

# JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

## Accommodation and Compliance Series

# Accommodation and Compliance Series: Employees with Gastrointestinal Disorders

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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 Gastrointestinal Disorders**

Gastrointestinal (GI) disorders affect millions of people of all ages - men, women, and children. Examples of GI disorders include Crohn's disease, gastroparesis, ulcerative colitis, irritable bowel syndrome, spastic colon, and diverticulitis. Symptoms of GI disorders range from very mild to debilitating. Just as symptoms may vary from person to person, so may the need for job accommodation.

### **Gastrointestinal Disorders 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 Gastrointestinal Disorders**

People with gastrointestinal disorders 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 gastrointestinal disorders 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
- Stand-lean Stools
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace

##### Effect of/Receive Medical Treatment

- Flexible Schedule
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

##### 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

#### Toileting/Grooming Issue

- Accessible Toilets and Toilet Seats
- Aide/Assistant/Attendant
- Flexible Schedule
- Grab Bars - Toilet Hinged Arm Support
- Modified Break Schedule
- Swing Away Grab Bars
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Toileting Aids
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace

### **Work-Related Functions**

#### Commute

- Flexible Schedule
- Ridesharing/Carpooling
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Transportation Assistance

#### 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:**

### **An employee seems to have trouble interacting with members of the public.**

The employee mentions that performing this job duty causes him a lot of stress, and this stress makes his ulcerative colitis much more likely to flare up. The employer reviews the individual's job duties and finds that interacting with the public is a marginal function of the individual's job. The employer agrees to restructure the individual's job as an accommodation so that this job duty will be reallocated to other employees, and they discuss other job duties that they can give him that would not cause this level of stress to keep the work load balanced.

### **An employee with fecal incontinence mentions that they have trouble making it to the restroom in time and often has accidents due to this.**

The employer moves the employee's workstation as an accommodation so that the employee is as close as possible to a restroom.

### **During the holiday season an employer hosts an employee appreciation luncheon.**

An employee with gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and obesity was on a restrictive diet, which included avoiding foods and drinks that triggered severe symptoms. In addition to the food typically provided for the event, the employer agreed to work with the catering company to develop additional dishes that the employee would be able to eat. This accommodation benefited others with similar sensitivities to food.

### **An applicant, while being toured around the workplace, notices that the employer has a cafeteria that provides employees with one meal during their meal breaks per day as a benefit of employment. The**

The applicant mentions that she has Celiac's disease, and therefore would need gluten-free options in order to enjoy this benefit of employment. The employer agrees to modify the menu by adding some gluten-free options as an accommodation.

### **A claims processor with a gastrointestinal disorder was having flare ups of his condition, which resulted in a strong odor that was affecting coworkers.**

He asked to work from home until he could get his condition under control. His employer granted his request.

### **A supervisor has noticed that one of his employees consistently takes a much longer time in the restroom and this seems to be negatively impacting his performance.**

When the supervisor approaches the employee regarding this, the employee discloses that he has irritable bowel syndrome and because of this disability needs to take more time to use the restroom. The employer reviews the situation and allows for a modification to the employee's schedule as an accommodation so that the employee makes up the time that he missed due to his longer restroom breaks by extending his shift's end time each day as needed.

**A computer operator was experiencing weight loss and gastrointestinal limitations as a result of having HIV.**

She was provided with an ergonomic chair with extra padding and began to change seating positions often. This prevented her from getting sores from sitting in one position for prolonged periods of time. Employee's workstation was also moved closer to a restroom to provide her better access. Total cost to move employee to another workstation was virtually nothing.

**After receiving complaints from coworkers about an employee passing very smelly gas, the employer discussed the problem with the employee.**

The employee said he was aware of the problem, but did not know it was that bad. He indicated that he has a gastrointestinal disorder that had flared up recently. The employer agreed to allow the employee to telework until the employee's condition was under control again.

## **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.

### **American College of Gastroenterology**

6400 Goldsboro Road,  
Suite 200  
Bethesda, MD 20817  
Direct: (301) 263-9000  
[info@acg.gi.org](mailto:info@acg.gi.org)  
<http://gi.org/>

The American College of gastroenterology was founded in 1932 to advance the study and medical treatment of disorders of the gastrointestinal tract. Our mission is to advance world-class care for patients with gastrointestinal disorders through excellence, innovation and advocacy in the areas of: Scientific investigation, Education, Prevention, and Treatment

### **American Gastroenterological Association**

4930 Del Ray Avenue  
Bethesda, MD 20814  
Direct: (301) 654-2055  
<http://www.gastro.org/>

### **Bladder and Bowel Foundation**

SATRA Innovation Park  
Rockingham Road  
Kettering, Northants NN16 - 9JH  
[info@bladderandbowelfoundation.org](mailto:info@bladderandbowelfoundation.org)  
<https://www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org/>

The Bladder and Bowel Foundation (B&BF) is the UK wide charity for people with bladder and bowel control problems. B&BF provides information and support services, including a confidential helpline, for anyone affected by these conditions as well as their families, careers and healthcare professionals.

### **Celiac Disease Foundation**

20350 Ventura Blvd  
Ste 240  
Woodland Hills, CA 91364  
Direct: (818) 716-1513  
Fax: (818) 267-5577  
<https://celiac.org/>

Celiac Disease Foundation drives diagnosis, treatment, and a cure for celiac disease through advocacy, education, and research to improve the quality of life for all people affected by gluten-related disorders.

**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.

**Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America**

733 Third Avenue  
Suite 519  
New York, NY 10017  
Toll Free: (800) 932-2423  
Fax: (212) 779-4098  
[info@ccfa.org](mailto:info@ccfa.org)  
<http://www.ccfa.org/>

The Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America (CCFA) is a non-profit, volunteer-driven organization dedicated to finding the cures for Crohn's Disease and ulcerative colitis.

**Gastroparesis Patient Association for Cures and Treatments**

185-132 Newberry Commons  
Etters, PA 17319  
Toll Free: (888) 874-7228  
[contact@g-pact.org](mailto:contact@g-pact.org)  
<https://www.g-pact.org/>

G-PACT is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization which provides services to patients who have a digestive tract paralysis including gastroparesis, chronic intestinal pseudo-obstruction, and colonic inertia. We reach out to over 35 countries and all 50 states. We focus on a variety of options and provide services and information completely free of charge. All of our staff are volunteers, so 100% of donations go to support our activities.

**GIKids**

714 N. Bethlehem Pike  
Suite 300  
Ambler, PA 19002  
Direct: (215) 641-9800  
[naspghan@naspghan.org](mailto:naspghan@naspghan.org)  
<http://www.gikids.org/>

With GIKids, NASPGHAN and their foundation are working to reach out directly to families, kids and teens who live with digestive conditions to provide them with the information they need to understand and improve their digestive health, work with their health care providers, live a more independent life, and understand what works in plain language instead of medical jargon.

**International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders**

PO Box 170864  
Milwaukee, WI 53217  
Toll Free: (888) 964-2001  
Direct: (414) 964-1799  
Fax: (414) 964-7176  
[iffgd@iffgd.org](mailto:iffgd@iffgd.org)  
<http://www.iffgd.org/>

The International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders (IFFGD) is a Public Charity designated under the U.S. IRS code 501(c)(3). We are a nonprofit education and research organization dedicated to informing, assisting, and supporting people affected by gastrointestinal (GI) disorders.

**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 Association for Continence**

PO Box 1019

Charleston, SC 29402

Toll Free: (800) 252-3337

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

The focus of the National Association for Continence is to provide quality continence care through education, collaboration, and advocacy. We offer up many different avenues so you can start to have important and meaningful conversation about your experience with incontinence. Here you can read in-depth explanations and get straight talk about every type of continence from medical experts. We can even help you connect with physicians local to you who specialize in dealing with this life-altering condition.

**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 Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases**

Building 31, Room 9A06

31 Center Drive, MSC 2560

Bethesda, MD 20892-2560

Direct: (301) 496-3583

<http://www.niddk.nih.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases conducts and supports research on many of the most serious diseases affecting public health. The Institute supports much of the clinical research on the diseases of internal medicine and related subspecialty fields as well as many basic science disciplines.

### **National Institute on Aging**

31 Center Drive

MSC 2292

Bethesda, MD 20892

Toll Free: (800) 222-2225

[niaic@nia.nih.gov](mailto:niaic@nia.nih.gov)

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/>

At NIA, our mission is to discover what may contribute to a healthy old age as well as to understand and address the disease and disability sometimes associated with growing older. In pursuit of these goals, our research program covers a broad range of areas, from the study of basic cellular changes that occur with age to the examination of the biomedical, social, and behavioral aspects of age-related conditions, including Alzheimer's disease.

**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.

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