

# JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

## Accommodation and Compliance Series

### Job Coaching in the Workplace

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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.

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Authored by Daniel Tucker, M.S. Updated 06/12/2013.

# **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 or topic and provides information about the condition or topic, 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 Job Coaches**

### **What are job coaches and what do they do?**

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. Support (to the employee and employer) in addition to skills training can consist of advocacy, disability awareness-building, job adaptations, social support, problem-solving, and the development of natural supports to allow the job coach to phase out of direct involvement (Beyer and Robinson, 2009).

### **Who uses job coaches?**

While job coaches can be helpful in assisting individuals with a wide variety of disabilities, job coaches most commonly work with individuals who have conditions such as autism, learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder (ADD), and cognitive

impairments. Job coaching is also one of the most frequently used accommodations by people with psychiatric disabilities (MacDonald-Wilson, Lin, & Farkas, 2011).

### **Where can employers find job coaches?**

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.

### **Who provides funding for job coaches?**

Often, the state vocational rehabilitation agency pays the job coaching provider for clients it refers. Sometimes job coaching is funded by a managed care organization on a fee-for-service basis. Also, provider agencies and other entities sometimes fund job coaching with vocationally-focused grants such as the job-readiness grants from the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation.

It is less typical for employers to directly pay for a job coaching service, but they may be required to consider whether they can provide funding for a job coach as a reasonable accommodation under the ADA, absent undue hardship, if no other funding options are available. However, paying for a temporary job coach is not typically that costly. A recent research review (conducted by the University of Maryland for the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation at Boston University) found that accommodations for people with psychiatric disabilities often involve supports provided by job coaches and tend to cost little to nothing (MacDonald-Wilson, Lin, & Farkas, 2011).

## **Job Coaches and the Americans with Disabilities Act**

### **Does the ADA require employers to provide job coaches?**

Title I of the ADA requires employers with 15 or more employees to consider providing reasonable accommodation for employees who meet the Act's definition of disability. A reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a job that enables a qualified individual with a disability to enjoy equal employment opportunities. Reasonable accommodation can include job coaches in the form of personalized training.

According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), an employer may be required to provide a temporary job coach to assist in the training of a qualified individual with a disability as a reasonable accommodation, barring undue hardship. An employer also may be required to allow a job coach paid by a public or private social service agency to accompany the employee at the job site as a reasonable accommodation (EEOC, 1997).

### **When might an employer have to provide a job coach under the ADA?**

According to the EEOC, an employer might have to consider a job coach to assist an employee to learn how to do a job; provide intensive monitoring, training, assessment, and support; help develop healthy working relationships by encouraging appropriate social interaction and maintaining open communications; and assist the parties in determining what reasonable accommodation is needed (EEOC, n.d.).

## Accommodating Employees Using Job Coaches

(Note: People use job coaches for a variety of reasons, so their accommodation needs will vary. The following is only a sample of the accommodation 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. Has the employee been consulted regarding possible accommodations?
6. 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?
7. Do supervisory personnel and employees need training regarding job coaches?

### Accommodation Ideas and Situations and Solutions:

**Learning the Job:** Some employees may need more assistance learning a new job than an employer is able to provide. In such cases, a temporary job coach can provide the additional training that is needed.

**Situation:** 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.

**Solution:** 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.

**Providing Monitoring and Support:** In addition to helping employees learn a new job, a job coach can provide one-on-one monitoring and support until the employee has mastered job duties or overcome other work-related issues.

**Situation:** 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.

**Solution:** 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.

**Encouraging Appropriate Social Interaction:** In some cases, people with disabilities may be starting their first jobs and may have difficulty interacting with coworkers or management. Job coaches can often help these employees develop appropriate workplace social skills.

**Situation:** 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.

**Solution:** 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.

**Helping with Accommodations:** A job coach often can be a useful resource to help come up with accommodation ideas and for testing ideas until effective accommodations can be identified and implemented.

**Situation:** 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.

**Solution:** 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.

## 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.

### **ADD Action Club**

<http://addactionclub.com>

ADDclasses.com is a virtual support and education resource helping people affected by ADD by offering free teleseminars, an ADD audio library, and ADD support programs.

### **ADD Coach Academy**

17 Googas Road  
Slingerlands, NY 12159  
Direct: (518)482-3458  
<http://www.addca.com/index.html>

The ADD Coach Academy is a coach training program that provides ADHD coach training delivered by Master Certified Coaches.

**ADD Coaching**

Direct: (540)904-6562

Fax: (540)904-6138

INFO@addcoaching.com

<http://addcoaching.com>

ADDcoaching.com provides online resources for individuals with ADD as well as coaching by telephone.

**ADD Consults**

630 N. Old Woodward, Suite 302

Birmingham, MI 48009

Direct: (248)988-1260

info@addconsults.com

<http://www.addconsults.com/directory/index.php3>

ADD Consults provides a variety of services including individual consultation, industry, media, and public relations services including a directory of ADD help.

**America's Heroes at Work**

Toll Free: (866)487-2365

<http://www.americasheroesatwork.gov>

America's Heroes at Work provides information and tools to help returning Service Members and Veterans living with TBI and/or PTSD succeed in the workplace - particularly Service Members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

**Attention Deficit Disorder Association**

PO Box 7557

Wilmington, DE 19803-9997

Toll Free: (800)939-1019

Fax: (800)939-1019

info@add.org

<http://www.add.org>

The Attention Deficit Disorder Association provides information, resources and networking opportunities to help adults with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder lead better lives.

**Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder (CHADD)**

8181 Professional Place, Suite 150

Landover, MD 20785

Toll Free: (800)233-4050

Direct: (301)306-7070

Fax: (301)306-7090

<http://www.chadd.org>

CHADD is a national non-profit organization providing education, advocacy and support for individuals with ADHD.

**Omni Employment & Advocacy Services**

11125 N. Oak Trafficway

Kansas City, MO 64155

Direct: (816)651-3100

<http://www.omniea.com>

Omni Employment & Advocacy Services is a comprehensive, consumer focused, results based supportive employment program.

## References

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- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. (n.d.). *Questions and answers about persons with intellectual disabilities in the workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act*. Retrieved from [http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/intellectual\\_disabilities.cfm](http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/intellectual_disabilities.cfm)
- MacDonald-Wilson, K., Lin, C. H., & Farkas, M. (2011). *Synthesis of the research literature on job accommodations for people with psychiatric disabilities 1990-2010 (Research Syntheses)*. Retrieved from Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation website: <http://www.bu.edu/drrk/research-syntheses/psychiatric-disabilities/job-accommodations>

This document was developed by the Job Accommodation Network, funded by a contract from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (#1605DC-17-C-0038). 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.