



**Job Accommodation Network**

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

## Accommodation and Compliance Series

# Workplace Accommodations: Low Cost, High Impact

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Funded by a contract with the Office of Disability  
Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor

## JAN'S Accommodation and Compliance Series

### Introduction

*\*Funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) provides information to assist with engaging in the interactive process and successfully resolving accommodation situations. This information is informal guidance only; it is not legal advice.*

**Updated April 5, 2024**



A wealth of talent awaits employers who open doors to candidates with disabilities, and effective job accommodations are key to hiring and retaining them. The accommodations they may need, if any, are often easy to implement and cost less than employers think. A survey conducted by JAN indicates workplace accommodations are not only typically low in cost, but also positively impact the workplace in many ways. Today, more employees may be entitled to workplace accommodations. Recent evidence suggests that Long COVID has limited the labor force participation of millions of working-age Americans. As a result, employers are increasingly interested in finding ways to keep valuable employees in their jobs and better understanding the costs associated with providing job accommodations.

This report includes information from the 4,447 employer surveys completed between January 1, 2019 and December 31, 2023. Prior to 2019, JAN collected cost information via one-on-one phone calls but in 2019 began using online employer questionnaires that resulted in a significantly higher number of responses from a more diverse group of employers. Of these responses, 1,524 (34%) were received before the pandemic began in March, 2020. Employers participating in the JAN survey represent a wide array of industry sectors (e.g., manufacturing, service, and wholesale/retail sales) and sizes (from small businesses to Fortune 500 mega-companies). Each of these employers contacted JAN to obtain specific information about workplace accommodations, the ADA, or both. Approximately eight weeks after their initial contact, these employers were asked a series of questions about the situation they discussed with JAN, the quality of JAN's services, and the results of accommodations the employer provided.

Surveyed employers report that the benefits from making workplace accommodations far outweigh their associated costs. Such benefits include:

- Retaining valuable employees,
- Improving productivity and morale,
- Reducing workers' compensation and training costs, and
- Improving company diversity.

Furthermore, many employees with disabilities are skilled problem solvers by virtue of having to manage a disability daily in a world that wasn't designed for them.

Of the 4,447 employers who completed the survey, 1,059 provided information related to the cost of accommodations. More than half (56%) of the employers participating in this survey who provided cost information reported the accommodations they made cost absolutely nothing to implement (\$0). Another 37% of the surveyed employers reported the accommodations made involved only a one-time cost, while the remaining 7% of accommodations made resulted in ongoing costs to the employer. Of those accommodations that did have a one-time cost, the median one-time expenditure as reported by the employer was \$300 (N69). Those with ongoing accommodation costs had a median annual cost of \$1,925 (NX), a decrease compared to previous report findings.

Employers who participated also reported that JAN understood their needs and provided information that met those needs. In addition, 100% of employers stated they would use JAN's services again for assistance with workplace accommodations.

**What is the bottom line? Contacting JAN to obtain information on workplace accommodations typically results in modifications that have a low cost and a high, positive impact. And JAN's services are always free!**

*This report was prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Office of Disability Employment Policy by the Job Accommodation Network, under grant number OD-38028. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to DOL, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement of same by the U.S. Government. Updated 4/05/2024.*

## Findings

**Finding #1: Employers want to provide accommodations so they can retain valued and qualified employees.**

More than half of the (56%) employers surveyed reported they called JAN to retain a current employee. On average, employees associated with a JAN request had been with the company for 5 years and 9 months (N =,965). Typical (median) wages for these employees were \$18.00 for those paid by the hour and \$65,000 for those with an annual salary. In addition, 66% of the individuals for whom the employer requested accommodation information had a college associate degree or higher.

**Finding #2: Most employers report no cost or low cost for accommodating employees with disabilities.**

Of the 1,059 employers who provided cost information related to accommodations they had provided, 589 (56%) said the accommodations needed by their employee cost nothing. Another 397 (37%) experienced a one-time cost. Only 72 (7%) said the

accommodation resulted in an ongoing, annual cost to the company. Of those accommodations that did have a one-time cost, the median one-time expenditure as reported by the employer was \$300 (N69). Those with on-going accommodation costs had a median annual cost of \$1,925 (NX).

### **Finding #3: Employers report accommodations are effective.**

Employers who had implemented accommodations were asked to rank the effectiveness of the accommodations on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being extremely effective. Of the 1,679 responding to the question regarding effectiveness, the majority (67%) reported the accommodations were either very effective or extremely effective at helping workers with disabilities perform their job duties. Another 21% of employers reported the accommodations to be somewhat effective and only 12% reported them to be ineffective.

### **Finding #4: Employers experience multiple direct and indirect benefits after making accommodations.**

Employers who made accommodations for employees with disabilities reported multiple benefits as a result. The most frequently mentioned direct benefits of accommodations were:

- Increased employee retention,
- Increased employee productivity, and
- Increased employee attendance.

The most widely mentioned indirect benefits of accommodations employers received were:

- Improved interactions with co-workers,
- Increased overall company safety, and
- Increased overall company morale.

The following outlines the percentage of employers who reported experiencing direct and indirect benefits as a result of having made an accommodation.

#### **Direct Benefits**

- Retained a valued employee: 85%
- Increased the employee's productivity: 53%
- Increased the employee's attendance: 48%
- Eliminated costs associated with training a new employee: 47%
- Increased diversity of the company: 33%

- Saved workers' compensation or other insurance costs: 23%
- Hired a qualified person with a disability: 18%
- Promoted an employee: 7%

### **Indirect Benefits**

- Improved interactions with co-workers: 35%
- Increased safety: 29%
- Increased overall company morale: 29%
- Improved interactions with customers: 22%
- Increased overall company productivity: 20%
- Increased overall company attendance: 18%

### **Finding #5: Employers find JAN helpful during the accommodation process.**

Ninety-seven percent of employers (N=669) reported that JAN understood their needs. In addition, 92% stated the information JAN sent them met their needs. And 100% of employers stated they would use JAN again.

## Situations and Solutions:

*The following examples are based on real-life disability or accommodations-related experiences shared by users of the JAN service. Because accommodations are made on a case-by-case basis, these examples may not represent or relate to every workplace situation but are provided to demonstrate possible interactive process and accommodation strategies.*

**A janitor has lasting symptoms of fatigue from having COVID-19.**

They were allowed to take frequent, shorter breaks when they were overly tired. No cost.

**An employer provided an ASL interpreter for an employee attending a 6-week training program.**

The employer stated it allowed them to retain and promote a valuable employee and eliminated the cost of hiring a new employee. One time cost was \$19,000.

**A health care worker with a vision loss was having eye strain and headaches as a result of the computer use for report writing.**

The employer purchased dictation equipment so the employee could dictate their reports. Cost \$600.

**An employee working in Human Resources had multiple conditions (fatigue, respiratory problems, and mitral valve prolapse) as a result of having COVID-19.**

They requested to work 4 days a week instead of 5 for a one-year time period. The employer did not report an associated cost.

**An office worker with ADHD and an anxiety disorder in a health care facility found that noise from co-workers and patients in her work area was distracting.**

Noise-cancelling headsets were provided. Cost was \$250.

**A grocery store clerk requested the ability to bring their service animal to work.**

The employer agreed to do so on a trial basis and ultimately allowed the accommodation permanently. No cost.

**An office worker with no use of one hand was provided a one-handed keyboard. Cost \$150.**

## References

To cite: Job Accommodation Network (Updated 10/19/2020). Workplace accommodations: Low cost, high impact. Retrieved MM/DD/YYYY, from <https://askjan.org/topics/costs.cfm><

This document was developed by the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (#OD-38028-22-75-4-54). The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Labor. Nor does mention of tradenames, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Labor.