwardPT.com is the official consumer information website of the American Physical Therapy Association.

American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE)

520 N. Northwest Hwy
Park Ridge, IL 60068
Direct: (847) 699-2929
customerservice@asse.org
<http://www.asse.org>

Founded in 1911, the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) is the world's oldest professional safety society. ASSE promotes the expertise, leadership and commitment of its members, while providing them with professional development, advocacy and standards development. It also sets the occupational safety, health and environmental community's standards for excellence and ethics.

Arthritis Foundation

1330 W. Peachtree Street
Suite 100
Atlanta, GA 30309
Direct: (404) 872-7100
<http://www.arthritis.org>

The Arthritis Foundation is committed to raising awareness and reducing the unacceptable impact of arthritis, a disease which must be taken as seriously as other chronic diseases because of its devastating consequences. The Arthritis Foundation is leading the way to conquer the nation's leading cause of disability through increased education, outreach, research, advocacy and other vital programs and services.

Back.com

710 Medtronic Parkway
Minneapolis, MN 55432-5604
Toll Free: (800) 633-8766
<http://www.back.com/index.htm>

Back.com is an educational site for people with chronic pain and/or back pain. It was created to help support people with questions about surgical options, and to provide information on options for chronic pain treatment and relief.

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

135 Hunter St. East
Hamilton, ON
Toll Free: (800) 668-4284
Direct: (905) 572-2981
Fax: (905) 572-4500
<http://www.ccohs.ca>

CCOHS is Canada's national centre for occupational health and safety (OH&S) information. Their goal is to promote health and safety in the workplace, and encourage attitudes and methods which will lead to improved physical and mental health of working people.

Human Factors and Ergonomics Society (HFES)

1124 Montana Ave
Suite B
Santa Monica, CA 90403-1617
Direct: (310) 394-1811
Fax: (310) 394-2410
info@hfes.org
<http://hfes.org>

The Society's mission is to promote the discovery and exchange of knowledge concerning the characteristics of human beings that are applicable to the design of systems and devices of all kinds.

Institute for Chronic Pain

PO Box 193
Stillwater, MN 55082
<http://www.instituteforchronicpain.org/>

The Institute for Chronic Pain is an educational and public policy think tank whose mission is to change the culture of how chronic pain is treated. We engage in research, development, and promotion of scientifically accurate information related to the field of chronic pain management. We do so by bringing together thought leaders from around the world to provide academic-quality information that is approachable to all stakeholders in the field, particularly, patients, their families, and society, more

generally. The staff and fellows of the Institute are specialists in chronic pain management as well as healthcare policy and management.

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

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 for Occupational Safety and Health

1150 Tusculum Ave
Cincinnati, OH 45226
Toll Free: (800) 232-4636
Direct: (513) 533-8326
Fax: (513) 533-8347
cdcinfo@cdc.gov
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/>

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) was established by the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. NIOSH is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and is the only federal Institute responsible for conducting research and making recommendations for the prevention of work-related illnesses and injuries.

National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases

1 AMS Circle
Bethesda, MD 20892-3675
Toll Free: (877) 226-4267
Direct: (301) 495-4484
Fax: (301) 718-6366
NIAMSinfo@mail.nih.gov
<http://www.niams.nih.gov>

The mission of the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases is to support research into the causes, treatment, and prevention of arthritis and musculoskeletal and skin diseases, the training of basic and clinical scientists to carry out this research, and the dissemination of information on research progress in these diseases.

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

P.O. Box 5801

Bethesda, MD 20824

Toll Free: (800) 352-9424

Direct: (301) 496-5751

<http://www.ninds.nih.gov>

The NINDS, an agency of the U.S. Federal Government and a component of the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Public Health Service, is a lead agency for the congressionally designated Decade of the Brain, and the leading supporter of biomedical research on disorders of the brain and nervous system.

National Safety Council

1121 Spring Lake Drive

Itasca, IL 60143-3201

Toll Free: (800) 621-7615

Direct: (800) 621-7619

Fax: (630) 285-1434

customerservice@nsc.org

<http://www.nsc.org>

The mission of the National Safety Council is to educate and influence society to adopt safety, health and environmental policies, practices, and procedures that prevent and mitigate human suffering and economic losses arising from preventable causes.

Occupational Safety & Health Administration

200 Constitution Avenue

NW

Washington, DC 20210

Toll Free: (800) 321-6742

<http://www.osha.gov>

The mission of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is to save lives, prevent injuries, and protect the health of America's workers. To accomplish this, federal and state governments must work in partnership with the more than 100 million working men and women and their six and a half million employers who are covered by the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970.

**Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America
(RESNA)**

1560 Wilson Blvd

Suite 850

Arlington, VA 22209

Direct: (703) 524-6686

Fax: (703) 524-6630

info@resna.org

<http://www.resna.org/>

RESNA, the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America, is the premier professional organization dedicated to promoting the health and well-being of people with disabilities through increasing access to technology solutions. RESNA advances the field by offering certification, continuing education, and professional development; developing assistive technology standards; promoting research and public policy; and sponsoring forums for the exchange of information and ideas to meet the needs of our multidisciplinary constituency.

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 Spine Health Foundation, Inc.

P.O. Box 531

Piney Flats, TN 37686

Direct: (423) 467-2087

info@spinehealthfoundation.org

<http://www.spinehealthfoundation.org/>

Our mission is to provide education, encouragement and healing solutions to disadvantaged individuals, "the working poor," who suffer with chronic pain due to untreated spinal injuries or disorders.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Toll Free: (844) 698-2311

<http://www.va.gov/>

The Agency is responsible for providing employment, training, educational and reemployment rights information and assistance to veterans, and other military personnel who are preparing to transition from the military. Also provide hearing aids. All World War I veterans are eligible to receive free hearing aids. Other veterans can receive free hearing aids if their hearing loss is at least 50% service-related.

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