

# JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

## Accommodation and Compliance Series

# Accommodation and Compliance Series: Chronic Pain

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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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## **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 Chronic Pain**

Chronic pain has been said to be the most costly health problem in America. While acute pain is a normal sensation triggered in the nervous system to alert you to possible injury and the need to take care of yourself, chronic pain is different. Chronic pain persists. Pain signals keep firing in the nervous system for weeks, months, even years or a lifetime. Living with chronic pain can lead to loss of appetite, depression, and exhaustion. The pain associated with chronic pain usually overwhelms all other symptoms. Chronic pain can be caused by headaches, low back pain, cancer pain, arthritis pain, pain in the nervous system, and psychological pain.

### **Chronic Pain 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 Chronic Pain**

People with chronic pain 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 arthritis 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**

##### Decreased Stamina/Fatigue

- Accessories for Scooters
- Aide/Assistant/Attendant
- All-Terrain Scooters
- Anti-fatigue Matting
- Elevating Wheelchairs
- Ergonomic and Pneumatic Tools
- Ergonomic Assessments
- Ergonomic Equipment
- Examination and Procedures Chair
- Flexible Schedule

- Head Support for Wheelchairs
- Job Restructuring
- Low Task Chair
- Mechanic's Seats and Creepers
- Multi-Purpose Carts
- Periodic Rest Breaks
- Scooters
- Stand-lean Stools
- Stools for Cutting Hair
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Walkers
- Wearable Anti-fatigue Matting
- Wheelchair Accessible Scales
- Wheelchair Mounts
- Wheelchairs
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace

#### Feeling/Sensing

- Aide/Assistant/Attendant
- Alternative Input Devices
- Alternative Keyboards
- Alternative Mice
- Anti-vibration Gloves
- Anti-vibration Tool Wraps
- Articulating Keyboard Trays
- Book Holders
- Ergonomic and Pneumatic Tools
- Forearm Support
- Grip Aids
- Keyguards
- On-Screen Keyboards
- One-Handed Keyboards

- One-Handed Keyboard Software
- Page Turners
- Periodic Rest Breaks
- Scribe/Notetaker
- Speech Recognition Software
- Task Rotation
- Tool Balancers
- Writing Aids

## Pain

- Industrial
  - Adjustable Workstations for Industrial Settings
  - Anti-fatigue Matting
  - Anti-vibration Gloves
  - Anti-vibration Seats
  - Anti-vibration Tool Wraps
  - Carts
  - Compact Material Handling
  - Wearable Anti-fatigue Matting
- Office
  - Adjustable Workstations for Office Settings
  - Alternative Keyboards
  - Alternative Mice
  - Chairs with Head Support
  - Ergonomic and Adjustable Office Chairs
  - Ergonomic Assessments
  - Ergonomic Equipment
  - Forearm Support
  - Gooseneck and Other Telephone Holders
  - Scribe/Notetaker
  - Speech Recognition Software
  - Supine Workstations

- Writing Aids
- Other
  - Aide/Assistant/Attendant
  - Automatic Door Openers
  - Flexible Schedule
  - Modified Break Schedule
  - Scooters
  - Service Animal
  - Stand-lean Stools
  - Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
  - Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace
  - Workstation Space Heaters

## Sitting

- Adjustable Drafting Tables
- Adjustable Pedicure Chairs
- Adjustable Workstations for Industrial Settings
- Adjustable Workstations for Office Settings
- Chairs and Stools for Medical Services
- Clean Room Stools
- Ergonomic and Adjustable Office Chairs
- Ergonomic and Pneumatic Tools
- Ergonomic Assessments
- Ergonomic Equipment
- Forward Leaning Chairs
- Handheld Computers (General)
- Headsets
- Large-Rated Chairs
- Low Task Chair
- Lumbar Cushions
- Periodic Rest Breaks
- Proper Sitting / Standing Techniques

- Stand-lean Stools
- Stools for Cutting Hair
- Supine Workstations
- Treadmill / Pedal Workstations
- Van Conversion

#### 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

#### Toileting/Grooming Issue

- Accessible Toilets and Toilet Seats
- Aide/Assistant/Attendant
- Flexible Schedule
- Grab Bars - Toilet Hinged Arm Support
- Grooming and Dressing Aids
- Independent Living Aids
- Modified Break Schedule
- Swing Away Grab Bars
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Toileting Aids
- Transfer Aids
- Transfer Sheets



- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace

## **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
- Job Restructuring
- Flexible Schedule
- Marginal Functions
- Modified Break Schedule
- On-site Mentoring

- Service Animal
- Simulated Skylights and Windows
- Supervisory Methods
- Support Animal
- Support Person
- Task Rotation
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Uninterrupted Work Time

#### Temperature

- Air Deflectors
- Cold Resistant Gloves
- Cooling Clothing
- Fans
- Flexible Schedule
- Foot Warmers
- Heat Resistant Gloves
- Heated Clothing
- Heated Ergonomic and Computer Products
- Heated Gloves
- Modified Break Schedule
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Vent Covers
- Workstation Space Heaters

## 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 human resources manager had chronic pain due to a car accident.**

The individual was having difficulty getting to work on time. He was accommodated with a flexible schedule to allow more time to access public transit.

### **An assembly line worker with chronic pain was having difficulty standing for long periods.**

He was accommodated with a sit-lean stool and anti-fatigue matting.

### **An individual with chronic pain due to a back injury was having difficulty sitting throughout the day.**

She was accommodated with a reclining workstation.

### **An appointment secretary was reprimanded for poor attendance due to chronic pain.**

She was provided periodic rest breaks when at work and allowed telecommuting part-time.

### **A medical technician with chronic pain was restricted from doing repetitive work.**

He was required to perform typing throughout the day. He was transferred to another job requiring less repetition.

### **A switchboard operator with chronic pain and fibromyalgia was accommodated with flexible scheduling, rest breaks, and an adjustable workstation.**

The adjustable workstation allowed her to alternate between a sitting and standing position.

## 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)  
<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](mailto: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 Academy of Pain Management**

975 Morning Star Drive  
Suite A  
Sonora, CA 95370  
Direct: (209) 533-9744  
Fax: (209) 533-9750  
[info@aapainmanage.org](mailto:info@aapainmanage.org)  
<http://www.aapainmanage.org>

The mission of the American Academy of Pain Management is to improve the lives of people with Pain by advancing a person centered, integrative model of pain care through evidence-guided education, credentialing, and advocacy.

### **American Chronic Pain Association**

P.O. Box 850  
Rocklin, CA 95677-0850  
Toll Free: (800) 533-3231  
Fax: (916) 632-3208  
[ACPA@theacpa.org](mailto:ACPA@theacpa.org)  
<http://www.theacpa.org>

The purpose of the American Chronic Pain Association is to facilitate peer support and education for individuals with chronic pain and their families so that these individuals may live more fully in spite of their pain.

### **American Occupational Therapy Association**

6116 Executive Boulevard, Suite 200  
North Bethesda, MD 20852-4929  
Direct: (301) 652-6611  
[members@aota.org](mailto: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 Pain Society**

8735 W. Higgins Road,  
Suite 300  
Chicago, IL 60631  
Toll Free: (847) 375-4715  
[info@americanpainsociety.org](mailto:info@americanpainsociety.org)  
<http://www.ampainsoc.org>

The American Pain Society is a multidisciplinary community that brings together a diverse group of scientists, clinicians, and other professionals to increase the knowledge of pain and transform public policy and clinical practice to reduce pain-related suffering.

**American Physical Therapy Association**

<http://www.moveforwardpt.com/Default.aspx>

MoveForwardPT.com is the official consumer information website of the American Physical Therapy Association.

**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.

**Institute for Chronic Pain**

PO Box 193

Stillwater, MN 55082

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

The Institute for Chronic Pain is an educational and public policy think tank whose mission is to change the culture of how chronic pain is treated. We engage in research, development, and promotion of scientifically accurate information related to the field of chronic pain management. We do so by bringing together thought leaders from around the world to provide academic-quality information that is approachable to all stakeholders in the field, particularly, patients, their families, and society, more generally. The staff and fellows of the Institute are specialists in chronic pain management as well as healthcare policy and management.

**International Association for the Study of Pain**

1510 H St. NW

Suite 600

Washington, DC 20005-1020

Direct: (202) 524-5300

Fax: (202) 524-5301

[IASPdesk@iasp-pain.org](mailto:IASPdesk@iasp-pain.org)

<http://www.iasp-pain.org/>

IASP brings together scientists, clinicians, health-care providers, and policymakers to stimulate and support the study of pain and to translate that knowledge into improved pain relief worldwide.

**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://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.

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

8600 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, MD 20894  
[pubmedcentral@ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](mailto: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 Fibromyalgia & Chronic Pain Association**

3857 Birch St. Suite 312  
Newport Beach, CA 92660  
[nfa@fmaware.org](mailto:nfa@fmaware.org)  
<https://www.fmaware.org/>

The National Fibromyalgia & Chronic Pain Association (NFMCPA) is a 501(c)3 not for profit organization. We support people with chronic pain illnesses and their families and friends by contributing to caring, professional, and community relationships. Through continuing education, networking with support groups and advocates, and affiliation with professional organizations, the members of the NFMCPA have a place to be informed, get involved, and recognize achievements.

### **National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke**

P.O. Box 5801  
Bethesda, MD 20824  
Toll Free: (800) 352-9424  
Direct: (301) 496-5751  
<http://www.ninds.nih.gov>

The NINDS, an agency of the U.S. Federal Government and a component of the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Public Health Service, is a lead agency for the congressionally designated Decade of the Brain, and the leading supporter of biomedical research on disorders of the brain and nervous system.



**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.

**Remedy's Health Communitites**

<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.

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