

# JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

## Accommodation and Compliance Series

# Accommodation and Compliance Series: Employees with Blindness

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## 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 Blindness**

The term "blindness" generally refers to a lack of usable vision. Individuals with total blindness are unable to see anything with either eye. Legal blindness is defined as 20/200 or less in the better eye with the best possible correction. Many individuals who are considered legally blind still have some degree of useable vision.

### **Blindness 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 Blindness**

People with blindness 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 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

#### Blind - Total

- Aide/Assistant/Attendant
- Braille Labelers
- Computer Braille Display
- Computer Phone Software
- Detectable Warning Surfaces
- Flexible Schedule
- Headsets - Computer (USB, VOIP etc.)
- High Visibility Floor Tape and Paint
- Job Restructuring
- Keyboard Tops and Labels
- Optical Character Recognition (OCR) Systems - Scan
- Qualified Reader
- Ridesharing/Carpooling
- Screen Reading Software and Training
- Service Animal
- Stair Tread/Textured Tape

- Tactile Dots and Markers
- Talking Bar Code Scanner/Reader
- Talking Cash Register
- Talking Color Detector
- Talking Credit Card Terminal
- Talking Money Identifier
- Telephone Light Sensor
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace

### **Work-Related Functions**

#### Commute

- Flexible Schedule
- Ridesharing/Carpooling
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Transportation Assistance
- Van Conversion
- Walkers

#### Parking

- Flexible Schedule
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

## Situations and Solutions:

**A social service worker at a state agency had no vision and requested reader services to help with accessing documents and information.**

Reader services were provided during half of every workday.

**An applicant was unable to complete a pre-employment typing test because the testing software did not work with his assistive technology.**

The employer offered a reader, but the applicant was concerned that this would not reflect his true ability, since the reader could not match the speed and consistency of a screen reader. The applicant's vocational rehabilitation was able to provide a proctored test of his typing ability using an accessible typing program.

**A university professor who is blind had to attend a conference once a year.**

He was provided with a sighted guide to assist him with travel and with navigating the hotel and conference center.

**An educator at a health care facility had no vision and wanted to bring her service dog to work to assist with mobility.**

The employer allowed the employee to bring the service dog to work.

**An employee working at a resort gift shop who is legally blind had difficulty knowing when a new customer was in the store.**

She also had trouble reading tags on merchandise. She did benefit from magnification. JAN suggested a wireless visitor alert system that would chime when customers walked through the door. To read tags on merchandise, JAN suggested a portable electronic magnifier that the employee could carry everywhere in the store.

**Co-workers decide it would be funny to move furniture around so an employee who is blind will run into it.**

The employee does run into the furniture and is injured. The co-workers are suspended while the employer investigates what happened and they are ultimately terminated.

**An individual with no vision was placed in a switchboard operator position for a large service complex building.**

The person needed to be aware of what telephone lines were on hold, in use, or ringing. She was provided with a light sensor to assist in determining the console buttons that were lit, blinking, and/or steady. The telephone console was also modified to provide the employee with ring differentiation for external versus internal calls.

**A customer service representative for a financial institution lost his vision and could no longer read his computer screen.**

The employer provided screen reading software for his computer so that all information present on the screen and all information inputted into the system would be read back to him.

## 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.

### **Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

3903 Taft Drive  
Anchorage, AK 99517-3069  
Toll Free: (800) 770-7517  
Direct: (907) 248-7770  
<https://www.alaskabvi.org/Pages/default.aspx>



Our mission is to equip Alaskans with vision loss to meet their life and work goals. Celebrating 35 years in 2012, the Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired serves over 300 people of all ages annually with new techniques for communication, mobility, and daily living when loss of eyesight interferes with activities or employment.

**American Council of the Blind**

1703 N. Beauregard St.  
Suite 420  
Alexandria, VA 22201  
Toll Free: (800) 424-8666  
Direct: (202) 467-5081  
Fax: (703) 465-5085  
[info@acb.org](mailto:info@acb.org)  
<http://www.acb.org>

The American Council of the Blind strives to increase the independence, security, equality of opportunity, and quality of life, for all blind and visually-impaired people.

**American Foundation for the Blind**

2 Penn Plaza,  
Suite 1102  
New York, NY 10121  
Direct: (212) 502-7600  
Fax: (888) 545-8331  
<http://www.afb.org>

The American Foundation for the Blind removes barriers, creates solutions, and expands possibilities so people with vision loss can achieve their full potential.

**American Printing House for the Blind, Inc.**

1839 Frankfort Avenue  
PO Box 6085  
Louisville, KY 40206-0085  
Toll Free: (800) 223-1839  
Direct: (502) 895-2405  
Fax: (502) 899-2284  
[info@aph.org](mailto:info@aph.org)  
<http://www.aph.org>

**Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

3100 East Roosevelt St.  
Phoenix, AZ 85008  
Direct: (602) 273-7411  
<http://www.acbvi.org/>

Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI) has been providing services for individuals since 1947. ACBVI is committed to "enhancing the quality of life for people who are blind or otherwise visually impaired." Our services are available to adults who are legally blind or visually impaired as well as those who have a degenerative eye condition which may eventually become a visual impairment. These services are offered separately or concurrently according to the individual needs of the qualifying client.

**Georgia Center for the Visually Impaired**

739 West Peachtree Street, N.W.  
Atlanta, GA 30308  
Direct: (404) 875-9011  
Fax: (404) 607-0062  
<http://www.cviga.org/>

The mission of the Center for the Visually Impaired is to empower people impacted by vision loss to live with independence and dignity.

**Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults**

141 Middle Neck Road  
Sands Point, NY 11050  
Direct: (516) 944-8900  
[hkncinfo@hknc.org](mailto:hkncinfo@hknc.org)  
<https://www.helenkeller.org/hknc>

The mission of the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults is to enable each person who is deaf-blind to live and work in his or her community of choice.

**Learning Ally**

20 Roszel Road  
Princeton, NJ 08540  
Toll Free: (800) 221-4792  
<http://www.learningally.org/>

We are a national not-for-profit dedicated to bringing parents, teachers and the community together to empower dyslexic, blind or visually impaired students to succeed.

**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.

### **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 Federation of the Blind**

200 East Wells Street  
Baltimore, MD 21230  
Toll Free: (410) 659-9314  
Fax: (410) 685-5653  
<https://nfb.org/>

The ultimate purpose of the National Federation of the Blind is the complete integration of the blind into society on a basis of equality. This objective involves the removal of legal, economic, and social discriminations; the education of the public to new concepts concerning blindness; and the achievement by all blind people of the right to exercise to the fullest their individual talents and capacities. It means the right of the blind to work along with their sighted neighbors in the professions, common callings, skilled trades, and regular occupations.

### **National Research & Training Center on Blindness & Low Vision**

108 Herbert - South, Room 150 Industrial Education Department Building  
PO Drawer 6189, Mississippi State University  
Mississippi State, MS 39762  
Direct: (662) 325-2001  
Fax: (662) 325-8989  
[nrtc@colled.msstate.edu](mailto:nrtc@colled.msstate.edu)  
<http://www.blind.msstate.edu/>

Our mission is to enhance employment and independent living outcomes for individuals who are blind or visually impaired through research, training, education, and dissemination.

**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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