

JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

Accommodation and Compliance Series

Accommodation and Compliance Series: Electrical Sensitivity

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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 Electrical Sensitivity

There are people who report a sensitivity to electromagnetic fields. Although it has been difficult for the environmental health and medical communities to define, individuals with electromagnetic sensitivity report various symptoms including but not limited to fatigue, weakness, neurological issues, immunological issues, gastrointestinal issues, increased irritability, lack of ability to think clearly and quickly, sleep disturbance, overall malaise, and anxiety. Despite the medical community's difficulty in defining electromagnetic sensitivity, individuals with the condition may benefit from job accommodations.

Electrical Sensitivity 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 Electrical Sensitivity

People with electrical/electromagnetic sensitivity 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 electrical/electromagnetic sensitivity 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

- Alerting Devices
- Alternative Lighting
- Applications (apps)
- Apps for Memory
- Behavior Modification Techniques
- Calendars and Planners
- Cubicle Doors, Shields, and Shades
- Electronic Organizers
- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
- Flexible Schedule
- Full Spectrum or Natural Lighting Products
- Job Coaches

- Job Restructuring
- Marginal Functions
- Modified Break Schedule
- Noise Canceling Headsets
- Personal On-Site Paging Devices
- Professional Organizers
- Sound Absorption and Sound Proof Panels
- Task Separation
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Timers and Watches
- Uninterrupted "Off" Work Time
- Verbal Cues
- Visual Schedulers
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace
- Written Instructions

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

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

Photosensitivity

- Alternative Lighting
- Anti-Glare Filters for Fluorescent Lights
- Cubicle Doors, Shields, and Shades

- Fluorescent Light Tube Covers
- Full Spectrum or Natural Lighting Products
- LED Light Filters
- Light Filtering Glasses
- Lighting Gel Filters
- Sun/UV Protective Clothing
- Vehicle Window Tinting and Shades

Respiratory Distress/Breathing Problem

- Air Cleaners & Purifiers
- Air Cleaners - Chemical/Odor Removal
- Air Cleaning Systems
- Air Purifiers for Multiple Chemical Sensitivity
- Alternative Cleaning Supplies
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Device
- Carpet Alternatives, Sealants, and Sustainable Flooring
- Escape Hoods
- Flexible Schedule
- Floor Cleaning/Stripping Products - Chemical Sensitivity
- Low/No Odor Paints and Stains
- Mask Brackets and Frames
- Masks - Respirator
- Masks – General/Chemical/Allergen
- Odor Control
- Outgoing Voice Amplification - Telephone
- Personal Air Cleaner (Neckworn)
- Personal On-Site Paging Devices
- Powered Air Purifying Respirator (PAPR)
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Voice Amplification

Stress Intolerance

- Apps for Anxiety and Stress
- Behavior Modification Techniques
- Counseling/Therapy
- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
- Flexible Schedule
- Job Restructuring
- Marginal Functions
- Modified Break Schedule
- Supervisory Methods
- Support Animal
- Support Person

Work-Related Functions

Light

- Alternative Lighting
- Anti-Glare Filters for Fluorescent Lights
- Flexible Schedule
- Fluorescent Light Tube Covers
- Full Spectrum or Natural Lighting Products
- LED Light Filters
- LED Lighting
- Lighting Gel Filters
- Modified Lighting
- Non-Fluorescent Lighting
- Personal Visors
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

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

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 company policy allowing anyone to work from home changed following a merger.

The new company allowed an employee with electrical sensitivity to continue working from home as an accommodation, modifying the new policy and adjusting the way meetings were conducted.

A new hire with electrical sensitivity requested alternative means of communication because the wireless phones triggered symptoms.

The employer provided a wired telephone as an alternative in addition to increasing face-to-face communication.

After moving to a new facility an employee with electrical sensitivity noticed that exposure to devices in the “open concept” office was triggering symptoms.

The employer moved the employees' workspace and allowed the use of a cubicle wall and shielding equipment as an accommodation.

An employee with electrical sensitivity was experiencing increased symptoms during staff meetings.

As an accommodation the employer introduced a policy restricting the use of devices that triggered symptoms during meetings.

An employee with electrical sensitivity was provided with a Plexiglas shield for their computer and phone as an accommodation.

They were also permitted to use a typewriter or handwritten notes in place of the computer for internal communication purposes.

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

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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.

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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.

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Founded on the Principles of Bau-Biologie® (Building Biology), brought from Germany to North America and the rest of the English-speaking world by the renowned architect Helmut Ziehe, our mission is to help create healthy homes, schools, and workplaces, free of toxins in the indoor air and tapwater, and electromagnetic pollutants.

We guide both the general public and working professionals (architects, builders, engineers, physicians and other health care practitioners, design consultants, etc.) to an understanding of the vital, complex relationship between the natural and built environments, and teach them the means for merging these complementary environments into greater harmony.

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