JAN
Job Accommodation Network
Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

Accommodation and Compliance Series

Finding a Job that is Right for You: A Practical Approach to Looking for a Job as a Person with a Disability

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ODEP
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JAN'S Accommodation and Compliance Series

Introduction

Planning will create the best opportunity for your successful job search. As you begin the planning process, there are a couple of publications you may want to read. JAN has developed Dos and Don'ts of Looking for a Job and Strategies to Consider in Seeking Employment providing job seekers helpful hints to improve the chance of success.

Below are brief section descriptions of JAN's Employment Guide, which are designed to assist with a step-by-step process for finding a job.

Step 1: What kind of job is right for you?

This section is designed to help you assess your knowledge, skills, and abilities while helping you understand where jobs are, how much specific jobs pay, and what jobs are expected to be in demand. In addition, this section contains information about who may train you for these jobs, inform you about working from home, and guide you in developing a small business.

Where are the jobs?

The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook is a nationally recognized information source describing tasks workers do on the job, working conditions, training and education needed, earnings, and expected job prospects now and in the future.

Additionally, the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics provides up to date information on:

- Largest Employment Declines - provides 10 detailed industries with the largest wage and salary employment declines.
- Occupations with the Largest Job Growth - provides similar information as Fastest Growing Occupations but looks at the number of jobs instead of a percentage growth.
- Fastest Growing Occupations - provides information on growing occupations and the rate of change expected in the next few years.

Do you have the skills to do the job?

You found an occupation that sounds interesting. What skills do you need to perform the job? Information about various occupations and the detailed descriptions for these occupations can be found in the U.S Department of Labor's O*Net Website.

Below are links for on-line career resources to assess your skills.

Princeton Review Career Quiz is a free career assessment tool receiving high reviews. Other career assessment tools can be found at Quintessential Careers.

After taking one of the quizzes, you may want to work through the following worksheets to begin developing a job plan.

- Job Priority List Worksheet - Once completed, this worksheet should help you find the kind of job you are looking for while meeting most of your needs and concerns. An example of a completed worksheet is provided.
- Overcoming Obstacles Worksheet - You will encounter some obstacles when searching for a job. This worksheet will help you work through these obstacles and identify solutions. An example of a completed worksheet is provided.
- Personal Inventory Worksheet - This form will help you organize your list and identify your interests, strengths, and weaknesses. An example of a completed Personal Inventory Form will assist you in getting started. Your personal inventory will be used to build your resume and later to convince the employer you have the skills and abilities to successfully fulfill the job requirements.

Does this job meet your financial needs?

One question often asked is "How much does the job pay?" A good online resource to answer this question comes from salary.com. This site takes the job, location, and cost of living for a region to provide a customized report of salary expectations. Once you know the expected salary, compare this with your budget. A tool to help you determine this is the Personal Needs Assessment.

What other options are there to help me enter the workforce?

Getting Hired powered by CareerCircle is the place where people with disabilities seeking employment, employers committed to hiring people with disabilities, service providers, college disability and career services departments,and disability advocacy groups connect.

Hire Disability Solutions provides comprehensive career services to facilitate employment for people with disabilities, veterans, their family members, and others who face challenges in their lives.

Since 1995, ABILITY Jobs has helped 100's of thousands of job seekers with disabilities in their employment search. With the first stand-alone resume bank, employers can actively seek talented people with disabilities looking for work.

An employment option many people choose is a temporary agency. Temporary agency employment is an excellent way to get back into the workforce, gain skills, and reorient you to the job market.

Two of the largest temporary agencies are:

- Manpower
- Kelly Services

Are there any special federal government programs to hire people with disabilities?

Selective Placement gives federal agencies incentives for hiring people with disabilities. Qualified applicants can be placed into federal agency jobs without going through the competitive placement process. Additional information about federal employment for people with disabilities can be found in People with Disabilities in the Federal Government: An Employment Guide Publication.

I am visually impaired and looking for a job. Are there any programs that can help me identify success stories for other people with low or no vision?

The American Foundation for the Blind has developed a free, Web-based service providing information based on interviews with over 1,000 blind or visually impaired people about their jobs and the technology they use at CareerConnect.

The Olmsted Center for Sight has been a leader in quality services for individuals who are blind or visually impaired since 1907 and offers a broad range of services for people of all ages and degrees of visual impairment.

Is self-employment right for you?

The Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities has a self-assessment for individuals considering self-employment.

If you determine self-employment is for you, the entrepreneurship branch of the Job Accommodation Network can help identify resources in your area to assist you.

What about work-from-home?

Work-from-home is an employment option especially for individuals who have difficulty with transportation, fatigue, or specific schedules.

The Job Accommodation Network has developed a Telecommuting Webpage with resources in telework and work-from-home.

Can you turn a volunteer position into gainful employment?

Volunteering at community service organizations can sometimes lead to employment opportunities. Volunteering allows you the opportunity to showcase your skills and abilities to business and civic leaders in your area. Volunteer Match is a Website dedicated to matching a volunteer with organizations who need volunteers in a geographical area.

What internships may be available?

Internships can help launch a college student or recent graduate into the job market. Several websites post intern opportunities, such as InternJobs.com, Pathways, and InternshipPrograms.com.

A number of internship programs were specifically developed for students and recent graduates with disabilities. These include:

- The Workforce Recruitment Program from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy actively recruits students with disabilities on college campuses.
- Career Opportunities for Students with Disabilities (COSD) is a unique consortium composed of large and small universities, well known national employers, and U.S. Government agencies focused on the career employment of college graduates with disabilities.
- Emerging Leaders helps college students with disabilities find and secure fulfilling internship and leadership opportunities. Emerging Leaders helps corporate and nonprofit employers find outstanding young talent for their business ventures and helps managers understand the benefits of considering diversity and inclusion in their hiring practices.
- Entry Point! is a program of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) offering outstanding internship opportunities for students with disabilities in science, engineering, mathematics, computer science, and some fields of business.

I am a young adult with a disability. Are there any programs to help me get the training I need to enter the workforce?

If you are a young person with a disability, then you may want to check out the Job Corps Program. The Job Corps Program is a no-cost education and vocational training program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor for young U.S. citizens ages 16 through 24 who meet income guidelines. Job Corps helps young people learn a trade, earn a high school diploma or GED, and get help finding a good job. If you are interested in joining the Job Corps program or finding out more about it, call 800-733-JOBS (1-800-733-5627) or go to the Website to learn more.

Step 2: Who can help you to find the right job?

This section lists federal and state programs that can help you get a job. These include:

- state vocational rehabilitation agency,
- the Social Security Administration's Ticket-to-Work program,
- the Federal government selective placement program, and
- your local One-Stop Disability Navigator.

This section also lists on-line resources, such as general and disability-related job banks.

As a person with a disability, who can help me find a job?

Your state rehabilitation agency can provide you with a counselor and can help you get a vocational assessment, get training or education, prepare your resume, and/or assist with your job search.

I am receiving social security benefits. Are there any programs designed to help me find work?

If you receive benefits from the Social Security Administration (SSA) , then you may want to ask for help from an Employment Network. These Employment Networks work with the Social Security's Ticket-to-Work Program to find jobs for people who receive social security benefits. These employment networks, like the state vocational rehabilitation agencies, are funded to help you get a job.

Learn more about the Ticket-to-Work Program.

Ticket-to-Work offers local service providers to assist you in going to work.

Are there local resources where I can go to find a job?

If you are looking for local help, you will definitely want to visit your local One-Stop Career Center. One-Stop Centers are local employment or career offices throughout the country. The U.S Department of Labor funds these Centers. Many One Stop Centers have Disability Navigators who can help you navigate through the variety of programs and services.

Are there other places I should look for a job?

A job bank allows you to post your resume on the Internet for employers to see. Below are a number of job banks where you may want to post your resume. The first group of job banks is for everyone. The second group is specifically designed for job searchers with disabilities. The third group specifically provides service in for Spanish speakers. Finally, the last group is for service members and their families as they look for work.

Many of these Websites also have other information that may be helpful during your search for the "right" job.

Job Banks

- Monster
- Careerbuilder
- USAJOBS
- Indeed Job Metasearch Engine
- Net-Temps
- America's Job Exchange
- Careerjet.com
- Zippia
- FlexJobs
- Scouted
- Snagajob

Disability-Related Job Banks

- AAPD Career Center
- ABILITY Jobs
- disAbledPerson.com
- Getting Hired powered by CareerCircle
- Peak Performers
- RECRUITDISABILITY.ORG
- Sierra Group's One More Way Foundation
- Talent Acquisition Portal

Orientado a la comunidad hispanas

- Saludos

Military Specific Job Banks

- Monster Veteran Employment Center
- Military.com Spouse

Step 3: Are you prepared for a job interview?

This section includes information about applying for a job, preparing for an interview, and completing an interview. It provides general information on building a resume, following-up after an interview, and addressing disability-specific questions during a job search.

What should be my first step in looking for a job?

First, be sure that you have completed Step 1. It is important to know the job market - what jobs are out there and where - as well as to know yourself, your skills, abilities, knowledge, and experience.

If I know where the jobs are and what jobs are available, now what?

Next, develop a resume presenting your qualifications to an employer. Remember, a resume is usually what the employer sees first.

How do I develop a resume?

Once you have completed the Personal Inventory Form and have an action plan for Overcoming the Obstacles identified during the self discovery process provided in Step 1, you are ready to start building a resume.

A resume provides the employer with the skills, abilities, knowledge and experience you have developed to date. So, if you have not already created a list of these, now is the time. The completed Personal Inventory Form is a good form to begin collecting this information.

Next, you should complete the Work Experience Questionnaire. This form can help you define your skills and abilities gathered from life or work experiences. The exercise will help you examine your job experience, paid and unpaid, as well as your academic and personal activities to create a list. The key to this exercise is to not underestimate yourself or your abilities.

Then, complete the Resume Worksheet. This worksheet will help you document your work history in a resume format. Completing this worksheet organizes the information from the various worksheets and questionnaires that you have completed.

Once you have built your resume, you may also want to use the Resume Checklist as a final review of your resume before sending it to employers.

A resume resource is available in case you need more help.

What else do I need to prepare beside the resume?

A good cover letter is essential to submitting your resume to an employer. Again, the cover letter and resume give the employer a first impression of you so you want both to be perfect. Resources including guidelines, sample letters, and a checklist are included below.

A cover letter resource is available in case you need more help.

If I have my cover letter and resume complete, what is next?

You will need to scan the newspaper "want ads" and job bank Websites. Be sure you also let your friends, teachers, community members, church members, and others know that you are looking for a job. Many positions are filled with people the employer knows. Telling everyone you know that you are job hunting may open a job opportunity through this informal network.

What if an employer I am interested in working for is not currently hiring?

If you know an employer that you would like to work for but the employer is not currently hiring, ask for an informational interview so you can be considered for employer's future job openings. This informational interview can be the start of a relationship leading to a future job.

If I found a job opening that I am qualified for, it is in the area I want to live, the pay is enough to support me, I have sent my cover letter and resume, and I have been called for the job, how should I prepare? Being prepared shows an employer you are motivated. Begin your interview preparation by using the Interview Checklist. You will also want to review the Interview Dos and Don'ts. Next, because some employers require a completed application before hiring, gather all the information typically needed to fill out a job application. Much of the information will be found in your resume, but some may not. For example, you may be asked to provide all of your education, even from elementary school, including addresses. For more information, please go to the "Job Seeker's Guide to Successfully Completing Job Applications."

Finally, research the company offering you an interview. Learn what the company does, who the company's customers are, and who is involved with the company. If you know someone who has worked for or is still working for the company talk to them in person. Search the Internet for the company name to get additional information. By knowing this information, you will be better able to tell the employer what you can do for the company. You will also be able to ask relevant questions about the company and the job during the interview.

Should I have references available at the interview?

Many recruiting professionals suggest having your references ready to provide to the interviewer. Most of the time three references will be sufficient. References should include people who can provide positive feedback about your work history or your

character. Remember to ask permission from the people you want to use as references before giving the list to a potential employer. This will prevent your references from being surprised by a call from the employer and give your references time to prepare accordingly.

The day of the interview, what is expected of me and what should I expect?

Generally, the company will explain the procedure before your interview so you will have time to prepare. Remember, preparation is the most important thing. Plan ahead for what you will say and take the time to present your qualifications in a professional manner.

Being on time for an interview is very important. If late, it will reflect badly on how the interviewer sees you. Few excuses will work if you are late. However, if you plan ahead and scout the interview location before, check traffic reports, check bus or train schedules, and follow weather reports, lateness will not be a problem. If you find that you are going to be late, call the employer and explain that you have been delayed. While this is not the best situation, a call may show you are responsible and determined to meet your commitments.

You will face different types of interviews during your job search. At times you will be part of a short interview called a screening interview. During this interview, the employer is checking to see if you have the qualifications the employer needs and what you say in the interview is consistent with your resume. If you meet the employer's requirements, you may be invited to a longer interview. These interviews may be one-on-one or by a group of people. But whether the interview is with one person or a few, be prepared to discuss why you should be hired.

Finally, first impressions are very important. An employer can make a snap judgment about you even before you have a chance to say anything. Therefore, personal grooming is very important on the day of the interview. A fresh shower, a clean shave (for men), brushed teeth, and brushed or combed hair are all good grooming habits. Applicants are urged not to wear any perfume products including after shave cologne as many individuals have allergies and find scented products offensive. The person interviewing you may be one of these individuals.

Always remember interviewers will see a messy person as someone who may not be able to handle the job. Personal grooming takes little time, but it can make a lasting impression. Also keep good eye contact for the greeting. You want to present yourself as a strong person who can work individually and as a team member. Remember to smile when you first greet anyone. You are happy for this opportunity to show an employer that you are the right person for the job.

If I have an obvious disability, how can I positively address this in the interview?

How you present yourself at an interview helps an interviewer decide whether to hire you. For example, how you sit or how you walk promotes to the interviewer a perception

of the kind of person you are. If, because of an obvious disability, you walk with a limp or are unable to sit straight, you may want to develop a positive strategy for addressing your limitations. For example, an individual without arms shared that when he was interviewing he would ask the interviewer if it was appropriate to take notes. He would then pull his notepad and pen out of his pocket with his foot and start writing with his toes. It was not as important to the applicant to take specific notes as it was to let the interviewer see him taking the notes.

Another suggestion, if you use a piece of assistive technology, would be to bring the equipment into the interview. For example, if you have a vision impairment and use a screen reading software, bring in the software on a laptop to show the interviewer the notes used to prepare for the interview.

Are there questions an interviewer should not ask?

Questions are the main part of the interview and are one of the main ways the interviewer can know if a candidate is right for the job. You can expect lots of different questions from discussion about your education to your last job. However, there are questions that an interviewer cannot legally ask. An employer may not ask or require a job applicant to take a medical examination before making a job offer. An interviewer cannot make any pre-employment inquiry about a disability or the nature or severity of a disability. However, during the post-offer, pre-employment stage of the process, an employer can ask medical questions not related to the job as long as everyone going into the position is asked the questions. An employer may, however, ask questions about the ability to perform specific job functions and may, with certain limitations, ask an individual with an obvious disability to describe or demonstrate how s/he would perform a specific function. JAN has developed a fact sheet on the Pre-Offer, Disability-Related Questions: Dos and Don'ts and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has an enforcement guidance on Pre-employment Disability-Related Questions and Medical Examinations.

How do I explain recent gaps in my work history because of my disability?

One of the questions often asked of candidates is their work history from most recent to first experience. Individuals can be asked to explain gaps in employment history. While there is not a perfect answer, JAN Consultants suggest that "The best way to handle difficult questions during the interview is to be prepared for them. Make a list of the questions you know you are going to have trouble with and formulate an answer, then practice your delivery of these answers so you will be ready from them." For example, "I see that there is a two year gap in your work history. What have you been doing during this time?" This is an opportunity to talk about what you have been doing, not what you have not been doing. Think about valuable life experiences that you have gained during this time. Have you been taking care of children or a parent, going to school, taking art classes, or volunteering? This question may prompt you to disclose your disability if you have not already done so. Be sure to do it in a way that shows how you have dealt with a difficult situation in a positive manner. Remember to keep the past in the past, stating

that you are ready to move forward and are qualified and able to do the job you want." If and when this question arises, it is also wise to have researched the position for which you have applied as well as the organization's focus, mission, and history. Using the information you found during the research, you can transition the conversation back to why an employer should hire you.

Can an employer require medical examinations or ask questions about a disability?

If you are applying for a job, an employer cannot ask you if you are disabled or ask about the nature or severity of your disability. An employer can ask if you can perform the duties of the job with or without reasonable accommodation. An employer can also ask you to describe or to demonstrate how, with or without a reasonable accommodation, you will perform the job duties.

An employer cannot require you to take a medical examination before you are offered a job. Following a job offer, an employer can condition the offer on your passing a required medical examination, but only if all entering employees for the job category have to take the examination. However, an employer cannot reject you because of information about your disability revealed by the medical examination, unless the reasons for rejection are job-related and necessary for the conduct of the employer's business. The employer will also have to consider reasonable accommodation, barring an undue hardship, to allow an applicant the ability to perform the essential functions of the job up to the expectations of anyone entering the position. Finally, the results of all medical examinations must be kept confidential and maintained in separate medical files.

At this point, do I tell the employer I may have a disability?

Disclosing a disability is voluntary during the application and interview stages of the employment process. Some individuals decide to disclose to a potential employer at that time. Disclosure during the application or interview stage may be because the disability is not hidden or the individual decides this is the right time. Many, including the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), suggest a positive approach to disclosing before a job offer has been made. This approach would anticipate the concerns of the employer, have innovative accommodation suggestions available, practice demonstrating how you would perform difficult functions, and keep the focus on your abilities. This approach should send a message to the interviewer that you are an innovative individual who can anticipate job changes.

JAN Consultants suggest "Disability Disclosure and Interviewing Techniques for Persons with Disabilities," if you need to disclose during an interview "remember to talk about your abilities, not your disabilities. Employers need qualified, capable individuals to fill positions. Find a way to show that you are that person. Sell them on what you can do, not on what you cannot do and the interview will go better than you expect. Be positive about yourself and be honest."

John Williams, an award-winning columnist, who has been writing about disability issues for 22 years wrote in a 2001 National Organization on Disability article "It is your choice whether or not to mention your disability; by law, interviewers cannot ask candidates disability-related questions. And it is best not to discuss specific medical problems during your interview. However, if you use assistive technology, describing what you use and how it helps your performance can make a positive impression on the interviewer. This indicates problem-solving ability and self-confidence. Remind the person interviewing you that any purchase of assistive technology products is a capital investment."

Job candidates should be aware that once disclosure of a disability or an accommodation request is made employers may ask the employee about the limitations related to the job and are permitted to make medical inquiries.

Disclosing a disability requires a lot of thought and planning. Candidates with disabilities should plan how they will disclose and assess the consequences of sharing this intimate information with a prospective employer. Ultimately, the job candidate must decide the time, place, and degree of information to share with others.

Also, read what Richard Pimentel from Milt Wright and Associates has to say about disclosure, and then decide for yourself when and if to disclose.

How do I ask for help when filling out the application and for the interview?

If you think you will need assistance in order to participate in the application and hiring process, you should inform the employer. Assistance needed to reduce the barrier a disability creates is called reasonable accommodation. Employers are required to provide reasonable accommodation only for the known physical or mental limitations of a qualified individual with a disability. Generally, you, as the applicant, have the responsibility to request an accommodation from the employer.

What examples are there of people being accommodated during the interview process?

Over the years, JAN has collected a number of examples of people being accommodated during the application, interview, and hiring process. If you need to talk with someone about what kind of help or accommodation you need, contact JAN.

There are also a number of other publications you may want to read as you apply for and are considered for a job interview. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), has an excellent resource called Job Applicants and the Americans with Disabilities Act. This publication addresses such topics as: Reasonable Accommodation for the Application Process, Asking for Accommodation, Discussing Disability with the Potential Employer, Discussing Accommodations to Perform the Job, and Being "Qualified for the Job."

How do I ask for help?

An accommodation may be requested orally or in writing. JAN has developed an example of a written accommodation request letter.

I have submitted a request for accommodation and the employer is asking for medical records. What do I do?

In asking for help, you are disclosing to the employer that you have an impairment. When a job applicant requests help, or a reasonable accommodation, an employer may require that the employee provide medical documentation to establish whether the employee has an ADA disability and needs the requested accommodation. To learn more about what medical information an employer can request before you are hired, go to the EEOC's publication ADA Enforcement Guidance: Pre-employment Disability-related Questions and Medical Examinations.

The employer wants me to have a drug test. Do I have to test?

According to EEOC, employers do the have right to request a drug test. The ADA specifically states that tests to determine the current illegal use of controlled substances are not considered medical examinations and can be administered prior to a job offer. JAN's Accommodation & Compliance Series publication on Employees with Drug Addiction discusses legal and illegal drug use under the ADA.

I am applying for a safety sensitive job requiring a polygraph test, and because of my disability I am concerned I will not be able to pass this test. What are my options?

The Employee Polygraph Protection Act allows some employers in safety sensitive industries to administer polygraphs, lie detector tests to potential employees.

After the interview, are there things that I should do?

After the interview, don't forget to send a thank you letter to the interviewer. If you have not heard from a company from 10 days to 2 weeks after you sent your thank you letter, you can follow up with a phone call. During this call, state your name, the date of the interview, and the position. Let the employer know you are still interested in the position and ask if there is a timetable for making a decision. Generally, an interviewer will tell you when the decision will be made.

Another thing that should be done is your self-evaluation of the interview. How did you do? Do you know? Can you take a step back and evaluate yourself on how you did during the interview? You should take some time and review what happened at the interview. Did you take notes? If you did, they are a good sign you were paying attention. Do you remember if you stumbled over your words? Did you delay answering a question? Did you sit up straight and ask appropriate questions? Did you give the interviewer the extra resume asked for? If you felt you did something wrong, what was

it? How would you handle it differently? Think of corrections and if you do not get the job, be better prepared for your next interview. In addition, by reviewing the interview you may discover additional questions for the employer you can ask during your follow-up call or second interview.

Should I wait to hear back after an interview before considering other jobs? While you are waiting for word from the employer about the job, you can be getting ready for other interviews or continue searching for other positions. You should not wait until you hear back from an employer. If you wait and do not get the position, you will have wasted valuable search and possible interview time.

Effective interviewing is essential to getting the job. Job openings occur every day. Being prepared for these opportunities and being at the right place at the right time, often makes the difference in who is hired.

What should I do if I feel the interviewer has asked an illegal question?

Should you be asked an illegal question, you do not have to answer it. However, you do not want to point out to the interviewer the question is illegal and possibly ruin your chances to be hired. You can change the subject or politely explain that you are not comfortable answering the question. Also, do not dwell on the interviewer's mistake. This may be just a mistake and will have nothing to do with your being hired.

What do I do if I think I was discriminated against during the interview?

If at any time you feel the employer has discriminated against you based on your disability, then you can file a complaint.

- Information about filing a claim on the federal level with the EEOC.
- Information about filing a claim on the state level

If you would like to learn more about your rights, below are two publications that you may want to read.

- ODEP: Employment Rights, Who Has Them and Who Enforces Them
- ODEP: Frequently Asked Questions

Step 4: You got the job. Now what?

The final section includes strategies for success at your new job. Information is also provided on how to request a job accommodation and links to publications explaining accommodations for specific disabilities. In addition, this section includes information on career advancement and growth.

Congratulations! You received the job. Obviously you have the skills and abilities the employer was seeking. After settling into the new job you may decide you want to

advance in the company and need help to do so. This final section provides information about what you can do to advance and grow in the new job.

Starting a new job can be stressful. What can I do to make the transition easier?

About.com suggests several tips to reduce new job stress and how to find out how to fit into your new position.

How can I learn the ropes of the company?

A mentor is someone at work who has experience, knowledge, and is willing to share this with you. There is never a time when a mentor cannot help you. Look for and find someone who can give you knowledge, expertise, and access to information at your new job you would not get otherwise. For more information about how to establish a mentor relationship, go to "How to Develop a Mentor Relationship at Work."

What are other steps I should take to promote myself at work?

It is important to build a good reputation at work. Without a good reputation, others may be hesitant about wanting to work with you and limit your success on the job. For additional information, see:

Dos and Don'ts for Building a Good Reputation

Strategies on Advancing at Work

What can I do to get to know my co-workers?

Some suggestions are:

- Look and see who of your new co-workers helps others. Know that they may be a resource for you.
- Be matter of fact about your disability but do not focus on it.
- Understand that your new co-workers may know little about disability so be understanding about mistakes they may make.
- Make the effort to go around the workplace and introduce yourself.
- Go to work with confidence and a smile.
- Be yourself . . . some people will be comfortable around you after a while and other may never be no matter what you do.

I am having problems doing my job due to my disability. What do I do?

If, due to a disability, your productivity is below what is expected of your job, you may wish to ask for a reasonable accommodation. Reasonable accommodation is any

change in the work environment or in the way things are usually done resulting in an equal employment opportunity for you as an individual with a disability.

If you need help asking for an accommodation or suggestions to do the job effectively, contact JAN to discuss potential accommodation options.

Reasonable accommodations can include modifications to the facility, changes in the job process, and assistive technology allowing you to perform at the expected performance standards. Because your employer would not have to excuse poor performance, it is advisable for you to know your limitations and expectations.

Asking for an accommodation before there is a continuing performance problem can help you from being disciplined on the job. An accommodation request is usually initiated by you and may be requested verbally or in writing. For information on how to put your request in writing, visit JAN's How to Request an Accommodation: Accommodation Form Letter.

The EEOC, the federal agency charged with enforcing the ADA, discusses requesting reasonable accommodation in its enforcement guidance regarding psychiatric disabilities. This guidance states "when an individual decides to request accommodation, the individual or his/her representative must let the employer know that s/he needs an adjustment or change at work for a reason related to a medical condition. To request accommodation, an individual may use "plain English" and need not mention the ADA or use the phrase "reasonable accommodation." However, the EEOC suggests individuals with disabilities might find it useful to document accommodation requests in the event there is a dispute about whether or when they requested accommodation. Further, the guidance states requests for accommodation "may be requested on behalf of an individual with a disability . . . by a "family member, friend, health professional, or other representative."

If I did not disclose a disability when I was hired, can I still ask for a reasonable accommodation?

You always have the right to request an accommodation. Often people with disabilities do not need an accommodation when first hired for a job. If the job or the employee's condition changes, then there may be a need for an accommodation. An employer could not deny you this request solely because you have not previously disclosed your disability. However, employers could refuse to accommodate if there is an undue hardship or if they feel you are not a person with a disability.

What kind of medical questions can my employer ask after I have requested an accommodation?

When an employee requests an accommodation and the disability or need for accommodation is not obvious, an employer may require that the employee provide medical documentation to establish that the employee has an ADA disability and needs the requested accommodation. According to guidance from the Equal Employment

Opportunity Commission, requests for medical information unrelated to the accommodation request are not permitted.

For additional information, visit: Enforcement Guidance: Disability-Related Inquiries and Medical Examinations of Employees under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

If I am not sure I want to tell my employer about my disability, do I have to?

If you need a reasonable accommodation in order to perform essential job functions, you should inform the employer an accommodation will be needed. Employers are required to provide reasonable accommodation only for the known physical or mental limitations of a qualified individual with a disability. Generally, under the ADA it is an individual's responsibility to inform an employer that an accommodation is needed.

Voluntary disability disclosure is a personal choice and refers to telling your employer and/or fellow co-workers about your physical, sensory, intellectual, or mental health disability. Once employed, many people with disabilities disclose when their disability is affecting work performance. Other people disclose when their disability begins affecting their relationships with co-workers or supervisors, while others make the choice to disclose in order to reduce the stress caused by hiding their disability.

Disclosure can be an opportunity to provide an employer, manager, or co-worker with accurate, first-hand information about the disability as well as strategies successfully used to accommodate a particular disability. This discussion with the employer, supervisor, or other employees may also serve to dispel myths and misconceptions concerning a particular disability.

Many employees choose not to disclose. Some are not yet comfortable talking about their disabilities or have had a bad experience - discrimination, prejudice, or rejection, - when disclosing. Others fear future progress in the organization will be limited. Some do not disclose because their disabilities are not affecting either their work performance or their relationships in the workplace.

How do I know what kind of reasonable accommodation I need?

Reasonable accommodation ideas may come from personal, educational, or professional experiences. For example, you may use a reaching device at home better enabling you to reach high and low objects; or possibly you had used a software program in college helping you organize your work; or maybe you had a different mouse at another job increasing the information you were able to enter into the computer. If you have developed strategies or have used equipment to successfully accommodate your disability, then you may want to share this with your employer. However, if you have not needed an accommodation before and do not know where to start, call JAN. JAN is a free service where teams of accommodation experts help guide you through the accommodation process. JAN also has a Website with publications containing accommodation suggestions for disabilities frequently discussed by JAN consultants and an interactive Website called the Searchable Online Accommodation Resource

(SOAR). SOAR asks you about your situation and then leads you to accommodation suggestions, including information on where to buy a product if one is suggested.

Learn more about JAN.

Is there a typical process followed for accommodating employees with disabilities at work?

Every workplace is different. Large corporations have human resource departments and policy and procedures designed to inform employees of how certain things are done. Other businesses are smaller and may not be as detailed in terms of rules and processes to follow. Look through any materials you were given upon hire to see if a reasonable accommodation process is mentioned. If there is not a process in place, then you may want to read through JAN's publication Job Accommodation Process. This publication provides a step-by-step process employers can follow when making accommodation decisions.

For a list of disability-specific workplace accommodations, please go to JAN's A to Z.

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