

JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

Accommodation and Compliance Series

Occupation and Industry Series: Accommodating Students with Disabilities

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ODEP
Office of Disability
Employment Policy

Funded by a contract with the Office of Disability
Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor

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Introduction

Inclusive classrooms are essential for students of all abilities and backgrounds, but for students with disabilities, the classroom setting may present certain challenges that need accommodation and consideration.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 both ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to educational opportunities in higher education. Both laws require colleges and universities to offer a wide range of services, accommodations, and auxiliary services for students with disabilities. These services are typically individually designed, and based on the specific needs of each student as identified by the school's Disability Service Providers. Academic accommodations may include adaptations in the way specific courses are conducted, the use of auxiliary equipment and support staff, and modifications in academic requirements. A college or university has the variety of resources and the flexibility to select the specific aids or services it provides, as long as they are effective. Such aids and services should be selected in direct consultation with student who will use them.

Situations and Solutions:

A college student with auditory processing disorder was trying to learn new languages for a career as a translator.

She has not been successful in grasping the languages orally in order to learn to speak them. Accommodations discussed included extending the time frame for completion of her degree so that she can learn the languages one at a time instead of several at once. Also discussed were ways to improve her ability to “hear” the languages by recoding all class sessions and using variable speed playback in order to process at a slower rate, allowing plenty of time for processing information in class and formulating a response after questions, allowing preferential seating, and looking at ways to minimize auditory distractions in the classroom.

A student with chronic fatigue syndrome had difficulty keeping up with class notes.

He was accommodated with a laptop computer to use in class.

A student with muscular dystrophy was limited in her use of the computer.

She was accommodated with a miniature computer keyboard and mouse. The keyboard worked with the slightest touch and no force was needed to activate the keys.

A student with epilepsy used hedge-cutters and other landscaping tools in a training program.

For safety, JAN suggested steel-toed shoes, shin guards, and hand protection.

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