

JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

Accommodation and Compliance Series

Accommodation and Compliance Series: Employees with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

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ODEP

Office of Disability
Employment Policy

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 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a trauma-related disorder caused by an individual's exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one or more of the following ways:

- directly experiences the traumatic event;
- witnesses the traumatic event in person;
- learns that the traumatic event occurred to a close family member or close friend (with the actual or threatened death being either violent or accidental); or
- experiences first-hand repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event (not through media, pictures, television or movies unless work-related).

The disturbance, regardless of its trigger, causes clinically significant distress or impairment in the individual's interactions and capacity to work. Be aware that some individuals with PTSD will never need an accommodation, while other may need accommodations that change over time.

JAN's [Effective Accommodation Practices \(EAP\) Series: Executive Functioning Deficits](#) is a publication detailing accommodations for individuals with limitations related to executive functioning. These ideas may be helpful in determining accommodations.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) 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 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

People with PTSD 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 PTSD 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

Decreased Stamina/Fatigue

- Job Restructuring
- Periodic Rest Breaks
- Task Rotation
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace

Executive Functioning Deficits

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

Managing Time

- Applications (apps)
- Apps for Organization/ Time Management
- Checklists
- Color Coded System
- Electronic Organizers
- Marginal Functions
- PDAs, Notetakers, and Laptops
- Reminders
- Task Separation
- Timers and Watches
- Wall Calendars and Planners
- Written Instructions

Memory Loss

- Additional Training Time / Training Refreshers
- Apps for Memory
- Electronic Organizers
- Memory Software
- Recorded Directives, Messages, Materials
- Reminders
- Support Person
- Verbal Cues
- Wall Calendars and Planners
- Written Instructions

Mental Confusion

- Job Coaches
- Marginal Functions
- On-site Mentoring
- PDAs, Notetakers, and Laptops
- Reminders
- Supervisory Methods
- Training Modifications
- Written Instructions

Organizing/Planning/Prioritizing

- Applications (apps)
- Apps for Organization/ Time Management
- Color-coded Manuals, Outlines, and Maps
- Electronic Organizers
- Ergonomic Equipment
- Job Coaches
- Job Restructuring
- On-site Mentoring
- Organization Software

- Professional Organizers
- Reminders
- Supervisory Methods
- Task Identification
- Task Separation
- Timers and Watches
- Wall Calendars and Planners
- Written Instructions

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

Work-Related Functions

Noise

- Cubicle Doors, Shields, and Shades
- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
- Fans
- Flexible Schedule
- Folding Wall Partitions and Room Dividers
- Noise Abatement
- Noise Canceling Headsets

Stress

- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- 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 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.

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 building manager with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) asked to bring an emotional support animal to work with her.

The employer was concerned about the behavior of the animal as the employee trained it herself. The employer and employee agree to a trial period to assess whether the animal could be in the workplace without causing a disruption.

A tax specialist with post-traumatic stress disorder had difficulty handling stress and controlling his emotions.

The employee's physician stated that these limitations were due to his PTSD and the side effects of changing his medication. His job performance and attendance were declining. As a reasonable accommodation, the employer allowed the employee to use a service animal. By making this accommodation the employee was able to be more effective. The employer benefited from improving productivity and attendance. Reported cost: \$0.

A veteran who recently returned to the workforce after spending several years overseas has Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), which causes difficulty with memory and mood regulation.

He was recently hired as a customer service representative. After disclosing his disability and requesting reasonable accommodations, his employer provided him with a cubicle close to an exit, with his back facing a wall. This helped to alleviate some of his stress, but he still had difficulty with memory and emotional outbursts. The employer obtained a job coach through the Department of Veterans Affairs to assist the employee with adjusting to his new position. The job coach worked with the employer and

employee to develop a customized form for taking notes from customers and a system for organizing the employee's workspace. The job coach also suggested the employee e-mail his supervisor when he has questions so he will have responses in written form that he can refer to later if he forgets something. Finally, the job coach helped the employee incorporate breaks into his day to walk and do breathing exercises to help reduce the likelihood of emotional outbursts. After the job coach comes in twice a week for three weeks, the employee is able to incorporate the job coach's suggestions into his regular routine and perform his job duties without assistance.

A veteran with PTSD was working for state government on a team project.

The employer decided to move the team's office to the basement of a building. Once the move occurred, the veteran realized that the noises in the basement were triggering memories of explosions and causing flare ups of his PTSD. The employer did not want to move the entire team again but was able to find an office on the first floor of the same building for the veteran. The rest of the team remained in the basement, but team meetings were held upstairs.

Lexie is a nurse with PTSD.

She has applied for a nursing position and has been called for an interview. In her last interview that didn't go very well, she sat across the table in a very small room from four people, the nursing administrator, the personnel director, a nurse manager, and a physician. Lexie feels that if there were no more than two people in the room, she would be able to better represent herself, making her interview more successful. In order to limit the interviewers, Lexie may have to disclose and ask for an accommodation.

An office worker with PTSD asked to use his service animal at work.

Part of the service animal's training included notifying the worker when someone was approaching from behind so the worker would not be startled. The employer wanted to explore other accommodation options so offered to set up mirrors in the employee's workstation so he could better see people approaching. The employer found that the employee could not concentrate on his work because he had to look up at the mirrors so often because he did not feel the sense of security he felt when his service animal was present. The employer decided to allow the service animal.

A veteran, who is now a delivery truck driver, had PTSD that resulted in a sleep disorder.

He was having difficulty with his nightshift schedule. His employer transferred him to a dayshift when an opening became available.

A veteran with head and neck injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was working as a graphic designer in a cubicle environment.

He had chronic pain, which was exacerbated by using a computer mouse, and PTSD, which was exacerbated by noise. The employer preferred to have the designer work in the office with his team, but there were no private offices available. Instead, the employer provided an ergonomic mouse and a noise canceling headset.

A veteran with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was working for state government on a team project.

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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.

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 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.

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.

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.

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 Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress

203 Deer Road
Ronkonkoma, NY 11779
Direct: (631) 543-2217
Fax: (631) 543-6977
info@aaets.org
<http://www.aaets.org>

The American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress® is a multidisciplinary network of professionals who are committed to the advancement of intervention for survivors of trauma. The Academy aims to identify expertise among professionals, across disciplines, and to provide meaningful standards for those who work regularly with survivors.

American Chronic Pain Association

P.O. Box 850
Rocklin, CA 95677-0850
Toll Free: (800) 533-3231
Fax: (916) 632-3208
ACPA@theacpa.org
<http://www.theacpa.org>

The purpose of the American Chronic Pain Association is to facilitate peer support and education for individuals with chronic pain and their families so that these individuals may live more fully in spite of their pain.

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.

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.

International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies

111 Deer Lake Road, Suite 100
Deerfield, IL 60015
Direct: (847) 480-9028
Fax: (847) 480-9282
info@istss.org
<http://www.istss.org/>

The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS) is the world's premier trauma organization dedicated to trauma treatment, education, research and prevention. Through this organization, professionals share information about the effects of trauma, seeking to reduce traumatic stressors and their immediate and long-term consequences.

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 Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Direct: (802) 296-6300
<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/>

Strives to advance the clinical care and social welfare of America's veterans through research, education, and training in the science, diagnosis, and treatment of PTSD and stress-related disorders.

National Center for Victims of Crime

2000 M Street NW
Suite 480
Washington, DC 20036
Direct: (202) 467-8700
Fax: (202) 467-8701
<http://www.victimsofcrime.org/>

Purpose is to forge a national commitment to help victims of crime re-build their lives.

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.

PTSD Alliance

Direct: (855) 446-1604

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

A group of professional and advocacy organizations that have joined forces to provide educational resources to individuals diagnosed with PTSD and their loved ones; those at risk for developing PTSD; and medical, healthcare and other frontline professionals.

Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network

1220 L Street, NW

Suite 505

Washington, DC 20005

Toll Free: (800) 656-4673

Direct: (202) 544-1034

Fax: (202) 544-3556

info@rainn.org

<https://rainn.org/>

RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) is the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization and was named one of "America's 100 Best Charities" by Worth magazine. RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline (800.656.HOPE and online.rainn.org) in partnership with more than 1,100 local sexual assault service providers across the country and operates the DoD Safe Helpline for the

Department of Defense. RAINN also carries out programs to prevent sexual violence, help victims and ensure that rapists are brought to justice.

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.

Sidran Institute

PO Box 436

Brooklandville, MD 21022-0436

Direct: (410) 825-8888

Fax: (410) 560-0134

<http://Sidran> Institute

Dedicated to supporting people with traumatic stress conditions, providing education and training on treating and managing traumatic stress, providing trauma-related advocacy, and informing the public on issues related to traumatic stress

The Soldiers Project

4605 Lankershim Blvd.

Suite 202

North Hollywood, CA 91602

Toll Free: (877) 576-5343

Fax: (818) 761-7476

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

The Soldiers Project is committed to providing a safety net of psychological care for military service members and their loved ones as well as educating the general public on how the psychological consequences of war affect not only those who serve, but also their loved ones at home and in our communities. We provide free, confidential professional psychological counseling services to those who have served in our nations military after September 11, 2001.

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.

Veterans Crisis Line

Toll Free: (800) 273-8255

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

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text.

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