

# JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

## Accommodation and Compliance Series

# Accommodation and Compliance Series: Employees with Essential Tremors

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**ODEP**

Office of Disability  
Employment Policy

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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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## **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 Essential Tremors**

Essential tremor is a nerve disorder in which tremors (shakes) occur without an identifiable cause when a person is moving or trying to move. Essential tremor of the hands typically occurs when the hands are in use. In contrast, tremors from Parkinson's are most prominent when a person's hands are at his sides or resting in his lap. Essential tremor can involve your hands, head and voice.

Essential tremor is the most common form of abnormal tremor. It resembles an exaggerated shaking. Essential tremor is a relatively benign condition, affecting movement or voice quality, but with no other effects. It involves a rhythmic, moderately rapid tremor of voluntary muscles. Purposeful movements may make the tremors worse, while avoiding hand movements may suppress the tremors completely. There may be difficulty holding or using small objects (such as silverware or writing utensils).

In the workplace, people with essential tremor may have difficulty writing, keyboarding and mousing, grasping small tools or items, and communicating. Limitations may be worsened by fatigue, stress and anxiety, and temperature extremes.

### **Essential Tremors 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 Essential Tremors**

People with essential tremors 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 essential tremors 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**

##### Decreased Stamina/Fatigue

- Aide/Assistant/Attendant
- Ergonomic Assessments
- Ergonomic Equipment
- Job Restructuring
- Periodic Rest Breaks
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace

#### Feeling/Sensing

- Alternative Input Devices
- Alternative Keyboards
- Alternative Mice
- Articulating Keyboard Trays
- Book Holders
- Expanded Keyboards
- Forearm Supports
- Grip Aids
- Keyguards
- Miniature Keyboards
- On-Screen Keyboards
- One-Handed Keyboard Software
- One-Handed Keyboards
- Page Turners
- Scribe/Notetaker
- Speech Recognition Software
- Writing Aids

#### Handling/Fingering

- Industrial
  - Anti-vibration Gloves
  - Anti-vibration Tool Wraps
  - Compact Material Handling
  - Ergonomic and Pneumatic Tools
  - Ergonomic Equipment
  - Extra Grip Gloves
  - Grip Aids
  - Vacuum Pickup Tools
- Office Equipment

- Alternative Input Devices
- Alternative Keyboards
- Alternative Mice
- Articulating Keyboard Trays
- Book Holders
- Compact Material Handling
- Ergonomic and Pneumatic Tools
- Ergonomic Equipment
- Expanded Keyboards
- Forearm Supports
- Grip Aids
- Keyguards
- Miniature Keyboards
- On-Screen Keyboards
- One-Handed Keyboards
- Page Turners
- Scribe/Notetaker
- Speech Recognition Software
- Typing / Keyboarding Aids
- Writing Aids
- Other
  - Aide/Assistant/Attendant
  - Money Handling Products
  - Periodic Rest Breaks

#### Spasm/Tic/Tremor/Blinking

- Aide/Assistant/Attendant
- Alternative Input Devices
- Alternative Keyboards
- Alternative Mice
- Alternative Mice - Limiting Tremors
- Auto-dialers

- Book Holders
- Compact Material Handling
- Door Knob Grips and Handles
- Eating Aids
- Ergonomic and Pneumatic Tools
- Ergonomic Equipment
- Expanded Keyboards
- Extra Grip Gloves
- Forearm Supports
- Grip Aids
- Hands-free Telephones
- Job Restructuring
- Keyguards
- Money Handling Products
- On-Screen Keyboards
- One-Handed Keyboards
- Outgoing Voice Amplification - Telephone
- Padded Edging
- Page Turners
- Periodic Rest Breaks
- Scribe/Notetaker
- Speech Recognition Software
- Switches
- Tongue Touch Keyboards/Mice
- Tool Balancers
- Typing / Keyboarding Aids
- Vacuum Lifts
- Vacuum Pickup Tools
- Voice Recognition Memory Devices
- Word Prediction/Completion and Macro Software
- Writing Aids

## 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

## Temperature Sensitivity

- Air Deflectors
- Cold Resistant Gloves
- Cooling Clothing
- Fans
- Flexible Schedule
- Heated Clothing
- Heated Ergonomic and Computer Products
- Heated Gloves
- Portable Air Conditioners
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Vent Covers
- Workstation Space Heaters

## Toileting/Grooming Issue

- Accessible Toilets and Toilet Seats
- Aide/Assistant/Attendant
- Flexible Schedule
- Grab Bars - Toilet Hinged Arm Support

- Grooming and Dressing Aids
- Independent Living Aids
- Modified Break Schedule
- Swing Away Grab Bars
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Toileting Aids
- Transfer Aids
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace

#### Weak Speech

- Flexible Schedule
- Job Restructuring
- Outgoing Voice Amplification - Telephone
- Voice Amplification

### **Work-Related Functions**

#### Stress

- Apps for Anxiety and Stress
- Behavior Modification Techniques
- Counseling/Therapy
- Flexible Schedule
- Job Restructuring
- Marginal Functions
- Modified Break Schedule
- Service Animal
- Support Animal
- Task Rotation
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Uninterrupted Work Time

#### Temperature

- Air Deflectors
- Cold Resistant Gloves

- Cooling Clothing
- Fans
- Flexible Schedule
- Foot Warmers
- Heat Resistant Gloves
- Heated Clothing
- Heated Ergonomic and Computer Products
- Heated Gloves
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Modified Break Schedule
- Vent Covers
- Workstation Space Heaters

## Situations and Solutions:

**A data entry clerk developed essential tremor and was having difficulty keyboarding and mousing with accuracy.**

The employer provided an alternative keyboard and mouse, as well as speech recognition software, as an accommodation.

**A new hire for an assembler position at a manufacturing plant was assigned to work on assembling small parts to a machine, although they had been hired to assemble large items.**

Due to essential tremor the employee was unable to maintain quotas. The employer did not have an open position on the large item assembly line but did agree to provide vacuum pickup tools to aid the employee in assembling the smaller items until a position became available.

**An employee with essential tremor experienced a worsening of symptoms when holding a phone receiver.**

Answering phone calls was an essential function of the job. The employer provided a headset with a telephone headset lifter so the employee could receive and place calls without having to physically hold the handset.

**An electrician with essential tremor, who regularly worked outdoors, noticed that symptoms were worse during the hot summer months and cold winter months.**

The employer provided a battery operated fan and warming clothing but the accommodations were not effective. As a next step the employee was provided with leave on days where temperatures were extreme and they began to look at options for reassignment to a position that did not require working outdoors.

**A teacher with essential tremor had difficulty accessing areas of the building that did not have automatic doors.**

The employer was not able to modify all of the doors in the facility but did agree to add automatic door openers to the doors the employee frequently used and provide door knob grips for other doors that the employee used infrequently.

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

### **Genetic and Rare Diseases Information Center (GARD)**

P.O. Box 8126  
Gaithersburg, MD 20898-8126  
Toll Free: (888) 205-2311  
Fax: (301) 251-4911  
<https://rarediseases.info.nih.gov/>

The Genetic and Rare Diseases (GARD) Information Center is a program of the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) and funded by two parts of the National Institutes of Health (NIH): NCATS and the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI). GARD provides the public with access to current, reliable, and easy to understand information about rare or genetic diseases in English or Spanish.

**International Essential Tremor Foundation**

P.O. Box 14005  
Lenexa, KS 66285  
Toll Free: (888) 387-3667  
Direct: (913) 341-3880  
Fax: (913) 341-1296  
[info@essentialtremor.org](mailto:info@essentialtremor.org)  
<http://www.essentialtremor.org/>

The International Essential Tremor Foundation (IETF) funds research to find the cause of essential tremor (ET) that leads to treatments and a cure, increases awareness, and provides educational materials, tools, and support for healthcare providers, the public, and those affected by ET.

**International Essential Tremor Foundation**

11111 West 95th Street  
Suite 260  
Overland Park, KS 66214  
Toll Free: (888) 387-3667  
Direct: (913) 341-3880  
Fax: (913) 341-1296  
[info@essentialtremor.org](mailto:info@essentialtremor.org)  
<http://www.essentialtremor.org/>

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### **International Parkinson and Movement Disorder Society**

555 East Wells Street

Suite 1100

Milwaukee, WI 53202

Direct: (414) 276-2145

Fax: (414) 276-3349

[info@movementdisorders.org](mailto:info@movementdisorders.org)

<http://www.movementdisorders.org/MDS.htm>

The International Parkinson and Movement Disorder Society (MDS) is a professional society of over 4,500 clinicians, scientists and other healthcare professionals dedicated to improving the care of patients with movement disorders through education and research.

### **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](mailto: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](mailto: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 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 Organization for Rare Disorders**

55 Kenosia Avenue  
Danbury, CT 06813-1968  
Toll Free: (800) 999-6673  
Direct: (203) 744-0100  
Fax: (203) 263-9938  
<http://www.rarediseases.org>

NORD is a unique federation of voluntary health organizations dedicated to helping people with rare "orphan" diseases and assisting the organizations that serve them. NORD is committed to the identification, treatment, and cure of rare disorders through programs of education, advocacy, research, and service.

**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.

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