

JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

Accommodation and Compliance Series

Employees with Burn Injuries

Job Accommodation Network
PO Box 6080
Morgantown, WV 26506-6080
(800)526-7234 (V)
(877)781-9403 (TTY)
jan@askjan.org
askjan.org



A service of the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy

Preface

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is a service of the Office of Disability Employment Policy of the 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.

The following document is not copyrighted and reproduction is encouraged. Section 105 of the Copyright Law provides that no copyright protection is available for works created by the U.S. Government. Therefore, all works created by JAN fall under this provision. While individuals may use such work with impunity, individuals may not claim copyright in the original government work, only in the original material added. Individuals may access the full text of the law from the U.S. Copyright Office <http://www.loc.gov/copyright>. Please note that specific information cited by JAN may be copyrighted from other sources. Citing secondary sources from a JAN publication may violate another organization's or individual's copyright. Permission must be obtained from these sources on a case-by-case basis. When using JAN materials, JAN asks that the materials not be reproduced for profit, that the tone and substance of the information are not altered, and that proper credit is given to JAN as the source of the information. For further information regarding this or any other document provided by JAN, please contact JAN.

Authored by Beth Loy, Ph.D. Updated 12/30/15.

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 <http://AskJAN.org/soar>.

Information about Burn Injuries

How prevalent are burn injuries?

Burns are one of the most common household injuries. It is estimated that about 450,000 people per year have burn injuries that require medical treatment (American Burn Association, 2013). Burns result in about two million physician visits per year (National Library of Medicine, 2014). Because of the advances in treatment of burns, an individual is now much more likely to survive a serious burn injury and continue to be a productive employee.

What causes burn injuries and how are they classified?

Burns are usually caused by heat (thermal burns), such as fire or hot liquids. Burns can also be caused by chemicals and radiation such as sun light, gas, and electricity (Merck, 2014).

Burns are classified in three ways: first, second and third degree:

- First degree burns are the most common type of burn injury. This involves only the top layer of skin and is characterized by pain, redness, and swelling. Sunburn is a typical first degree burn (Merck, 2014).
- Second degree burns involve the first and second layer of skin. They are characterized by blistering of the skin, redness, and swelling and are very painful (Merck, 2014).

- Third degree burns are the most severe and often result in extensive scarring. They can require a long recovery time and may result in severe limitations (Merck, 2014).

Burn Injuries and the Americans with Disabilities Act

Are burn injuries a disability under the ADA?

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 (EEOC Regulations . . . , 2011). Therefore, some people with burn injuries will have a disability under the ADA and some will not.

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 (EEOC Regulations . . . , 2011). For more information about how to determine whether a person has a disability under the ADA, visit <http://AskJAN.org/corner/vol05iss04.htm>.

Accommodating Employees with Burn Injuries

(Note: People with burn injuries 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 burn injuries 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 with a burn injury 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 with a burn injury been consulted regarding possible accommodations?
6. Once accommodations are in place, would it be useful to meet with the employee with a burn injury to evaluate the effectiveness of the accommodations and to determine whether additional accommodations are needed?
7. Do supervisory personnel and employees need training regarding burn injuries?

Accommodation Ideas:

Gross Motor Impairment:

- Modify the work-site to make it accessible
- Provide parking close to the work-site
- Provide an accessible entrance
- Install automatic door openers
- Provide an accessible restroom and break room
- Provide an accessible route of travel to other work areas used by the employee
- Modify the workstation to make it accessible
- Adjust desk height if wheelchair or scooter is used
- Make sure materials and equipment are within reach range
- Move workstation close to other work areas, office equipment, and break rooms
- Provide material lifts
- Provide stand/lean stools
- Provide anti-fatigue matting

Fine Motor Impairment:

- Implement ergonomic workstation design
- Provide alternative computer access
- Provide alternative telephone access
- Provide arm supports
- Provide writing and grip aids
- Provide a page turner and a book holder
- Provide a note taker
- Provide anti-vibration gloves
- Provide tool balancers

Heat Sensitivity:

- Reduce work-site temperature
- Use cool vest or other cooling clothing
- Use fan/air-conditioner at the workstation
- Allow flexible scheduling and flexible use of leave time
- Allow work from home during hot weather

Cold Sensitivity:

- Increase work-site temperature
- Use portable space heaters
- Dress in layers using thermal material or fleece
- Wearing gloves
- Provide heated clothing
- Allow work from home during cold weather

Working Effectively with Supervisors:

- Provide positive praise and reinforcement
- Provide written job instructions
- Develop written work agreements that include the agreed upon accommodations
- Communicate performance standards and the consequences of not meeting them
- Allow for open communication to managers and supervisors
- Establish written long term and short term goals
- Develop strategies to deal with problems before they arise
- Develop a procedure to evaluate the effectiveness of the accommodation

Interacting with Coworkers:

- Educate all employees on their rights to accommodations
- Provide sensitivity training to coworkers and supervisors

- Do not mandate that employees attend work-related social functions
- Encourage all employees to move non-work related conversations out of work areas

Difficulty Handling Stress and Emotions:

- Provide praise and positive reinforcement
- Refer to counseling and employee assistance programs
- Allow telephone calls during work hours to doctors and others for needed support
- Allow the presence of a support animal
- Allow the employee to take breaks as needed

Sleep Disorder:

- Allow flexible work hours
- Allow frequent breaks
- Allow work from home

Pain Management:

- Implement ergonomic workstation design, e.g., ergonomic chair and adjustable workstation to alternate between sitting and standing
- Reduce repetitive tasks or interrupt the tasks with other duties
- Provide carts and lifting aids
- Allow flexible work hours
- Allow frequent breaks
- Allow work from home
- Reserve a rest area with cot for breaks

Respiratory Impairment:

- Pre-notification of construction, painting, pesticide use, and heavy cleaning
- Use non-toxic carpeting or alternative floor covering such as tile or cotton throw rugs
- Use non-toxic building materials and lawn products
- Allow use of oxygen

Situations and Solutions:

A drafting engineer had third degree burns to 80% of his body. He was limited in sitting for extended periods. He was accommodated with an ergonomic workstation, including a sit/stand work station.

A school teacher with burn injuries to both hands was having trouble writing. JAN provided information on assistive writing aids such as pen/pencil/marker grips and devices to make holding a pen/pencil/marker easier.

A person employed as a ground maintenance laborer was recovering from severe burns of his head, neck, and back. His job required him to work outside during most of the day. Due to the scars he was unable to sweat to cool his body temperature, and he was concerned about getting sunburned. His employer provided him with a hat, long sleeved light cotton shirts, and a cool vest. The employer also changed his schedule to an earlier start time so that he could work mainly during the morning hours during extreme heat.

A consultant employed by a federal agency had severe limitations in fine motor movements as a result of burns to her hands. She had difficulty typing for long periods of time. An articulating keyboard tray was added to her desk, allowing her to bring the keyboard closer to her body. She was also given a split keyboard and a trackball mouse that allowed her to use her fingers to move the cursor and type, eliminating the need for her to use her thumbs. The individual combined these devices with speech recognition.

A security guard with breast cancer was burned from radiation treatment. She had difficulty wearing the polyester uniform with embroidered insignia that was required by company policy. The employer modified the dress code policy by having a uniform made of cotton material with the logo and employee name added with a no-sew iron-on adhesive.

Resources

Job Accommodation Network

West Virginia University
PO Box 6080
Morgantown, WV 26506-6080
Toll Free: (800)526-7234
TTY: (877)781-9403
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
TTY: (877)889-5627
Fax: (202)693-7888
<http://www.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 Burn Association

311 S. Wacker Drive, Suite 4150
Chicago, IL 60606
Direct: (312)642-9260
Fax: (312)642-9130
info@ameriburn.org
<http://www.ameriburn.org>

Dedicated to promoting and supporting burn-related research, education, care, rehabilitation, and prevention.

Arizona Burn Foundation

PO Box 1329
Phoenix, AZ 85001
Direct: (602)230-2041
Fax: (602)230-2157
<http://www.azburn.org>

Assisting burn victims and their families in becoming burn survivors, through different programs, rehabilitation, treatment, and research.

Burn Survivor Resource Center

Toll Free: (800)669-7700

info@burnsurvivor.com

<http://www.burnsurvivor.com>

One stop resource center to ensure professional information is made available to the burn survivor, to the many people who are searching for critical information on behalf of a loved one, to the family, and to the professionals.

Flicker of Hope Foundation (FHF)

8624 Janet Lane

Vienna, VA 22180

Direct: (703)698-1626

Fax: (703)698-6225

info@flickerofhope.org

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

FHF was founded with the purpose of providing emotional and practical support for burn survivors and their families. This support is presented in the form of counseling, scholarship opportunities, and the sharing of useful information.

Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors, Inc.

1835 R W Berends Dr. SW

Grand Rapids, MI 49519-4955

Toll Free: (800)888-2876

Direct: (616)458-2773

Fax: (616)458-2831

info@phoenix-society.org

<http://www.phoenix-society.org>

Information and resources for burn survivors.

References

- American Burn Association. (2013). *Burn incidence and treatment in the United States: 2013 fact sheet*. Retrieved December 4, 2014, from <http://www.ameriburn.org>
- EEOC Regulations To Implement the Equal Employment Provisions of the Americans With Disabilities Act, as Amended, 29 C.F.R. § 1630 (2011).
- Merck & Co., Inc. (2014). Burns. In *The Merck manual home edition: Online medical library*. Retrieved December 4, 2014, from <http://www.merckmanuals.com>
- National Library of Medicine (2014). *Burns: Interactive health tutorial*. Retrieved December 4, 2014, from <http://www.nlm.nih.gov>

This document was developed by the Job Accommodation Network (JAN). Preparation of this item was funded by the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor, Grant Number OD-23442-12-75-4-54. This document does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.