Accommodation and Compliance Series: Employees with Alzheimer's Disease

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Preface

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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 Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive brain disorder named for the German physician Alois Alzheimer who first described it in 1906. Alzheimer’s disease damages and eventually destroys brain cells, leading to loss of memory, thinking, and other brain functions. Alzheimer's is not a part of normal aging, but results from a complex pattern of abnormal changes. It usually develops slowly and gradually gets worse as more brain cells wither and die. Alzheimer’s is fatal, and currently there is no cure. Alzheimer’s disease is the most common type of dementia, a general term used to describe various diseases and conditions that damage brain cells. Symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease progress from mild forgetfulness to widespread brain impairment. Chemical and structural changes in the brain slowly destroy the ability to create, remember, learn, reason, and relate to others.

Early-stage Alzheimer’s is when the problems with memory, thinking, and concentration may begin to appear in a doctor’s interview or medical tests. Individuals in the early-stage typically need minimal assistance with simple daily routines. However, at the time of diagnosis, an individual is not necessarily in the early-stage of the disease. The term early-onset or younger-onset refers to Alzheimer’s that occurs in persons under the age of 65. Younger-onset individuals may be employed or have children still living at home. Early-onset Alzheimer’s has been known to develop between ages 30 and 40, but it is more common for someone in his or her 50s to have the disease.

JAN's Accommodation Solutions: Executive Functioning Deficits is a publication detailing accommodations for individuals with limitations related to executive functioning. These ideas may be helpful in determining accommodations.
Alzheimer’s Disease and the Americans with Disabilities Act

The ADA does not contain a definitive list of medical conditions that constitute disabilities. Instead, the ADA defines a person with a disability as someone who (1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more "major life activities," (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such 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 Alzheimer’s Disease

People with Alzheimer’s disease 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 Alzheimer’s disease 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. 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?
6. Do supervisory personnel and employees need training?

Accommodation Ideas:

Limitations

Executive Functioning Deficits
- Apps for Concentration
- Apps for Memory
- Calendars and Planners
• Checklists
• Color Coded System
• Cubicle Doors, Shields, and Shades
• Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
• Extra Time
• Flexible Schedule
• Form Generating Software
• Full Spectrum or Natural Lighting Products
• Job Coaches
• Job Restructuring
• Marginal Functions
• Modified Break Schedule
• Noise Canceling Earbuds
• Noise Canceling Headsets
• On-site Mentoring
• Recorded Directives, Messages, Materials
• Reminders
• Sound Absorption and Sound Proof Panels
• Speech Recognition Software
• Sun Boxes and Lights
• Sun Simulating Desk Lamps
• Timers and Watches
• Written Instructions

Managing Time
• Applications (apps)
• Apps for Organization/ Time Management
• Calendars and Planners
• Checklists
• Color Coded System
• Electronic Organizers
• Marginal Functions
• PDAs, Notetakers, and Laptops
• Personal On-Site Paging Devices
• Reminders
• Task Separation
• Timers and Watches
• Written Instructions

Memory Loss
• Additional Training Time / Training Refreshers
• Apps for Memory
• Calendars and Planners
• Electronic Organizers
• Job Coaches
• Professional Organizers
• Recorded Directives, Messages, Materials
• Reminders
• Social Skill Builders
• Support Person
• Verbal Cues
• Visual Schedulers
• Written Instructions

Organizing/Planning/Prioritizing
• Applications (apps)
• Apps for Organization/Time Management
• Calendars and Planners
• Color-coded Manuals, Outlines, and Maps
• Electronic Organizers
• Ergonomic Equipment
• Job Coaches
• Job Restructuring
• On-site Mentoring
• Organization Software
• Personal On-Site Paging Devices
• Professional Organizers
• Reminders
• Supervisory Methods
• Task Identification
• Task Separation
• Timers and Watches
• Visual Schedulers
• Written Instructions

Work-Related Functions

Stress
• Apps for Anxiety and Stress
• Behavior Modification Techniques
• Counseling/Therapy
• Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
• Flexible Schedule
• Job Coaches
• Job Restructuring
• Marginal Functions
• Modified Break Schedule
• Monitor Mirrors
• Odor Control
• On-site Mentoring
• Service Animal
• Simulated Skylights and Windows
• Strobe Lights
• Supervisory Methods
• Support Animal
• Support Person
• Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
• Uninterrupted Work Time

Use Cognitive Function
• Additional Training Time / Training Refreshers
• Aide/Assistant/Attendant
• Color Coded System
• Counting/Measuring Aids
• Electronic Dictionaries
• Electronic Organizers
• Extra Time
• Fractional, Decimal, Statistical, or Scientific Calculators
• Job Coaches
• Line Guides
• Marginal Functions
• Modified Break Schedule
• On-site Mentoring
• Personal On-Site Paging Devices
• Professional Organizers
• Reassignment
• Reminders
• Service Animal
• Social Skill Builders
• Support Person
• Training Modifications
• Uninterrupted Work Time
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 finance manager with Alzheimer's disease had difficulty learning new tasks and staying organized.
Her physician recommended disability retirement. Her employer took an integrated employment approach and carved out a position for her that had fewer responsibilities, but still allowed her to share her expertise with other employees.

Due to Alzheimer's disease, a project manager for an engineering firm was increasingly unable to keep track of and manage all of the individual components that were involved in the project.
After careful consideration, he spoke to his employer about the difficulties he was having and asked to be placed back into a team position where he would only be involved with one aspect of the project instead of coordinating the entire project. His employer agreed and as it was near to the end of the current project, felt that they could very easily do some restructuring and find a position for him on one of the teams.

A music teacher at a small high school was diagnosed with early-stage Alzheimer's.
Through meeting with school administration and with help from her doctor, the teacher was able to remain in her position with increased support in the form of accommodations. With the help of a colleague, she was able to better organize her desk and files so that retrieval of information was much easier. Color-coding was used to help her better locate that information. She was also provided with a voice-activated recorder to help her remember verbal instructions and notes from meetings. At the current time, the accommodations were helping her keep her performance at a very high level.

A caller in his late forties contacted JAN to ask about job accommodations related to a recent diagnosis of early-onset Alzheimer's.
The major difficulty he had been having was a compromised ability to find his way around the city. He drove a truck making deliveries and thought a GPS (global positioning system) would help him with the different directions and enable him to navigate the drive to specific locations. With information from his medical provider to substantiate the need for the accommodation, the caller submitted his request.

A human resources manager at a large university had recently been diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's disease.
The diagnosis came as no surprise to the employee, as he had been struggling for some time with working the long hours involved in managing the tasks. He found that he needed progressively more time to complete tasks and that the same tasks were becoming increasingly more complex. His inability to perform the essential functions of
the position prompted him to ask for an accommodation. He requested leave under the ADA so that he could contact his EAP and determine what benefits were available 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](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.
Resources

**Job Accommodation Network**
West Virginia University
PO Box 6080
Morgantown, WV 26506-6080
Toll Free: (800) 526-7234
TTY: (304) 293-7186
Fax: (304) 293-5407
jan@askjan.org
https://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
odep@dol.gov
https://www.dol.gov/agencies/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.

**Alzheimer's Association**
225 N. Michigan Avenue
Floor 17
Chicago, IL 60601-7633
Toll Free: (800) 272-3900
info@alz.org
http://www.alz.org
The Alzheimer's Association is the leading, global voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care and support, and the largest private, nonprofit funder of Alzheimer's research.

**Alzheimer's Disease Education and Referral Center (ADEAR)**
PO Box 8250
Silver Spring, MD 20907-8250
Toll Free: (800) 438-4380
Fax: (301) 495-3334
adear@nia.nih.gov
http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers

The National Institute on Aging's ADEAR Center offers information and publications for families, caregivers, and professionals on diagnosis, treatment, patient care, caregiver needs, long-term care, education and training, and research related to Alzheimer's disease. Staff members answer telephone, email, and written requests and make referrals to local and national resources. The ADEAR Website provides free, online publications in English and Spanish; email alerts; an Alzheimer's disease clinical trials database; the Alzheimer's Disease Library database; and more.

**Alzheimer's Foundation of America**
322 Eighth Avenue
7th Floor
New York, NY 10001
Toll Free: (866) 232-8484
Direct: (646) 638-1542
Fax: (646) 638-1546
http://www.alzfdn.org

The Alzheimer's Foundation of America's mission is to provide optimal care and services to individuals confronting dementia, and to their caregivers and families through member organizations dedicated to improving quality of life.
Alzheimers.gov is the government's free information resource about Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Here you can find links to authoritative, up-to-date information from agencies and organizations with expertise in these areas.

American Occupational Therapy Association
6116 Executive Boulevard, Suite 200
North Bethesda, MD 20852-4929
Direct: (301) 652-6611
members@aota.org
https://www.aota.org/

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) is the national professional association established in 1917 to represent the interests and concerns of occupational therapy practitioners and students of occupational therapy and to improve the quality of occupational therapy services.

American Physical Therapy Association

MoveForwardPT.com is the official consumer information website of the American Physical Therapy Association.
American Psychiatric Association
1000 Wilson Blvd
Suite 1825
Arlington, VA 22209-3901
Toll Free: (888) 357-7924
Direct: (703) 907-7300
apa@psych.org
https://www.psychiatry.org/

The American Psychiatric Association is an organization of psychiatrists working together to ensure humane care and effective treatment for all persons with mental illness, including substance use disorders. It is the voice and conscience of modern psychiatry. Its vision is a society that has available, accessible quality psychiatric diagnosis and treatment.

American Psychological Association
750 First Street NE
Washington, DC 20002
Toll Free: (800) 374-2721
Direct: (202) 336-5500
http://www.apa.org/

Our mission is to advance the creation, communication and application of psychological knowledge to benefit society and improve people’s lives.

Brain & Behavior Research Foundation
90 Park Avenue,
16th Floor
New York, NY 10016
Toll Free: (800) 829-8289
Direct: (646) 681-4888
info@bbrfoundation.org
https://www.bbrfoundation.org

The Brain & Behavior Research Foundation is committed to alleviating the suffering caused by mental illness by awarding grants that will lead to advances and breakthroughs in scientific research.
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are dedicated to protecting the health and safety of people at home and abroad, providing credible information to enhance health decisions, and promoting health through strong partnerships.

The Charlie Foundation for Ketogenic Therapies was founded in 1994 to provide information about diet therapies for people with epilepsy, other neurological disorders and tumorous cancers.

To enhance the quality of life and opportunities for individuals with disabilities in the Commonwealth, enabling them to become independent, productive, integrated, and fully included in the community through systems change activities which increase access and utilization of Assistive Technology devices and services.
DNA Learning Center: Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory
Direct: (516) 367-5170
Fax: (516) 367-5182
http://www.ygyh.org/index.htm

Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory (CSHL) is a private, not-for-profit research and education institution at the forefront of molecular biology and genetics.

DNA Learning Centers’s educate the public about genetics through the nation’s first science centers dedicated to this purpose.

Family Caregiver Alliance
235 Montgomery Street
Suite 950
San Francisco, CA 94104
Toll Free: (800) 445-8106
Direct: (415) 434-3388
https://www.caregiver.org/

Family Caregiver Alliance is the first community-based nonprofit organization in the country to address the needs of families and friends providing long-term care for loved ones at home.

FCA, as a public voice for caregivers, shines light on the challenges caregivers face daily and champions their cause through education, services, and advocacy.

The services, education programs, and resources FCA provides are designed with caregivers’ needs in mind and offer support, tailored information, and tools to manage the complex demands of caregiving.

Genetic and Rare Diseases Information Center (GARD)
P.O. Box 8126
Gaithersburg, MD 20898-8126
Toll Free: (888) 205-2311
Fax: (301) 251-4911
https://rarediseases.info.nih.gov/
The Genetic and Rare Diseases (GARD) Information Center is a program of the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) and funded by two parts of the National Institutes of Health (NIH): NCATS and the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI). GARD provides the public with access to current, reliable, and easy to understand information about rare or genetic diseases in English or Spanish.

**Mayo Clinic**  
13400 E. Shea Blvd.  
Scottsdale, AZ 85259  
Direct: (480) 301-8000  

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.

**MedlinePlus**  
8600 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, MD 20894  
custserv@nlm.nih.gov  
[https://medlineplus.gov](https://medlineplus.gov)

MedlinePlus is the National Institutes of Health's Web site for patients and their families and friends. Produced by the National Library of Medicine, the world’s largest medical library, it brings you information about diseases, conditions, and wellness issues in language you can understand. MedlinePlus offers reliable, up-to-date health information, anytime, anywhere, for free.
Mental Health America – founded in 1909 – is the nation's leading community-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness and to promoting the overall mental health of all Americans. Their work is driven by their commitment to promote mental health as a critical part of overall wellness, including prevention services for all, early identification and intervention for those at risk, and integrated care and treatment for those who need it, with recovery as the goal.

National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information.

At NIA, our mission is to discover what may contribute to a healthy old age as well as to understand and address the disease and disability sometimes associated with growing older. In pursuit of these goals, our research program covers a broad range of areas, from the study of basic cellular changes that occur with age to the examination of the
biomedical, social, and behavioral aspects of age-related conditions, including Alzheimer’s disease.

**National Organization for Rare Disorders**

55 Kenosia Avenue  
Danbury, CT 06813-1968  
Toll Free: (800) 999-6673  
Direct: (203) 744-0100  
Fax: (203) 263-9938  
http://www.rarediseases.org

NORD is a unique federation of voluntary health organizations dedicated to helping people with rare "orphan" diseases and assisting the organizations that serve them. NORD is committed to the identification, treatment, and cure of rare disorders through programs of education, advocacy, research, and service.

**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Toll Free: (844) 698-2311  
http://www.va.gov/

The Agency is responsible for providing employment, training, educational and reemployment rights information and assistance to veterans, and other military personnel who are preparing to transition from the military. Also provide hearing aids. All World War I veterans are eligible to receive free hearing aids. Other veterans can receive free hearing aids if their hearing loss is at least 50% service-related.
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