

# JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

## Accommodation and Compliance Series

# Accommodation and Compliance Series: Auditory Processing Disorder

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**ODEP**  
Office of Disability  
Employment Policy

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## Preface

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is funded by a grant from 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.

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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 Auditory Processing Disorder**

An auditory processing disorder is a type of learning disability. Learning disabilities refer to a number of disorders that may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding, or use of verbal or nonverbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning.

Learning disabilities result from impairments in one or more processes related to perceiving, thinking, remembering or learning. Learning disabilities range in severity and may interfere with the acquisition and use of oral language, reading, written language, and mathematics. Auditory processing disorder is the term used to describe a weakness in the ability to understand and use auditory information. Individuals may have difficulties with auditory discrimination. This includes the ability to notice, compare and distinguish the distinct and separate sounds in words — a skill that is vital for reading. Auditory figure-ground discrimination includes the ability to pick out important sounds from a noisy background. Auditory memory involves the short-term and long-term abilities to recall information presented orally. Auditory sequencing incorporates the ability to understand and recall the order of sounds and words. All of these difficulties may cause problems with writing, spelling, and reading.

### **Auditory Processing Disorder and the Americans with Disabilities Act**

The ADA does not contain a definitive list of medical conditions that constitute disabilities. Instead, the ADA defines a person with a disability as someone who (1) has

a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more "major life activities," (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such 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 Auditory Processing Disorder**

People with an auditory processing disorder 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 an auditory processing disorder 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. 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?
6. Do supervisory personnel and employees need training?

### **Accommodation Ideas:**

#### **Limitations**

##### Attentiveness/Concentration

- Products
  - Alternative Lighting
  - Applications (apps)
  - Apps for Concentration
  - Cubicle Doors, Shields, and Shades

- Desk Organizers
- Desk Pedal Exercisers
- Electronic Organizers
- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
- Fidget Devices
- Focus Enhancement
- Full Spectrum or Natural Lighting Products
- Noise Abatement
- Noise Canceling Earbuds
- Noise Canceling Headsets
- Simulated Skylights and Windows
- Sound Absorption and Sound Proof Panels
- Sun Boxes and Lights
- Sun Simulating Desk Lamps
- Timers and Watches
- Calendars and Planners
- Services
  - Job Coaches
- Strategies
  - Color Coded System
  - Behavior Modification Techniques
  - Flexible Schedule
  - Job Restructuring
  - Marginal Functions
  - Modified Break Schedule
  - Task Flow Chart
  - Task Separation
  - Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
  - Uninterrupted Work Time
  - Verbal Cues

- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace
- Written Instructions

## Learning

- Additional Training Time / Training Refreshers
- Job Coaches
- Job Restructuring
- Marginal Functions
- On-site Mentoring
- Support Person
- Training Modifications
- Uninterrupted Work Time
- Written Instructions

## Organizing/Planning/Prioritizing

- Products
  - Apps for Organization/ Time Management
  - Desk Organizers
  - Electronic Organizers
  - Ergonomic Equipment
  - Labels/Bulletin Board
  - Note Collection Software and Technology
  - Notepad or White Board
  - Organization Software
  - Timers and Watches
  - Calendars and Planners
  - Workflow Management Software
- Strategies
  - Additional Training Time / Training Refreshers
  - Color Coded System
  - Color-coded Manuals, Outlines, and Maps
  - Checklists

- Job Restructuring
- Marginal Functions
- On-site Mentoring
- Organization/Prioritization Skills
- Recorded Directives, Messages, Materials
- Reminders
- Supervisory Methods
- Task Flow Chart
- Task Identification
- Task Separation
- Written Instructions

### **Work-Related Functions**

#### Communicate

- Additional Training Time / Training Refreshers
- Aide/Assistant/Attendant
- Behavior Modification Techniques
- On-site Mentoring
- Verbal Responses

## Situations and Solutions:

The following situations and solutions are real-life examples of accommodations that were made by JAN customers. Because accommodations are made on a case-by-case basis, these examples may not be effective for every workplace but give you an idea about the types of accommodations that are possible.

### **An employee with auditory processing disorder, who worked in an open office area, requested a more private work space as an accommodation.**

Since no offices were available, she was provided a cubicle on the outskirts of the room, with taller walls that faced the other employees. Sound absorption panels were added to further help reduce the sound.

### **A paralegal with auditory processing disorder staffed meetings with various attorneys where information was exchanged at a very rapid pace.**

Because he became overloaded and had difficulty processing the information completely, he asked to record the meetings. Because the information was confidential, the employee was required to follow a strict policy; the meetings could be taped, but within two days the notes were to be transcribed and the recordings destroyed. The device was kept in a locked drawer.

### **An administrative assistant with an auditory processing disorder was required to take notes for departmental meetings.**

She wanted to improve her note-taking skills. She used a smart pen that records as she writes. A JAN consultant suggested she ask for an agenda as early as possible before the meeting. Using a template/advanced organizer that would include topics to be discussed already listed, she would be able to jot notes in those sections. Using pre-printed names of people in the department in the organizer would allow her to simply put the notes next to the individuals who spoke. The pre-printed information/advanced organizer would allow her to write less, stay better organized, and allow more time to listen.

### **A college student with auditory processing disorder was trying to learn new languages for a career as a translator.**

She has not been successful in grasping the languages orally in order to learn to speak them. Accommodations discussed included extending the time frame for completion of her degree so that she can learn the languages one at a time instead of several at once. Also discussed were ways to improve her ability to “hear” the languages by recoding all class sessions and using variable speed playback in order to process at a slower rate, allowing plenty of time for processing information in class and formulating a response after questions, allowing preferential seating, and looking at ways to minimize auditory distractions in the classroom.

### **An IT troubleshooter with an auditory processing disorder was having difficulty quickly answering questions posed to him on the phone.**

He requested that inquiries be given to him via e-mail instead. The employer agreed for a trial period to see how effective the accommodations would be. After a brief time for

his co-workers to adjust to writing the requests instead of picking up the phone, the accommodations were effective. The employer determined the written requests worked well for recordkeeping purposes and required all requests be written from then on.

## **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)  
<https://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)  
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/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 Audiology**

11480 Commerce Park Drive  
Suite 220  
Reston, VA 20191  
Toll Free: (800) 222-2336  
Fax: (703) 476-5157  
[infoaud@audiology.org](mailto:infoaud@audiology.org)  
<http://www.audiology.org>

The American Academy of Audiology promotes quality hearing and balance care by advancing the profession of audiology through leadership, advocacy, education, public awareness, and support of research.

### **American Speech-Language-Hearing Association**

2200 Research Blvd  
Rockville, MD 20850-3289  
Toll Free: (800) 638-8255  
Direct: (301) 296-5700  
Fax: (301) 296-8580  
<http://www.asha.org>

ASHA promotes the interests of, and provide the highest quality services for, professions in audiology, speech-language pathology, and speech and hearing science; and an advocate for people with communication disabilities.

### **AudiologyOnline**

538 W 21st St #79931  
Houston, TX 77008-3642  
Toll Free: (800) 753-2160  
Fax: (210) 579-7010  
<http://www.audiologyonline.com>

The mission of AudiologyOnline is to enhance the quality of life for the patients and clients in the care of the professionals we serve. We support this mission by providing relevant, convenient, and economical continuing education opportunities presented and authored by the leading experts in their respective professions to enhance clinical knowledge and skills, connecting quality professionals to the right job to better serve clients and patients, and enhancing students' clinical knowledge and skills to become meaningful contributors to the profession.

### **Auditory Processing Disorder Foundation, Inc.**

[contact@theapdfoundation.org](mailto:contact@theapdfoundation.org)  
<http://www.theapdfoundation.org/>

It is a fact that there is still much skepticism about Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) in schools, among parents and even in the medical field. Our mission is to create a place of international access where kids, parents and teachers from all over the world can come to find information and helpful resources for APD.

### **Hearing Health Foundation**

363 Seventh Avenue,  
10th Floor  
New York, NY 10001-3904  
Toll Free: (866) 454-3924  
Direct: (212) 257-6140  
[info@hearinghealthfoundation.org](mailto:info@hearinghealthfoundation.org)  
<http://hearinghealthfoundation.org>

#### **Our Mission:**

To prevent and cure hearing loss and tinnitus through groundbreaking research and to promote hearing health.

### **LD Online**

2775 S. Quincy St.  
Arlington, VA 22206  
Direct: (703) 998-2060  
<http://www.ldonline.org/>

LD OnLine seeks to help children and adults reach their full potential by providing accurate and up-to-date information and advice about learning disabilities and ADHD. The site features hundreds of helpful articles, multimedia, monthly columns by noted experts, first person essays, children's writing and artwork, a comprehensive resource guide, very active forums, and a Yellow Pages referral directory of professionals, schools, and products.

**Learning Disabilities Association of America**

4156 Library Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15234-1349  
Direct: (412) 341-1515  
Fax: (412) 344-0224  
[info@ldaamerica.org](mailto:info@ldaamerica.org)  
<http://ldaamerica.org/>

LDA is the largest non-profit volunteer organization advocating for individuals with learning disabilities. LDA publishes materials on issues of importance to adults with learning disabilities on adult literacy, parenting, and special populations. A special series of bulletins address civil rights and accommodations in various settings, including college, the workplace and the military.

**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.

**National Center for Biotechnology Information**

8600 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, MD 20894  
[pubmedcentral@ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](mailto:pubmedcentral@ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>

The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information.

### **National Center for Learning Disabilities**

32 Laight Street, 2nd Floor

New York, NY 10013

Toll Free: (888) 575-7373

Direct: (212) 545-7510

Fax: (212) 545-9665

[nclcd@nclcd.org](mailto:nclcd@nclcd.org)

<http://www.LD.org>

The NCLD works to ensure that the nation's 15 million children, adolescents and adults with learning disabilities have every opportunity to succeed in school, work, and life. NCLD provides essential information to parents, professionals, and individuals with learning disabilities, promotes research and programs to foster effective learning and advocates for policies to protect and strengthen educational rights and opportunities.

### **National Coalition on Auditory Processing Disorders (NCAPD)**

<http://www.ncapd.org>

The goal of the NCAPD is to become a national resource information network and to assist families and individuals affected by auditory processing disorders through education, support and public awareness. The NCAPD is developing programs that include the Online Chat, the Be-A-Friend Program, the Simulation of Auditory Processing Problems, and the National Referral Program. The NCAPD also offers regional conferences and a quarterly newsletter for members, called "NCAPD News."

### **National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders**

31 Center Drive

MSC 2320

Bethesda, MD 20892

Toll Free: (800) 241-1044

[nidcdinfo@nidcd.nih.gov](mailto:nidcdinfo@nidcd.nih.gov)

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

National Resource center for health information about hearing, balance, smell, taste, voice, speech, and language for health professionals, patients, industry, and the public.

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