

# JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

## Accommodation and Compliance Series

# Accommodation and Compliance Series: Employees with Personality Disorder

Job Accommodation Network  
PO Box 6080  
Morgantown, WV 26506-6080  
(800)526-7234 (V)  
(877)781-9403 (TTY)  
[jan@askjan.org](mailto:jan@askjan.org)  
[AskJAN.org](http://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 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 Personality Disorder

A personality disorder is an enduring pattern of inner experience and behavior that deviates markedly from the expectations of the individual's culture, is pervasive and inflexible, has an onset in adolescence or early adulthood, is stable over time, and leads to distress or impairment. There are 10 specific personality disorders. They are as follows:

- **Paranoid personality disorder** – a pattern of distrust and suspiciousness such that others' motives are interpreted as malevolent.
- **Schizoid personality disorder** – a pattern of detachment from social relationship and a restricted range of emotional expression.
- **Schizotypal personality disorder** – a pattern of acute discomfort in close relationships, cognitive or perceptual distortions, and eccentricities of behavior.
- **Antisocial personality disorder** – a pattern of disregard for, and violation of, the rights of others.
- **Borderline personality disorder** – a pattern of instability in interpersonal relationships, self-image, and affects, and marked impulsivity.
- **Histrionic personality disorder** – a pattern of excessive emotionality and attention seeking.
- **Narcissistic personality disorder** – a pattern of grandiosity, need for admiration, and lack of empathy.

- **Avoidant personality disorder** – a pattern of social inhibition, feelings of inadequacy, and hypersensitivity to negative evaluation.
- **Dependent personality disorder** – a pattern of submissive and clinging behavior related to an excessive need to be taken care of.
- **Obsessive compulsive personality disorder** – a pattern of preoccupations with orderliness, perfectionism, and control.

JAN's [Effective Accommodation Practices \(EAP\) Series: Executive Functioning Deficits](#) is a publication detailing accommodations for individuals with limitations related to executive functioning. These ideas may be helpful in determining accommodations.

## **Personality 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 Personality Disorder**

People with personality disorders 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 personality disorders 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**

#### 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

#### Executive Functioning Deficits

- Apps for Concentration
- Apps for Memory
- 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
- Memory Software
- 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
- Wall Calendars and Planners
- Written Instructions

#### Non-compliant 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

#### 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**

### 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

## Situations and Solutions:

### **An employee with obsessive compulsive personality disorder works as an administrative assistant for a physician's office.**

After being hired, she discloses her condition and requests accommodations in the form of written instructions, checklists, and a private workspace. The employer agrees to the accommodations. A few weeks into the job, the employee tells her supervisor she does not like the documentation system the office is using, and will be making changes as she sees fit. The supervisor explains that will not be tolerated, that she needs to follow their protocol, but the employee follows through with making her own changes. The supervisor takes disciplinary action and tells the employee if she continues to go against the employer's protocol that she could be terminated. The employee responds by writing an e-mail to the supervisor outlining how her way of doing things is better and why the employer should make the changes she is suggesting. The employer insists it will not make the changes and the employee needs to comply. The employee continues to defy the employer's instruction and is terminated.

### **An employee with borderline personality disorder works as a hairstylist in a beauty salon.**

At times, she becomes very upset and leaves work abruptly. The supervisor meets with her regarding these occurrences and the employee discloses her disability and explains that because of her work schedule, she has been unable to attend therapy and psychiatrist appointments, which has resulted in an exacerbation of her symptoms. The employer suggests providing her a consistent schedule, allowing her to keep the early part of the day open for her therapist and doctor appointments. The employer also agrees to allow the employee to take two additional unpaid breaks per shift. The accommodations result in the employee getting the treatment she needs, allowing her to continue working successfully in her position.

### **An employee with antisocial personality disorder works as a construction worker.**

One day while at work, the employee tells a coworker he does not like him and that the coworker should watch his back. The coworker reports this to the supervisor who then addresses the employee about the comment. The supervisor asks what the problem is, and the employee responds only by saying he just does not like the coworker. The supervisor tells the employee that if he threatens his coworker again he will be terminated. A week later the employee threatens his coworker again. The supervisor terminates the employee. In response, the employee discloses that he has antisocial personality disorder. The employer has no obligation to rescind the termination because it occurred prior to the employee's disclosure.

### **An employee with schizoid personality disorder has worked in a call center as a customer service representative for two years.**

Due to business necessity, the employer restructures the employee's position to include face to face interactions with customers. The employer begins receiving complaints from customers that the employee is acting in a rude and generally unfriendly manner. When the issue is brought up during a performance evaluation, the employee discloses

his schizoid personality disorder, and explains that it affects his ability to show appropriate affect. He generally appears unenthusiastic regardless of what is happening. As a result, he may appear to be acting rude or disinterested when interacting with customers in person. The employer reassigns the employee to a position where he can work on the phones exclusively again.

**An employee with avoidant personality disorder works as a vocational specialist for a disability insurance company.**

Originally, the employee's position allowed him to work from home full time. Recently, the company decides to begin transitioning some of its teleworking employees back into the office. The employee discloses his condition and requests he be allowed to continue working from home as an accommodation. The employee provides medical documentation explaining that he experiences intense feelings of inadequacy and discomfort when around others and would not be able to perform at the same level in an office environment as he would at home. As a result, the employer allows the employee to continue working from home.

**An employee with histrionic personality disorder works in a cubicle environment as an insurance claims processor.**

She is regularly talking and distracting her coworkers, at times talking about very personal issues and having crying fits. At other times the employee will be very physical with coworkers, hugging and talking about how much she loves being around them. The employee's behavior is generally disruptive, and when the supervisor confronts her about this, the employee discloses her condition. The employee provides medical documentation that states that she would benefit from working in a more private space where it is not so easy for her to talk to coworkers and listening to music on earphones while doing work off the phones. The employer is able to provide these accommodations, which prove to be effective.

**An employee with schizotypal personality disorder just started working as a cashier in a small department store.**

Within three weeks, the employer receives four comments from customers regarding the employee's behavior, that the employee had begun talking to them about strange things including aliens and various conspiracy theories. The employer meets with the employee to discuss these occurrences, at which point the employee discloses her disability. The employee provides medical documentation that states that the employee will at times have episodes where she will think and talk about things that are not grounded in reality and that while medication can help to prevent such occurrences, they will inevitably occur on an almost daily basis. Because it is an essential function to be able to communicate effectively with customers, and the employee's eccentric behavior is not in compliance with the employer's conduct standards, the employer determines the employee is not qualified for the position. Because the employee wasn't qualified for the position from the point of hire, the employer does not have an obligation to consider reassignment, but does anyway, reassigning the employee to a position as a stock clerk, which requires much less interaction with customers.

**An employee with narcissistic personality disorder is hired as a project manager for a software development company.**

The employee tells his subordinates that he will be replacing the "incompetent" president of the company within two years, so they had better respect him. One of his subordinates tells the vice president of the company, who tells the president. The president puts the employee on probation, explaining that the next such conduct violation would result in termination. Three months later, the project manager sends out a memo to everyone on his team outlining his accomplishments and how he deserves the praise of his team members and the company. He ends the memo by signing off as the future president of the company. The memo makes its way to the president who then terminates the employee. The employee then discloses he has a personality disorder. The employer follows through with the termination as there is no obligation to excuse prior conduct violations that occur before the employer is made aware of the condition.

**An individual with paranoid personality disorder is working as a financial consultant for a large marketing firm.**

Due to his condition, he often feels like coworkers and supervisors are looking for ways to hurt or sabotage him. He has been going to therapy and is aware that at least some of his beliefs are not true. He decides to disclose his disability and requests more frequent interactions with the supervisor to insure effective communication, the ability to have a support person present for performance evaluations, and a flexible schedule to allow for continued therapy appointments. The employer agrees to provide the accommodations and the employee is able to remain in his position and continue to work effectively.

## **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 Psychiatric Association**

1000 Wilson Blvd  
Suite 1825  
Arlington, VA 22209-3901  
Toll Free: (888) 357-7924  
Direct: (703) 907-7300  
[apa@psych.org](mailto:apa@psych.org)  
<http://www.psych.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.

### **Borderline Personality Disorder Resource Center**

Toll Free: (888) 694-2273

[bpdresourcecenter@nyp.org](mailto:bpdresourcecenter@nyp.org)

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

The mission of the Borderline Personality Disorder Resource Center (BPDRC) is to promote BPD education and connect those affected by BPD to established resources for treatment and support.

### **BPDWORLD**

<http://www.bpdworld.org>

BPDWORLD has information that focuses on borderline personality disorder (BPD) The Web site has a lot of information available to all, including depression, self-harm, anxiety and much more. The site offers the best support services available on the net with forums, chat, peer support ticket system, live chat to our volunteers and a great journal system.

### **Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation**

940 Commonwealth Ave.

West Boston, MA 02215

Direct: (617) 353-3549

Fax: (617) 358-3066

[psyrehab@bu.edu](mailto: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.

**International OCD Foundation Inc.**

PO Box 961029

Boston, MA 02196

Direct: (617) 973-5801

Fax: (617) 973-5803

[info@iocdf.org](mailto:info@iocdf.org)

<http://iocdf.org/>

The International OCD Foundation is a donor-supported nonprofit organization. Founded in 1986 by a small group of individuals with OCD, the Foundation has grown into an international membership-based organization serving a broad community of individuals with OCD and related disorders, their family members and loved ones, and mental health professionals and researchers around the world. We have affiliates in 25 states and territories in the US, in addition to global partnerships with other OCD organizations and mental health non-profits around the world.

**Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law**

1101 15th St. NW

Suite 1212

Washington, DC 20005

Direct: (202) 467-5730

Fax: (202) 223-0409

[communications@bazelon.org](mailto:communications@bazelon.org)

<http://www.bazelon.org>

The mission of the Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law is to protect and advance the rights of adults and children who have mental disabilities. The Bazelon Center envisions an America where people who have mental illnesses or developmental disabilities exercise their own life choices and have access to the resources that enable them to participate fully in their communities.

**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

**Mental Health America**

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

Mental Health America (MHA) – 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. Our work is driven by our 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](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 Education Alliance for Borderline Personality Disorder**

[neabpd@aol.com](mailto:neabpd@aol.com)  
<http://www.borderlinepersonalitydisorder.com/>

NEA.BPD National Education Alliance for Borderline Personality Disorder is a nationally recognized organization dedicated to building better lives for millions of Americans affected by Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD).

NEA.BPD works with families and persons in recovery, raises public awareness, provides education to professionals, promotes research, and works with Congress to enhance the quality of life for those affected by this serious but treatable mental illness.

### **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](mailto: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.

### **National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse**

1211 Chestnut Street  
Suite 1100  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
Toll Free: (800) 553-4539  
Direct: (215) 751-1810  
Fax: (215) 636-6312  
[info@mhsselfhelp.org](mailto:info@mhsselfhelp.org)  
<http://www.mhsselfhelp.org>

The National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse, the nation's first peer-run national technical assistance center, has played a major role in the development of the mental health consumer/survivor/ex-patient (c/s/x) movement. The movement strives for dignity, respect, and opportunity for those diagnosed with mental health conditions, often called peers. Individuals who receive or have received mental health services continue to reject the label of "those who cannot help themselves." Instead, they -- and we -- proclaim, "Nothing about us without us."

## **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.

## **Out of the Fog**

<http://outofthefog.website/>

Out of the FOG was launched in 2007 to provide information and support to the family members and loved-ones of individuals who suffer from a personality disorder. We are a supportive, close-knit community, encouraging one another through the many challenges that come with having a family member or significant other who has a personality disorder. You can join our support community here.

## **Personality Disorder Awareness Network (PDAN)**

1072 W Peachtree St  
NW #79468  
Atlanta, FL 30357  
Direct: (209) 732-6001  
[info@pdan.org](mailto:info@pdan.org)  
<http://www.pdan.org/>

Personality Disorder Awareness Network (PDAN) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to increasing public awareness of personality disorders, alleviating the impact of personality disorders on families, and preventing the development of personality disorders in children.

## **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

1 Choke Cherry Road  
Rockville, MD 20857  
Toll Free: (877)726-4727  
[SAMHSAInfo@samhsa.hhs.gov](mailto:SAMHSAInfo@samhsa.hhs.gov)  
<http://www.samhsa.gov>

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.

## **Treatment and Research Advancements for Borderline personality Disorder**

23 Greene Street  
New York, NY 10013  
Direct: (212) 966-6514  
[tara4bpd@gmail.com](mailto:tara4bpd@gmail.com)  
<http://www.tara4bpd.org>

The Treatment and Research Advancements for Borderline personality Disorder is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to foster education and research in the field of personality disorder, specifically but not exclusively Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD); to support research into the causes, psychobiology and treatment of personality disorders; to support and encourage educational programs and endeavors targeting mental health professionals, consumers of mental health services, families and/or the community at large in order to reduce stigma and increase awareness of personality disorder, to disseminate available information on etiology and treatment and to lawfully advocate for accomplishments of these goals.

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