

# JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

## Accommodation and Compliance Series

# Accommodation and Compliance Series: Paraplegia

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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 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.

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 Paraplegia**

People use wheelchairs for a variety of reasons, the most common reason being paralysis from spinal cord injuries. Individuals who have had a stroke, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, polio, cerebral palsy, back condition, cancer, diabetes, traumatic brain injury, and dementia may also have limitations that result in paraplegia. Paraplegia is a condition that results from paralysis in the legs and potentially the trunk.

### **Paraplegia 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 Paraplegia**

People with paraplegia 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 paraplegia 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**

##### Balancing

- Aerial Lifts
- All-Terrain Scooters
- All-Terrain Wheelchairs
- Anti-fatigue Matting
- Bath Chairs
- Canes
- Crutches
- Evacuation Devices
- Fall Protection
- Grab Bars
- Grab Bars - Toilet Hinged Arm Support
- Personal Safety and Fall Alert Devices
- Personal Transportation and Mobility Products
- Leg Extenders for Walkers

- Padded Edging
- Rollators and Rolling Walkers
- Rolling Safety Ladders
- Scooters
- Stair Assists
- Stair Lifts
- Swing Away Grab Bars
- Toileting Aids
- Walkers
- Walkers with Seats
- Walkers for Tall Individuals

#### Bending

- Accessible Baby Changing Stations
- Adjustable Drafting Tables
- Adjustable Exam Tables
- Adjustable Massage Tables
- Animal Lift Tables
- Automatic Snow Chains
- Battery Powered Lift Tables
- Compact Material Handling
- Convex Mirrors
- Ergonomic and Pneumatic Tools
- Examination and Procedures Chair
- Long-Handled Mirrors
- Low Task Chair
- Manhole Cover Lifts
- Pickups, Semis, and Heavy Equipment
- Stools for Cutting Hair
- Telescoping Cameras
- Walk-up Changing Tables

## Climbing

- Aerial Lifts
- Elevators
- Evacuation Devices
- Stair Assists
- Stair Lifts

## Lifting

- Accessible Baby Changing Stations
- Adjustable Exam Tables
- Adjustable Massage Tables
- Adult Changing Tables
- Aerial Lifts
- Animal Lift Tables
- Automated Filing Systems
- Ball Transfer Tables
- Bath Chairs
- Battery Powered Lift Tables
- Cake Decorating and Baking Equipment
- Carts
- Compact Material Handling
- Compact Mobile Cranes
- Drum Handling
- Drywall and Wallboard Lifts
- Electronic Organizers
- Engine Lifts and Lift Plates
- Ergonomic Assessments
- Ergonomic Equipment
- Evacuation Devices
- Folding Steps
- Hair Scissors
- Hands Free Resuscitation Devices

- Height Adjustable Table Legs
- Independent Living Aids
- Job Restructuring
- Large-Rated Small Step Ladders
- Large-Rated Wheelchair Lifts
- Lift Gates
- Lift Tables
- Lifters and Carriers for Mobility Aids
- Lifting Aids
- Light Switch Extension Handles
- Lightweight Lead Aprons
- Low Task Chair
- Manhole Cover Lifts
- Multi-Purpose Carts
- Patient Lifts (General)
- Periodic Rest Breaks
- Pickups, Semis, and Heavy Equipment
- Pipettes
- Pool Lifts
- Power Lift IV Stands
- Powered Bath Lifts
- Professional Organizers
- Proper Lifting Techniques
- Rolling Safety Ladders
- Spring-Loaded Carts
- Stainless Steel Carts and Worktables
- Stair Assists
- Stairclimbing Handtrucks
- Talking Bar Code Scanner/Reader
- Test Tube Holders
- Tire Handling

- Toileting Aids
- Tool Balancers
- Transfer Aids
- Transfer Sheets
- Truck Mounted Cranes
- Vacuum Lifts
- Vacuum Pickup Tools
- Vehicle Lifts and Manipulators
- Walk-up Changing Tables
- Wheelchair Lifts
- Winches and Chain Hoists
- Work Platforms

#### Operating Foot Control

- Hand Controls

#### Standing

- Adjustable Workstations for Industrial Settings
- Adjustable Workstations for Office Settings
- Grab Bars
- Scooters
- Stand Aids
- Stand-up Wheelchairs

#### Use of Mobility Aids

- Accessories for Scooters
- Adjustable and Ergonomic School Desks and Equipment
- Adjustable Massage Tables
- Adjustable Workstations for Industrial Settings
- Adjustable Workstations for Office Settings
- Automatic Door Openers
- Boat Access
- Door Knob Grips and Handles

- Ergonomic and Pneumatic Tools
- Evacuation Devices
- Flexible Schedule
- Height Adjustable Table Legs
- Job Coaches
- Light Switch Extension Handles
- Monitor Risers
- Pool Lifts
- Portable Ramps
- Ramps
- Spring-Loaded Carts
- Stair Lifts
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Threshold Ramps
- Van Conversion
- Wheelchair Accessible Lecterns
- Wheelchair Carts/Trailers
- Wheelchair Lifts
- Work Platforms

## Walking

- Aide/Assistant/Attendant
- All-Terrain Scooters
- All-Terrain Wheelchairs
- Foldable / Transport Wheelchairs
- Large-Rated Scooters
- Large-Rated Wheelchairs
- Personal Transportation and Mobility Products
- Reclining Wheelchairs
- Scooters
- Scooters for Small Stature
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

- Wheelchairs for Small Stature
- Wheelchairs
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace

## **Work-Related Functions**

### Commute

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

### Move Items/People

- Adjustable Exam Tables
- Aerial Lifts
- Animal Lift Tables
- Ball Transfer Tables
- Battery Powered Lift Tables
- Carts
- Compact Mobile Cranes
- Lifting Aids
- Multi-Purpose Carts
- Vacuum Lifts
- Vacuum Pickup Tools

### Off Site Access

- Accessible Vehicles
- Accessories for Scooters
- All-Terrain Scooters
- All-Terrain Wheelchairs
- Examination and Procedures Chair
- Flexible Schedule
- Head Support for Wheelchairs

- Low Task Chair
- Personal Transportation and Mobility Products
- Scooters
- Stair Assists
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Transportation Assistance
- Van Conversion
- Wheelchair Accessible Scales
- Wheelchair Carts/Trailers
- Wheelchair Mounts

#### Operate Equipment/Vehicles

- Hand Controls
- Swivel Seats and Seat Extenders
- Wheelchair Lifts

#### Parking

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

## 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.

### **A car salesman became a paraplegic following a car accident.**

Upon returning to work, he realized he could not exit the building quick enough to help customers. After having a discussion with the employer, they jointly decided that installing an automatic door would be the best solution.

### **A florist with paraplegia needed a table top that permitted her wheelchair to fit under.**

The employer purchased her an accessible workstation which enabled her to arrange flowers efficiently.

### **An applicant with paraplegia interviewed for a taxi driver position.**

During the interview, the employer asked about possible accommodation options the applicant would need. The applicant explained he could operate a vehicle with modifications, which included hand controls. The employer offered them the position and had a local driver rehabilitation specialist install the equipment.

### **A motivational speaker with paraplegia was required to travel and speak to large audiences across the country.**

The employer purchased a standup wheelchair so the speaker could stand behind a podium during their speeches.

### **A county commissioner with paraplegia was required to attend monthly commission meetings.**

The meetings were held in an inaccessible historic building. As an accommodation, the commission permitted the county commissioner to Skype into the meetings. This enabled them to actively participate and contribute to the meeting.

### **A chemistry professor used a wheelchair due to a spinal cord injury.**

The existing chemistry lab was designed to accommodate students at a standing height. The college could not remodel the entire lab so purchased an elevating wheelchair.

## 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.

### **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.

### **MedlinePlus**

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

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.

### **Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center**

American Institutes for Research  
1000 Thomas Jefferson Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20007  
Direct: (202) 403-5600  
[msktc@air.org](mailto:msktc@air.org)  
<http://www.msktc.org/>

The Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center (MSKTC) summarizes research, identifies health information needs, and develops information resources to support the Model Systems programs in meeting the needs of individuals with traumatic brain injury (TBI), spinal cord injury (SCI), and burn injury.

The Model Systems are funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) to conduct innovative and high-quality research, provide patient care, and offer other services to improve the health and overall quality of life for individuals with TBI, SCI, and burn injury.

**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 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.

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