Accommodation and Compliance Series: Employees with Blindness

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

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

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is funded by a contract with 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.

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 https://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.

Updated 08/14/2019.
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 Blindness

The term “blindness” generally refers to a lack of usable vision. Individuals with total blindness are unable to see anything with either eye. Legal blindness is defined as 20/200 or less in the better eye with the best possible correction. Many individuals who are considered legally blind still have some degree of useable vision.

Blindness and the Americans with Disabilities Act

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. 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. 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 Blindness

People with blindness 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 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. 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?

Accommodation Ideas:

Limitations

Blind - Total

- Aide/Assistant/Attendant
- Braille Labelers
- Computer Braille Display
- Computer Phone Software
- Detectable Warning Surfaces
- Flexible Schedule
- Headsets - Computer (USB, VOIP etc.)
- Job Restructuring
- Keyboard Tops and Labels
- Optical Character Recognition (OCR) Systems - Scan
- Qualified Reader
- Ridesharing/Carpooling
- Screen Reading Software and Training
• Service Animal
• Tactile Dots and Markers
• Talking Bar Code Scanner/Reader
• Talking Cash Register
• Talking Color Detector
• Talking Credit Card Terminal
• Talking Money Identifier
• Telephone Light Sensor
• Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
• Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace

**Work-Related Functions**

**Commute**
• Flexible Schedule
• Ridesharing/Carpooling
• Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
• Transportation Assistance

**Parking**
• Flexible Schedule
• Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
Situations and Solutions:

A social service worker at a state agency had no vision and requested reader services to help with accessing documents and information. Reader services were provided during half of every workday.

An applicant was unable to complete a pre-employment typing test because the testing software did not work with his assistive technology. The employer offered a reader, but the applicant was concerned that this would not reflect his true ability, since the reader could not match the speed and consistency of a screen reader. The applicant’s vocational rehabilitation was able to provide a proctored test of his typing ability using an accessible typing program.

A university professor who is blind had to attend a conference once a year. He was provided with a sighted guide to assist him with travel and with navigating the hotel and conference center.

An educator at a health care facility had no vision and wanted to bring her service dog to work to assist with mobility. The employer allowed the employee to bring the service dog to work.

An employee working at a resort gift shop who is legally blind had difficulty knowing when a new customer was in the store. She also had trouble reading tags on merchandise. She did benefit from magnification. JAN suggested a wireless visitor alert system that would chime when customers walked through the door. To read tags on merchandise, JAN suggested a portable electronic magnifier that the employee could carry everywhere in the store.

Co-workers decide it would be funny to move furniture around so an employee who is blind will run into it. The employee does run into the furniture and is injured. The co-workers are suspended while the employer investigates what happened and they are ultimately terminated.

An individual with no vision was placed in a switchboard operator position for a large service complex building. The person needed to be aware of what telephone lines were on hold, in use, or ringing. She was provided with a light sensor to assist in determining the console buttons that were lit, blinking, and/or steady. The telephone console was also modified to provide the employee with ring differentiation for external versus internal calls.

A customer service representative for a financial institution lost his vision and could no longer read his computer screen. The employer provided screen reading software for his computer so that all information present on the screen and all information inputted into the system would be read back to him.
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.
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.

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.

Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired
3903 Taft Drive
Anchorage, AK 99517-3069
Toll Free: (800) 770-7517
Direct: (907) 248-7770
https://www.alaskabvi.org/Pages/default.aspx
Our mission is to equip Alaskans with vision loss to meet their life and work goals. Celebrating 35 years in 2012, the Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired serves over 300 people of all ages annually with new techniques for communication, mobility, and daily living when loss of eyesight interferes with activities or employment.

**American Council of the Blind**
1703 N. Beauregard St.
Suite 420
Alexandria, VA 22201
Toll Free: (800) 424-8666
Direct: (202) 467-5081
Fax: (703) 465-5085
info@acb.org
http://www.acb.org

The American Council of the Blind strives to increase the independence, security, equality of opportunity, and quality of life, for all blind and visually-impaired people.

**American Foundation for the Blind**
2 Penn Plaza,
Suite 1102
New York, NY 10121
Direct: (212) 502-7600
Fax: (888) 545-8331
http://www.afb.org

The American Foundation for the Blind removes barriers, creates solutions, and expands possibilities so people with vision loss can achieve their full potential.
Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired
3100 East Roosevelt St.
Phoenix, AZ 85008
Direct: (602) 273-7411
http://www.acbvi.org/

Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI) has been providing services for individuals since 1947. ACBVI is committed to "enhancing the quality of life for people who are blind or otherwise visually impaired." Our services are available to adults who are legally blind or visually impaired as well as those who have a degenerative eye condition which may eventually become a visual impairment. These services are offered separately or concurrently according to the individual needs of the qualifying client.

Georgia Center for the Visually Impaired
739 West Peachtree Street, N.W.
Atlanta, GA 30308
Direct: (404) 875-9011
Fax: (404) 607-0062
http://www.cviga.org/

The mission of the Center for the Visually Impaired is to empower people impacted by vision loss to live with independence and dignity.
Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults
141 Middle Neck Road
Sands Point, NY 11050
Direct: (516) 944-8900
hkncinfo@hknc.org
https://www.helenkeller.org/hknc

The mission of the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults is to enable each person who is deaf-blind to live and work in his or her community of choice.

Learning Ally
20 Roszel Road
Princeton, NJ 08540
Toll Free: (800) 221-4792
http://www.learningally.org/

We are a national not-for-profit dedicated to bringing parents, teachers and the community together to empower dyslexic, blind or visually impaired students to succeed.

Mayo Clinic
13400 E. Shea Blvd.
Scottsdale, AZ 85259
Direct: (480) 301-8000
http://www.mayoclinic.org/

The Mayo Clinic's mission to inspire hope and contribute to health and well-being by providing the best care to every patient through integrated clinical practice, education and research.
MISSION: IMS brings together an international community of health care professionals, researchers, educators, and others to improve care and transform delivery of treatment to those suffering from soft tissue pain through the promotion and exchange of globally recognized research, education, and innovation in patient care.

The ultimate purpose of the National Federation of the Blind is the complete integration of the blind into society on a basis of equality. This objective involves the removal of legal, economic, and social discriminations; the education of the public to new concepts concerning blindness; and the achievement by all blind people of the right to exercise to the fullest their individual talents and capacities. It means the right of the blind to work along with their sighted neighbors in the professions, common callings, skilled trades, and regular occupations.

Our mission is to enhance employment and independent living outcomes for individuals who are blind or visually impaired through research, training, education, and dissemination.
World Health Organization
525 Twenty-third Street
N.W.
Washington, DC 20037
Direct: (202) 974-3000
Fax: (202) 974-3663
http://www.who.int/en/

We are the directing and coordinating authority on international health within the United Nations’ system.
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.