

# JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

## Accommodation and Compliance Series

# Accommodation and Compliance Series: Employees with Respiratory Impairments

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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.

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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 Respiratory Impairments**

Respiratory impairment is a generic term that refers to a number of medical conditions that can affect the respiratory system and may result in limitations such as labored breathing or asthma attacks, fatigue and difficulty with mobility, heightened sensitivity to ordinary substances and chemicals, and compromised immunity to infection.

The following is a non-comprehensive list of many of the medical conditions that may result in respiratory impairments: Allergies, Asthma, Chemical Sensitivity (MCS), Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, Cystic Fibrosis, Environmental Illness (EI), Fragrance Sensitivity, Lung Cancer, Pulmonary Sarcoidosis, Tuberculosis, Emphysema, Pulmonary Hypertension, Latex Allergy, and AIDS Related Lung Disease.

### **Respiratory Impairments 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 Respiratory Impairments**

People with respiratory impairments 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 respiratory impairments 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**

##### Respiratory Distress/Breathing Problem

- Products
  - Air Cleaners & Purifiers
  - Air Cleaners - Chemical/Odor Removal
  - Air Cleaning Systems
  - Air Purifiers for Multiple Chemical Sensitivity
  - Alternative Cleaning Supplies
  - Carpet Alternatives, Sealants, and Sustainable Flooring
  - Floor Cleaning/Stripping Products - Chemical Sensitivity
  - Low/No Odor Paints and Stains

- Masks - Smoke Allergy
- Odor/Fragrance/Chemical Masks
- Personal Air Cleaner (Neckworn)
- Powered Air Purifying Respirator (PAPR)
- Respirator Masks
- Strategies
  - Flexible Schedule
  - Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

## **Work-Related Functions**

### Air Quality/Irritants

- Products
  - Air Cleaners & Purifiers
  - Air Cleaners - Chemical/Odor Removal
  - Air Cleaning Systems
  - Air Purifiers for Multiple Chemical Sensitivity
  - Alternative Cleaning Supplies
  - Carpet Alternatives, Sealants, and Sustainable Flooring
  - Floor Cleaning/Stripping Products - Chemical Sensitivity
  - Low/No Odor Paints and Stains
  - Masks - Smoke Allergy
  - Odor/Fragrance/Chemical Masks
  - Personal Air Cleaner (Neckworn)
  - Powered Air Purifying Respirator (PAPR)
  - Respirator Masks
- Strategies
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  - Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

### Parking

- Accessible Parking Space
- Flexible Schedule

- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Wheelchairs

#### Work Site Access

- Products
  - Portable Ramps
  - Ramps
  - Scooters
  - Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace
- Strategies
  - Flexible Schedule
  - Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

## Situations and Solutions:

**A teacher diagnosed with sick building syndrome was required to attend weekly faculty meetings in the school building.**

She usually taught class from a portable classroom outside of the building and could not be in the school building for extended time. JAN suggested that she use either a speakerphone or public address (PA) system from her classroom to listen in and participate in the meetings, be provided with meeting minutes, or attend the meetings and wear a respirator mask if she felt comfortable doing so.

**An office worker with fragrance sensitivity was having difficulty because of the cleaning products used in the employee restroom.**

JAN provided information about non-toxic cleaning products.

**An employee with bronchial asthma could not work in hot environments.**

JAN discussed air-conditioning, including a window unit for the employee's office if the employer could not install central air.

**A hospital worker with COPD had difficulty walking from the employee lot to the work-site.**

The parking lot was very large and employees parked on a first-come, first-serve basis. JAN suggested providing a reserved parking space close to the work-site.

## 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](mailto: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  
[odep@dol.gov](mailto:odep@dol.gov)  
<http://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.

### **American Cancer Society**

250 Williams Street NW  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
Toll Free: (800) 227-2345  
<http://www.cancer.org>



The American Cancer Society is the nationwide community-based voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by preventing cancer, saving lives, and diminishing suffering from cancer, through research, education, advocacy, and service.

### **American Lung Association**

55 W. Wacker Drive,  
Suite 1150  
Chicago, IL 60601  
Toll Free: (800) 548-8252  
[info@lung.org](mailto:info@lung.org)  
<http://www.lungusa.org/>

The American Lung Association is leading the way in helping all Americans breathe easier. Thanks to our donors, volunteers, program and event participants, and staff, we are America's trusted source for lung health education, lung disease research, support, programs, services and advocacy.

### **Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America**

8201 Corporate Drive  
Suite 1000  
Landover, MD 20785  
Toll Free: (800) 727-8462  
[info@aafa.org](mailto:info@aafa.org)  
<http://www.aafa.org/>

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) is the premier patient organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with asthma and allergies and their caregivers, through education, advocacy and research. AAFA, a not-for-profit organization founded in 1953, provides practical information, community based services, support and referrals through a national network of chapters and educational support groups. AAFA also sponsors research toward better treatments and a cure for asthma and allergic diseases.

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

1600 Clifton Rd  
Atlanta, GA 30333  
Toll Free: (800) 232-4636  
<http://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.

### **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](mailto:custserv@nlm.nih.gov)  
<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/>

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.

Created by the U.S. National Library of Medicine

### **National Center for Biotechnology Information**

8600 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, MD 20894  
[pubmedcentral@ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](mailto:pubmedcentral@ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)  
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>

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.

### **National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute**

P.O. Box 30105  
Attention: Website  
Bethesda, MD 20824-0105  
Direct: (301) 592-8573  
Fax: (240) 629-3246  
[nhlbiinfo@nhlbi.nih.gov](mailto:nhlbiinfo@nhlbi.nih.gov)  
<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/>

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) provides leadership for a national program in diseases of the heart, blood vessels, lung, and blood.

### **National Institute on Aging**

31 Center Drive  
MSC 2292  
Bethesda, MD 20892  
Toll Free: (800) 222-2225  
[niaic@nia.nih.gov](mailto:niaic@nia.nih.gov)  
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/>

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 Jewish Health**

1400 Jackson Street

Denver, CO 80206

Toll Free: (877) 225-5654

Direct: (303) 388-4461

<http://www.nationaljewish.org/>

National Jewish Health is known worldwide for treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders, and for groundbreaking medical research. Founded in 1899 as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health remains the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to these disorders. *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked National Jewish Health as the number one or number two hospital in pulmonology on its Best Hospitals list ever since pulmonology was included in the rankings.

**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.

**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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