



# Accommodation and Compliance Series

## Accommodation and Compliance Series: Job Coaches

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## **JAN'S Accommodation and Compliance Series**

### **Introduction**

Job coaches are individuals who specialize in assisting individuals with disabilities to learn and accurately carry out job duties. Job coaches provide one-on-one training tailored to the needs of the employee. They may first do a job analysis to identify the job duties, followed by developing a specific plan as to how they can best train the employee to work more and more on his/her own until completely self-sufficient and able to perform job duties accurately and effectively without assistance.

Job coaching is sometimes done in a relatively informal way, but it can also involve the application of the evidence-based practice of "supported employment." Job coaches can also work with employers to explore unmet business needs so that jobs can be developed or customized.

Most state vocational rehabilitation agencies employ job coaches, have job coaching as part of their vocational rehabilitation counselors' roles or, more commonly, refer their clients to (or contract with) various non-profit organizations that provide job coaching. Types of these organizations vary among communities, but can include Arcs (and other service provider agencies for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities), community mental health providers, supported employment agencies and programs, transitional employment programs, community rehabilitation programs/providers and Goodwill Industries' vocational programs. Organizations like the Epilepsy Foundation of America, the Autism Society of America, and the National Multiple Sclerosis Society also can be sources of job coaches for people with specific disabilities. For more information on finding a job coach, review JAN's [list of resources](#).

## **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 food service worker with an anxiety disorder works in the kitchen of a restaurant, helping with food preparation and cleaning.**

She is able to perform all of her essential functions, but she tends to talk to her co-workers incessantly about her personal issues to the point that other employees complain to management. A manager talks with the food service worker about her conduct and explains that it is interfering with work and making coworkers uncomfortable. The employee is a client of a mental health agency and offers to talk with her service coordinator about getting a job coach. The job coach teaches the employee how to talk with coworkers about impersonal topics (like the weather) and how to focus conversations on work tasks she and coworkers are performing. The job coach then helps the employee apply the new skills directly on the job and is able to fade out direct involvement after a couple of months.

### **A grocery store chain recently hired a customer care clerk who has Down Syndrome.**

The new clerk's job duties require her to be able to quickly group similar items together when bagging customer purchases. Due to her disability, she has difficulty recognizing which products are similar, but can remember such relationships once they are pointed out to her. The employer does not have anyone available to spend the required time to train the clerk. The employer hired a job coach to show the clerk how to match items when bagging products. After about two weeks, the clerk was able to perform the job independently so the job coach was no longer needed.

### **A teacher with AD/HD experienced disorganization in her classroom due to clutter from many years of teaching.**

The employer provided a job coach to help the teacher learn organization techniques, to help separate and store items, and to dispose of previous student work and projects from yesteryear.

### **A janitor at a furniture factory has a cognitive disability.**

His primary essential function is to sweep away the ever-accumulating sawdust, which he does very well. However, once he has performed a complete sweep of the floor, he has difficulty determining when it needs to be done again. This results in the sawdust becoming a barrier to other workers' mobility. The employee is a client of state vocational rehabilitation (VR) and his vocational rehabilitation counselor arranges for a job coach to help address the problem. After monitoring the employee's work and helping him learn to discriminate between a clean floor and one that is ready to be swept again, the job coach is able to fade out his direct involvement, but remains available to support the employee as needed.

**Trinity, a new employee with fetal alcohol syndrome passed her probationary period with flying colors.**

She started to experience the gradual withdrawal of the job coach who had been instrumental in her success. The supervisor began to see a few issues resurface. The employer recruited a co-worker that had formed a positive relationship with Trinity to function as a natural support to her after the job coach was gone, providing the same type of support.

**An employer who had just hired a new employee with Tourette Syndrome was shocked when he discovered that the employee was making sexually offensive comments to female coworkers as well as passing around lewd pictures he had drawn.**

Meeting immediately with the employee and his job coach, the employer discovered that the employee had Tourette syndrome, had experienced the same issues in previous positions, and was unable to refrain from the comments and the drawings due to his Tourette's. Since no accommodation had previously been found to be effective, the employer terminated this employee.

**A new hire at a fast food restaurant is on the autism spectrum.**

He completed his new job tasks quickly and efficiently but then remained idle until someone told him the next task to perform. The manager complained that the employee "just stands around" and "looks bored." JAN suggested the use of a job coach to help learn the job and how to stay occupied during down time. JAN also suggested using a pocket-sized flowchart of work tasks that can be done when the employee is at a standstill.

**A grocery store bagger named Wanda had fetal alcohol syndrome.**

She wanted to hug everyone who came into the store, as well as her coworkers. Some customers were open to it, but many were not. The employer hired a job coach to help Wanda understand the inappropriateness of hugging customers and coworkers alike. The coach worked successfully with her, and was able to fade out her direct involvement, but remained available to support Wanda as needed.

**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 cleaning company supplies janitorial services for multiple employers**

A newly hired janitor has a development disability and will temporarily need a job coach. The cleaning company supplied the job coach and notified the employers that the coach would be coming into their worksites to help with training.

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