

JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

Accommodation and Compliance Series

Accommodation and Compliance Series: Employees with Bipolar Disorder

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AskJAN.org



ODEP
Office of Disability
Employment Policy

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Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor

Preface

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is funded by a grant from 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.

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Updated 09/12/2022.

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 Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar disorder is a brain disorder marked by periods of elevated mood (mania), and prolonged periods of sadness and hopelessness (depression). These shifts in mood are severe as compared to the average person. Signs and symptoms of mania include distinct periods of:

- Inflated self-esteem or grandiosity
- Decreased need for sleep
- More talkative than usual
- Distractibility
- Increase in goal-directed activity
- Excessive involvement in activities that have a high potential for painful consequences (spending sprees, sexual indiscretions, other risky behaviors)

Signs and symptoms of depression include distinct periods of:

- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism for most of the day
- Diminished interest or pleasure in more, or all, activities
- Significant weight loss
- Insomnia or hypersomnia
- Fatigue or loss of energy

- Feelings of worthlessness and guilt
- Loss of appetite and weight or weight gain
- Diminished ability to think or concentrate
- Recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal ideation

Bipolar Disorder 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 Bipolar Disorder

People with bipolar disorder 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 bipolar disorder 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

Attentiveness/Concentration

- Products
 - Alternative Lighting
 - Applications (apps)
 - Apps for Concentration
 - Apps for Memory
 - Break Reminder Software
 - Countdown Timers
 - Cubicle Doors, Shields, and Shades
 - Desk Organizers
 - Desk Pedal Exercisers
 - Electronic Organizers
 - Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
 - Fidget Devices
 - Focus Enhancement
 - Full Spectrum or Natural Lighting Products
 - Noise Abatement
 - Noise Canceling Earbuds
 - Noise Canceling Headsets
 - Sound Absorption and Sound Proof Panels
 - Timers and Watches
 - Calendars and Planners
- Services
 - Behavior Modification Techniques
 - Job Coaches
- Strategies
 - Coaching

- Color Coded System
- Flexible Schedule
- Job Restructuring
- Marginal Functions
- Modified Break Schedule
- Task Flow Chart
- Task Separation
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Uninterrupted "Off" Work Time
- Verbal Cues
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace
- Written Instructions

Control of Anger/Emotions

- Apps for Miscellaneous Mental Health / Control of Anger & Emotions
- Behavior Modification Techniques
- Counseling/Therapy
- Disability Awareness/Etiquette Training
- Employee Assistance Program
- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
- Flexible Schedule
- Job Coaches
- Job Restructuring
- Simulated Skylights and Windows
- Social Skill Builders
- Strobe Lights
- Sun Boxes and Lights
- Supervisory Methods
- Support Animal
- Support Person

Decreased Stamina/Fatigue

- Products
 - Anti-fatigue Matting
 - Ergonomic Equipment
 - Stand-lean Stools
 - Wearable Anti-fatigue Matting
- Services
 - Aide/Assistant/Attendant
 - Ergonomic Assessments
- Strategies
 - Flexible Schedule
 - Job Restructuring
 - Marginal Functions
 - Modified Break Schedule
 - Periodic Rest Breaks
 - Task Rotation
 - Task Separation
 - Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
 - Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace

Disruptive Behavior

- Apps for Miscellaneous Mental Health / Control of Anger & Emotions
- Behavior Modification Techniques
- Counseling/Therapy
- Cubicle Doors, Shields, and Shades
- Disability Awareness/Etiquette Training
- Employee Assistance Program
- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
- Flexible Schedule
- Habit Monitoring
- Job Coaches
- Job Restructuring

- Noise Canceling Headsets
- On-site Mentoring
- Periodic Rest Breaks
- Reminders
- Social Skill Builders
- Strobe Lights
- Supervisory Methods
- Support Animal
- Support Person
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Training Modifications
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace
- Written Instructions

Erratic/Inconsistent Behavior

- Apps for Miscellaneous Mental Health / Control of Anger & Emotions
- Behavior Modification Techniques
- Counseling/Therapy
- Cubicle Doors, Shields, and Shades
- Disability Awareness/Etiquette Training
- Employee Assistance Program
- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
- Flexible Schedule
- Habit Monitoring
- Job Coaches
- Job Restructuring
- Noise Canceling Headsets
- On-site Mentoring
- Periodic Rest Breaks
- Reminders
- Social Skill Builders

- Strobe Lights
- Supervisory Methods
- Support Animal
- Support Person
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Training Modifications
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace
- 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

Non-compliant Behavior

- Products
 - Apps for Miscellaneous Mental Health / Control of Anger & Emotions
 - Cubicle Doors, Shields, and Shades
 - Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
 - Noise Canceling Headsets
- Services

- Behavior Modification Techniques
- Counseling/Therapy
- Employee Assistance Program
- Strategies
 - Disability Awareness/Etiquette Training
 - Flexible Schedule
 - Habit Monitoring
 - Job Restructuring
 - On-site Mentoring
 - Periodic Rest Breaks
 - Reminders
 - Supervisory Methods
 - Support Person
 - Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
 - Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace
 - Training Modifications
 - Written Instructions

Organizing/Planning/Prioritizing

- Products
 - Applications (apps)
 - Apps for Organization/ Time Management
 - Desk Organizers
 - Electronic Organizers
 - Ergonomic Equipment
 - Labels/Bulletin Board
 - Note Collection Software and Technology
 - Notepad or White Board
 - Organization Software
 - Professional Organizers
 - Timers and Watches
 - Calendars and Planners

- Workflow Management Software
- Services
 - Job Coaches
 - Professional Organizers
- Strategies
 - Additional Training Time / Training Refreshers
 - Checklists
 - Color Coded System
 - Color-coded Manuals, Outlines, and Maps
 - Job Restructuring
 - On-site Mentoring
 - Organization/Prioritization Skills
 - Recorded Directives, Messages, Materials
 - Reminders
 - Supervisory Methods
 - Task Flow Chart
 - Task Identification
 - Task Separation
 - Written Instructions

Stress Intolerance

- Products
 - Apps for Anxiety and Stress
 - Apps for Individuals with Bipolar Disorder
 - Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
 - Simulated Skylights and Windows
 - Sun Boxes and Lights
 - Sun Simulating Desk Lamps
- Services
 - Behavior Modification Techniques
 - Counseling/Therapy

- Employee Assistance Program
- Strategies
 - Communicate Another Way
 - Complying with Behavior and Conduct Rules
 - Flexible Schedule
 - Instant Messaging and Texting Solutions for Businesses
 - Job Restructuring
 - Marginal Functions
 - Modified Break Schedule
 - On-site Mentoring
 - One-on-One Communication
 - Policy Modification
 - Positive Feedback
 - Supervisory Feedback
 - Supervisory Methods
 - Support Animal
 - Support Person

Work-Related Functions

Policies

- Additional Training Time / Training Refreshers
- Aide/Assistant/Attendant
- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
- Flexible Schedule
- Marginal Functions
- Modified Break Schedule
- Periodic Rest Breaks
- Physical/Social Distancing Signage
- Policy Modification
- Reassignment

- Service Animal
- Sleep Alerting Devices
- Strobe Lights
- Supervisory Methods
- Support Animal
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Touchless Faucets

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:

A supervisor of a printing company requested information on how to accommodate an employee who has reduced concentration and memory loss due to mental illness.

His duties included operating copy machines, maintaining the paper supply, filling orders, and checking the orders for accuracy. He was having difficulty staying on task and remembering what tasks he had completed. A JAN consultant suggested laminating a copy of his daily job tasks and checking items off with an erasable marker. Another suggestion was to use a watch with an alarm set for every hour as a reminder to check on his other job responsibilities.

A JAN consultant spoke with an employee with bipolar disorder who had difficulty with short-term memory and concentration.

The employee worked as a secretary in a busy office. The JAN consultant discussed requesting additional training time, written job tasks instructions, daily checklists, and allowing one hour each day to be off the phones to complete job tasks.

An employee with major depression and bipolar disorder was having difficulties working in a busy central banking office.

He needed to manage a large staff of workers, provide customer service, and oversee the daily office management. As an accommodation he requested and received a transfer to a smaller and less busy branch office. The employee maintained his salary and the responsibilities of his leadership role.

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.

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.

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.

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

8701 Georgia Ave.
Suite #412
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Direct: (240) 485-1001
Fax: (240) 485-1035
<https://adaa.org/>

ADAA is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to the prevention, treatment, and cure of anxiety and mood disorders, OCD, and PTSD and to improving the lives of all people who suffer from them through education, practice, and research.

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.

Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation

940 Commonwealth Ave.
West Boston, MA 02215
Direct: (617) 353-3549
Fax: (617) 358-3066
psyrehab@bu.edu
<http://cpr.bu.edu/>

The Center is a research, training, and service organization dedicated to improving the lives of persons who have psychiatric disabilities. Our work is guided by the most basic of rehabilitation values, that first and foremost, persons with psychiatric disabilities have the same goals and dreams as any other person. Our mission is to increase the likelihood that they can achieve these goals by improving the effectiveness of people, programs, and service systems using strategies based on the core values of recovery and rehabilitation.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Rd
Atlanta, GA 30333
Toll Free: (800) 232-4636
<https://www.cdc.gov/>

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.

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

55 E. Jackson Blvd,

Suite 490

Chicago, IL 60604

Toll Free: (800) 826-3632

Fax: (312) 642-7243

<http://www.dbsalliance.org/site/PageServer?pagename=me>

The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) is the leading peer-directed national organization focusing on the two most prevalent mental health conditions, depression and bipolar disorder, which affect more than 21 million Americans, account for 90% of the nation's suicides every year, and cost \$23 billion in lost workdays and other workplace losses.

Families for Depression Awareness

395 Totten Pond Road,

Suite 404

Waltham, MA 02451

Direct: (781) 890-0220

Fax: (781) 890-2411

<http://familyaware.org/>

Families for Depression Awareness is a national nonprofit organization helping families recognize and cope with depression and bipolar disorder to get people well and prevent suicides.

International Bipolar Foundation

8895 Town Centre Drive

Suite 105-360

San Diego, CA 92122

Direct: (858) 764-2496

Fax: (858) 764-2491

<http://ibpf.org/>

The mission of International Bipolar Foundation is to improve understanding and treatment of bipolar disorder through research; to promote care and support resources for individuals and caregivers; and to erase stigma through education.

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.

MedlinePlus

8600 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20894
custserv@nlm.nih.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

500 Montgomery Street
Suite 820
Alexandria, VA 22314
Toll Free: (800) 969-6642
Direct: (703) 684-7722
Fax: (703) 684-5968
<https://www.mhanational.org>

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 Alliance on Mental Illness

3803 N. Fairfax Dr.,
Ste. 100
Arlington, VA 22203
Toll Free: (800) 950-6264
Direct: (703) 524-7600
<http://www.nami.org>

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. NAMI advocates for access to services, treatment, supports and research and is steadfast in its commitment to raise awareness and build a community for hope for all those in need.

National Center for Biotechnology Information

8600 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20894
pubmedcentral@ncbi.nlm.nih.gov
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>

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

National Institute of Mental Health

6001 Executive Boulevard
Rockville, MD 20852
Toll Free: (866) 615-6464
Direct: (301) 443-4513
Fax: (301) 443-4279
nimhinfo@nih.gov
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

NIMH offers a variety of publications and other educational resources to help people with mental disorders, the general public, mental health and health care practitioners, and researchers gain a better understanding of mental illnesses and the research programs of the NIMH. All publications and educational materials are written by science writers, in collaboration with NIMH scientists and outside reviewers.

Remedy's Health Communities

<http://www.healthcommunities.com>

Remedy Health Media is America's fastest growing health information and technology company. We are a leading provider of clinical resources and wellness tools that help millions of patients and caregivers live healthier, more fulfilled lives.

Our mission is to empower patients and caregivers with the information and applications needed to efficiently navigate the healthcare landscape and as a result, to permit better health outcomes through use of our products and services.

Tourette Syndrome "Plus"

940 Lincoln Place
North Bellmore, NY 11701-1016
Direct: (516) 785-2653
admin@tourettesyndrome.net
<http://www.tourettesyndrome.net/>

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.

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.

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