# Ergonomics for Teleworkers

## [Introduction]

**LISA MATHESS:**

Hello, everyone. Thank you for joining us here today for the Job Accommodation Network Accommodation and Compliance Webcast Series titled "Ergonomics for Teleworkers." My name is Lisa Mathess. I am a lead consultant here at JAN, and I am joined by my teammate and senior consultant Matthew Mccord.

We would like to start by going over some of the objectives for this presentation on ergonomic equipment for telework or work from home. Throughout our presentation, we will go over some of the ergonomic basics, including what the term "ergonomic" truly means and how ergonomics play a role in the health and well-being of employees, those employees with and without disabilities.

Then we will discuss ergonomic evaluations and what one might expect with that process. Oftentimes there are professionals who can perform these assessments, but the information is laid out in a way that a layperson can do the assessment and adjust as needed.

Then we intend to talk about some of the common problems for those issues and discuss some remedies, solutions, and products that may assist in solving some of these matters.

And then finally we will get into tips and resources for home setups. Right now, many entities across the nation are enforcing telework, and so JAN, as well as others, are putting together practical tips for setting up home offices.

## [About Ergonomics]

MATTHEW MCCORD:

To begin our discussion properly today, let’s go over the definition of ergonomics. One definition of ergonomics put forth by Merriam-Webster is "an applied science concerned with designing and arranging things people use so that the people and things interact most efficiently and safely." According to the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society, Human Factors is concerned with "the application of what we know about people; their abilities, characteristics, and limitations to the design of equipment they use; environments in which they function; and jobs they perform." To us here at JAN, both of these definitions seem a little cumbersome. We like to refer to ergonomics simply as the science of fitting jobs to people.

To illustrate the importance of ergonomics, here are some statistics that support the prevalence of workplace injuries regarding musculoskeletal disorders and how prolonged sitting can impact one’s health. Musculoskeletal disorders are injuries or disorders of the muscles, nerves, tendons, joints, ligaments, and bones. Musculoskeletal disorders account for about 33% of all workplace injury cases. A 2019 study done by the World Health Organization claims that about 1 in 2 adults are living with a musculoskeletal disorder, and a 2015 study featured in the Annals of Internal Medicine showed that prolonged sitting increases risk for various serious health conditions such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease even for those who exercise regularly.

As you can see, the way that we work does matter. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration, or OSHA, has indicated that, even when workstations are set up correctly and ergonomic principles are implemented, users can still be at risk for developing musculoskeletal disorders. In addition to information about computer workstations, workstation environments, and ergonomic checklists, OSHA offers a list of signs or symptoms to look for that could indicate that an employee is at risk for musculoskeletal disorders associated with computer use. They include things like numbness or burning sensations in the hands; reduced grip strength; swelling or stiffness in the joints; pain in wrists, forearms, elbows, neck, or back; reduced range of motion in the shoulders, neck, or back; and more. If an employee is experiencing these signs or symptoms, it does not automatically mean that they will develop a musculoskeletal disorder, however it may be a good indication that the user should -- could benefit from an ergonomic assessment or evaluation and that their workstation may need to be modified in some way.

There are many reasons employers should consider implementing ergonomic practices and principles into their workplace. Whether we look at it through the lens of an ADA/reasonable accommodation standpoint, as a general practice for all employees in the workplace, or as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are several benefits to implementing universal design or ergonomic principles.

Number one, they can reduce Workers' Compensation claims. Number two, they can reduce leave time due to injuries or illnesses. Number three, they can create a safe and inclusive workplace, or, number four, to simply satisfy their obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

These are a variety of medical conditions ergonomic assessments can benefit. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but there are some -- but these are some of the impairments that we see frequently at JAN that may benefit from an ergonomic evaluation. These include things like back injuries, a variety of cumulative trauma injuries such as bursitis, carpal tunnel, tennis elbow, trigger finger, tendonitis, and thoracic outlet syndrome, among others.

## [Universal Design]

Now that we have discussed ergonomics in general, lets proceed to a discussion on universal design. Specifically, in regards to an office setting, whether at work or at home. "Universal design" is the concept of creating buildings, products, or environments to make them accessible and usable to all people, regardless of age, disability or other factors. When trying to make a company as accessible as possible, there are a few things to be mindful of that are helpful to consider.

First, consider providing telework as a generalized benefit of employment. This way, telework is not something that requires an accommodation review and all of the extra work that goes along with those. Many people thrive by working in their home, and having productive workers is the ultimate end goal for a business, after all.

Next, provide ergonomic -- ergonomically adjustable chairs and desks. These devices allow an employee to move positions and alternate between sitting and standing as needed throughout the workday. Humans did not evolve to sit in static positions for eight hours a day, starring at a computer screen, so giving people the flexibility may better their health and, in turn, better their productivity and quality of the work that they produce. You will see when we get into the tips for teleworking ergonomics, a big theme is going to be utilize a full-size computer monitor even when working from a laptop. Standalone monitors are going to be more adjustable and can be deemed more appropriate for a wider array of users, so just consider getting into the practice of furnishing separate monitors for those teleworkers, as there are many benefits to this one simple change.

Also, ensuring that computers are preloaded with various assistive technology softwares. This can range from speech recognition software options to screen readers and magnification. There are a wide array of programs that are often used by those with disabilities. It’s important to make sure that individuals with those programs that are on their in-office computers have them at home as well so that they can work effectively in both places.

Lastly, alternative mice and keyboards. There are many different types of alternative mice and keyboards, be it miniature keyboards, trackball mice, split keyboards, large-button keyboards, foot-pedal mice and more. We are all different and have different preferences and needs, so it is important to be mindful of what people might need for things like mice and keyboards too.

For detailed information on developing and implementing a universal design, we provided links at the bottom of this slide. First is to JAN’s Accommodation and Compliance Series publication on universal design in the workplace, and second is a link to an article on our site titled "Accessible Computer Workstations: A Snapshot." N

ow I will turn things over to Lisa so she can review the details of an ergonomic assessment with you all.

## [Ergonomic Assessments]

LISA MATHESS:

So getting into best practices when assessing an ideal workstation. A focal point in ergonomic assessments is the position of the computer monitor in relation to that user. To reduce eye strain and fatigue, the monitor should be about 18 to 28 inches away from user, the top of monitor should be at or slightly below eye level, and the angle should be between 0 and 7 degrees. Proper placement of the monitor limits the need for the user to tilt his or her head back to see the screen and limits the need for the user to lean forward to see what is on the screen. If the monitor is correctly positioned and the user has difficulty seeing images on the screen, additional accommodations such as screen magnification may need to be considered. We also want to be mindful of task lighting and those overhead lights we may be using in our homes.

To encourage proper body posture, reduce the need to turn the head from side to side, and reduce or limit strain on the head, neck, and shoulders, input documents should be properly positioned, and frequently used items should be within easy reach. The head and neck should be aligned when using the phone and when looking at the monitor with the user’s body properly aligned in front of that computer.

Lastly, I want to mention that breaks are so important. They can benefit muscles and the upper extremities, but also your eyes need breaks every so often. Are rest breaks built into the workday? To reduce stress on eye muscles, an individual should look away from the workstation and refocus on an object at least 25 feet away and blink often. Rest breaks should also include simple, brief exercises such as shoulder shrugs, neck rolls, ankle rotations, leg extensions, overhead stretches, hand shakes, and finger spreads.

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Continuing with that workstation setup: When the arms, elbows, wrists, or hands are not properly supported, this can result in joint or shoulder pain, numbness or tingling in the extremities, and may result in the employee making adjustments that lead to improper posture. In performing an ergonomic assessment, one would want to consider if the employee’s shoulders are relaxed; if the elbows are appropriately angled, meaning that they're not bent upward or stretched forward; if wrists are appropriately angled while keyboarding, mousing, or using equipment and tools; and whether or not the mouse or tool fits the user's hand.

Wrists should not be resting while typing. Wrists should be in a neutral position, not flexed up or down, so many times this means our keyboards shouldn’t be propped up on those little keyboard legs. Sharp or hard edges can irritate nerves and cause discomfort or pain, so it's good to check any areas where elbows or arms are not being properly supported, and we may need to cushion the edges of our workstations. Arms or hands may become fatigued from overuse, so it can be important to consider how long an employee is performing a repetitive task and when micro breaks could be taken.

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A very common ergonomic concern is whether or not the employee’s back, legs, and feet are properly supported. Being that our chair is where we spend a great deal of time, ergonomic assessments place a lot of focus on evaluating an employee’s posture and position while seated. An employee’s chair should be supporting the back to provide lumbar support and maintain the natural curvature of the spine. Feet should rest firmly on the floor, and hips and knees should be resting comfortably as well. Seat pans should be comfortable and the correct size so that movement isn’t restricted but also not creating pressure from the chair on the back of your knees. There should also be some room between top of your legs and the underside of that desk so the employee isn’t confined. The employee or user should be able to move the chair around freely and shouldn’t have to push off the desk or floor to move around the workstation.

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Proper positioning of materials, equipment, tools, and the like may reduce or eliminate the need for an employee to move in awkward ways or repeatedly perform the same motion that causes strain on the head, neck, shoulders, or back. In some cases, tools can be provided to help perform a task, and Matt will provide some examples of this later on.

Ergonomic assessments or a job analysis can help to identify repetitive tasks and tasks that require exertion, which can then be evaluated or modified to ensure that employees perform these tasks in a way that reduces their risk of fatigue or injury.

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Ergonomic assessments should also consider individual needs such as personal use items or assistive technology that employees may be using. Right now with the unique situation of many of us working at home, we need to be that much more mindful of the assistive technology people may need to be successful. Assistive technology and other equipment needed as accommodation to effectively work at home such as screen magnification/screen reading software, speech recognition, a larger monitor, a videophone, sit-to-stand desk, ergo chair, break reminder software, all these things we want to make sure that these technologies are available and they're unique, and we want to ensure they are fitted to the person.

Environmental concerns including noise levels, air quality, and temperature variations could also be addressed in ergonomic assessments. Luckily when we are assessing these variables for those of us who are teleworking, we are often in control of our own environments in our homes. But as many people have probably noticed, it can still get loud between outside noises or those pets and kids who are creating those loud or noisy environments, which could lead to distraction. If an employee’s rotating through different job tasks throughout the day, it may be necessary to evaluate each work setup or analyze each job task individually.

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Now to take a visual look at assessing a good computer workstation. I wanted to share a diagram of a workstation in the proper ergonomic setup. As the diagram depicts, an ergonomic workstation is one where the user’s monitor is just at eye level or slightly below, the monitor is around an arm’s length away, there is minimal bend at the wrists, the user's back is straight, elbows close to the body, a backrest is supporting that lower back, the chair is adjustable, and the user's feet are flat on the ground or resting on a footrest with room between the front of the seat pan and the back of the knees.

This is just one of many diagrams available that offer an easy guide on how employees can have an ergonomically correct workstation, even while working with what we have here in our new home offices. These types of diagrams can be a helpful tool for employees and can serve as a nice reminder for proper posture when working on a computer.

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Ok. Moving along. So we wanted to go over some practices that are easy to fall into but that should be avoided, as they can cause some issues.

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On slide 16, first we have working in a bed or, as we like to call it, "Master Bedroom with a View -- and Neck Strain!" Although it's tempting to simply grab your laptop and stay in bed while you work, this can cause that awkward bending of the neck, issues with the eye-to-monitor distance, and typing is very awkward for the wrists and forearms, as well as it just being bad practice. It’s also practical to get yourself in the work zone in a work-specific setting. Physically separating your work area from your rest area is always best business practice for many reasons.

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Moving into the living room, it is also good to avoid the couch as your workstation for the same principles and reasons. I know it's easy to convince yourself that working on the couch to send "one quick email" sounds easy, but as we all know and can contest, that one email usually turns into multiple emails, and before you know it an hour and a half has passed. That bent elbow underneath our body weight isn’t good for those tendons in our arms, and then your twisted spine. Always remind yourself that it is not worth the pain it will put your body through.

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This is something I have seen, especially over the past few months. Multitasking, or working with a toddler on your lap while trying to type one handed. The awkwardness is not ideal, not to mention the distractions this can cause that take away from the efforts that should go into providing meaningful work. I know with kids it can be hard, and there isn’t much you can do, but try your best to be mindful and adjust the best you can.

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Another big "no no" is sitting on the floor, typing with one hand, holding papers with the other. This can go hand and hand with the previous slide on working with children. You know, getting on the floor so that your kids think you are playing with them, all while trying to multitask and get that work done. We can all see in this photo how this can’t be ergonomically correct. The individual’s knees are to their chest, and they’re hunched over that coffee table.

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So JAN offers information on ergonomics in the workplace including publications and resource guides. On this slide we have a screenshot of the JAN Accommodation and Compliance Series on "Ergonomics in the Workplace: A Resource Guide," which could be used to supplement the information presented in this training. Linked within the ergonomic publication we also have additional JAN resources including assessment providers, which list both virtual and on-site options. We have seen at JAN that many are interested in those virtual assessments right now. Ergonomic software training and assessment tools on how to conduct an ergonomic evaluation can also be linked in this resource.

Ergo equipment is another section we include in this resource, which includes an array of equipment from workstations to chairs to ergonomic staplers and wrist rests. Although JAN does not recommend or endorse any one specific product over the next, we offer information on equipment and products that we know exist for your viewing and consideration. For detailed questions related to a product or service, you may find it useful to contact the manufacturer or vendor or to check in with a health care provider to see if something would be ideal for a specific employee or not.

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JAN’s webpage offers a large variety of information related to various topics, impairments, limitations, needs, and strategies. This is a screenshot of the homepage with the A-Z link circled at the top. Towards the bottom of this page you will see a dropdown menu where you can select disability, limitation, work-related function, or topic, or accommodation, depending on what information you know or are trying to accommodate. We encourage exploring our site, as it offers a lot of practical information related to accommodating individuals with all sorts of impairments.

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## [Common Ergonomic Issues]

### [Sitting]

MATTHEW MCCORD:

Okay. Now let's take a look at some of the more common problems we may face here at home and possible remedies for them. We’ll start with probably the most common problem: sitting. This really isn’t an issue that is unique to people with disabilities. We all can have trouble with prolonged sitting from time to time. But employees with disabilities such as back conditions may have a harder time with it than those without such conditions. Regardless, making sure that our backs and arms are supported, our feet are flat on the floor, and our posture is properly maintained by our workstation setup can help alleviate pain and discomfort caused by sitting.

There are a wide variety of products that may be helpful for employees with medical conditions that make sitting difficult. Some of the more common options are lumbar support cushions, which you may be using right now in the form of one of those decorative throw pillows from your couch.

Appropriate ergonomic chairs: This may be as simple as getting your chair from your office and taking it home, but if not then even something simple like a sturdy dining room chair can work, but you may need to add in some things to make that work like adding in some cushions or folded blankets to raise you up to proper height levels for your worktop.

Adjustable height workstations: In this case, I was using some old video game strategy guides to prop up my monitor to get it tall enough to where I was eye level with my screen, for instance, and of course footrests, which can almost be anything you have laying around the house. Boxes, reams of papers, and slabs of wood from the garage that you may have tucked away could all be considered for this use.

On slide 24, we wanted to provide some links to resources where you can find some more information on this issue. First is our Consultant’s Corner article titled "Best Practices for Addressing Requests for Ergonomic Chairs," and second is our Solution Showcase videos on adjustable workstations and ergonomic chairs. Links to both are found on this slide.

### [Laptop Use]

For our next common problem, using a notebook computer or laptop. First and foremost, connecting and using a full-size monitor can be incredibly helpful with this. Laptop screens can only be adjusted so much by their design, but with a normal monitor you can adjust the height to be eye level. This makes it so you no longer need to bend your neck to look at the screen, and with the monitor's larger size there is also less eye strain too.

Along those same lines, the use of an external keyboard and mouse can be very helpful. Wrist strain from awkward typing angles are just as much of a problem at home as they are in the office, and just like with the screen, laptop keyboards can’t be adjusted all that much. Working on a laptop alone is not ideal for a variety of reasons. Also remember to properly support your forearms and palms. The arms on your chairs can go a long way here if you have them, but something as simple as rolled-up kitchen towels can provide some much-needed cushioning.

And if you are having to work some days in the office and some days at home, and you find yourself having to transport that laptop back and forth, consider using some wheeled luggage to eliminate needing to carry that extra weight back and forth.

As for some products that may help with the use of a laptop computer, first we have docking stations. They can be very helpful as they enable laptop users to convert it into more of a desktop computer setup when at the office or at home. The docking station allows you to plug in external equipment with the USB ports into the docking station, and it serves a hub for your full-size monitor, keyboard, and mouse, and then you connect that with your laptop. Some also have ethernet cable ports so you don’t have to rely on wifi as well. With this, your laptop itself will basically just serve as a desktop computer tower.

There are standalone forearm supports you can order from places like Amazon. These can be secured onto your table to provide some much-needed arm rests. But if you would rather not buy a solution out of the box, you can also get creative. As you can see on the bottom -- on the image on the slide, a do-it-yourself setup that a woman has created by sitting a small desk with laptop strapped to angled cardboard boxes. Anything that gets us closer to that ergonomically correct setup is a step in the right direction.

### [Keyboard/Mouse Use]

Prolonged keyboarding and mousing can be difficult, but for individuals with cumulative trauma disorders such as carpal tunnel syndrome it can be even worse. Most employees who work in office settings spend a large portion of their day typing away on a computer nowadays. Implementing ergonomic principles and making minor workstation adjustments can be a good first step to consider when an employee reports difficulty with typing and mousing.

Altering or adjusting the placement of the keyboard or mouse is one remedy. Keyboards and mice come in all sorts of shapes and sizes, and in some cases the issue may be because of something simple like the keyboard or mouse might just be too big, or they might be too small.

Another simple remedy could be to adjust the armrest on the chair. Remember, your elbows should be as close to the body, and the armrest is there to support the arms in the proper position.

As for some product-based solutions for issues with keyboarding or mousing, the logical first place to start would be looking at alternative keyboards and mice. With all of the diverse options that are out there for keyboards and mice, it is entirely likely that you're just in need of a small change. Beyond that though, an articulating keyboard tray may be helpful to adjust the angle of the keyboard or its height.

Wrist rests can also be helpful, as they will help support the wrist and palms. A do-it-yourself option may be a rolled-up tea clothes or hand towels to elevate your palms into a neutral position.

### [Phone Use]

Most employees in office settings need to use a phone as part of their job, though how much it is used will vary from situation to situation. It can be tempting to get into the habit of resting the phone on your shoulder or tilting your head while talking and typing, but doing this can cause unnecessary strain on the neck, shoulders, as well as your back. Maintaining ergonomic posture while speaking on the phone can reduce discomfort and alleviate pain associated with a variety of disabilities. This can be as easy as relaxing the shoulders and keeping the head upright. It also helps to move the phone to an area of the desk that's easy to reach so that you don’t have to repeatedly stretch to your calls. Also taking micro breaks and standing while talking on the phone can be very helpful too.

Products such as a hands-free headset or a gooseneck phone holder could be used so that there isn’t a need to reach for a phone or support the receiver while you're talking on the phone. Putting calls on speakerphone, when appropriate, might be another solution to reduce pain or discomfort experienced when holding a phone receiver. Now I’ll pass the baton back over to Lisa so that she can review some more ergonomic considerations as well as some general telework considerations with you all.

### [Reading Documents]

LISA MATHESS:

Thanks, Matt. So now looking at another issue we may face -- having to read documents. When considering document holders there's a couple different considerations. You could use an in-line document holder that sits between the keyboard and keyboard tray and screen, and is it's aligned with your body midline so that all you have to do is lower your eyes to look down to see the documents and raise your eyes back to see the screen.

Otherwise you can use a screen-mounted document holder and position this to the same side of your screen as your dominant eye. Use a freestanding document holder and position this next to the side of the screen and slightly angle it so that it follows a curve from the side of the screen. And you don’t have to go buy a document holder off the shelf. Many of us have cookbook holders on display in the kitchen, so you could steal that for the time being.

And let's not forget that we don’t have to be tied to the chair to do some of our reading. So let's get up and stretch and move it to the couch while we review some of these documents. Little things like that can make a big difference.

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### [Eye Strain]

Eye strain can result from looking at a computer monitor for prolonged periods of time. For some individuals, eye strain can also contribute to the onset of migraine headaches. When employees report that looking at the computer is difficult, a simple remedy or fix could be to reposition the monitor if it is too close or too far from the user, clean the monitor if dust and dirt are preventing the user from clearly seeing information, or reduce the glare by adjusting lighting. Products such as a monitor riser or arm, a DIY option here is going to be stack of books or a box to get that monitor up higher.

Adjust your lighting. You want to take a look at where the light source is coming from, whether it's windows, your main ceiling light, or lamps, and adjust the lights and window shades as needed and continuing to adjust as the natural sunshine rotates throughout the day. And an anti-glare filter might also be necessary to provide so that the user doesn't have to strain to see the computer screen when light becomes too harsh and creates that bounceback or glare.

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### [Fatigue]

Fatigue can be a result of performing the same task repeatedly over the course of a shift or by not taking micro-breaks to adjust seating position, or to alternate between sitting and standing, or taking those breaks to stretch. Preventing fatigue by remembering to take time throughout the day for these easy remedies can help to prevent computer-related injuries or an exacerbation of an existing condition.

Equipment, including adjustable-height workstations -- this may look like working on a stack of something at the kitchen counter to stand and then rotating between that setup and the sit-down workspace you’ve created at the dining room table. Alternating between those two locations could be beneficial. You can also purchase desktop adjustable workstations. These are just a smaller footprint of an adjustable unit that has mechanisms to move up and down, but it sets on an existing desk or table.

The treadmill or bike workstations could be used to combat fatigue. Amazon and Walmart have pedal exercisers you could ship to your house to keep the blood flowing while seated. Employees may also find it useful to set alarms or recurring daily reminders to stretch periodically.

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### [Job Restructuring]

Okay. Switching gears to look at some telework considerations, more of administrative modifications rather than the product-based solutions. Of course job restructuring. Removing those secondary duties as an accommodation or changing the way we are performing those essential primary fundamental duties. This may look like a modified schedule, so the employee is working on the hardest tasks when they have the most mental energy or ability to perform. So you want to consider some flexibility here. We know kids that are now home with us, and we're trying to work, so perhaps extending hours into the evening so work can be done once the kids are pretty much out of our hair.

We mentioned the distractions kids and other things can cause, so we might want to consider a noise-canceling headset or looking at apps for concentration issues. Turning the usual phone call into an instant message or an email so there's less background noise to fight with might be beneficial.

And you want to be mindful with your own schedule and really mapping out your day with time chunks and what you want to accomplish during those times. Then of course taking a break. We have emphasized this, I know, but I think we're easy to forget about those breaks when we're really trying to be super productive. But ultimately breaks can increase productivity.

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### [Workplace Flexibility]

In similar premise as job restructuring, workplace flexibility. I mentioned allowing people to work when they were most energized or around their other duties. It is just the norm now that many of us are trying to maintain a full-time job while having to now watch our kids because our schools are virtual-based. So perhaps alternating an employee’s schedule, letting them adjust as needed not only to get the job done but allowing them to help with kids of their own school demands as well.

Continuing with the flexibility, allowing people to move around, take those stretch breaks, use the restroom, check in with our colleagues, and then of course permitting use of time for the check-ins with our service providers. That may look like a therapist or a counselor for someone, or it may be someone’s immunologist for a chronic health condition. So with the flexibility, you may need to consider allowing any missed time to be made up or allow someone to use accrued leave or unpaid leave when job duties can not be performed.

Lastly I want to highlight an Enews article titled "Make Telework Work." It has some practical guidance on at-home solutions and fixes for the work-at-home issues or challenging -- challenges we all can come across.

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### [Equipment Issues]

So let’s switch back to the topic of equipment while teleworking. I highlighted the JAN ergonomics publication earlier with the screenshot on slide 20, but let’s not forget that we have these ergonomic considerations in this pub and really go through it and self-assess what you are working with or how you are working. Lots of companies and organizations are pushing out tips and resources to help us better use what we have with our space and equipment. These links on the slide are from Mayo Clinic, Yale, System Concepts, and Inc. So if you download the slide deck, you'll be able to access those hyperlinks to all these great resources.

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Now focusing on equipment and accommodation issues while teleworking. Equipment issues for teleworking employees pre-COVID was complex and not addressed by the EEOC. So now looking at this new hybrid telework workforce, what employers have to furnish as far as equipment goes, it could be complex and should be handled with that case-by-case determination -- meaning an employer should engage in that interactive process if the ADA is triggered.

The EEOC notes in the Pandemic Preparedness guidance that, during a pandemic, if an individual with a disability needs the same reasonable accommodation at a telework site that was provided at the workplace, the employer should provide that accommodation, absent undue hardship. If such a request is made, the employer and the employee should discuss what the employee needs and why and whether the same or a different accommodation could suffice in the home setting.

For example, an employee may already have certain things in their home to enable them to do their job so that they don't need to have all of the accommodations that were previously provided in the workplace. It’s so important to have a open dialog with that employee. See what they -- See what they continue to need in the home setting. We may not have to recreate the office setup in someone's home, but providing some good ergonomic equipment that meets their needs is ideal. So all that to say engage in that interactive process, regardless what people had, and see what you can provide to enable them to be their best version of an employee.

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So I just went over we as employers, we may have to provide equipment as an accommodation for those who are teleworking for whatever reason, but do we as employers have to physically come in and set it up? Or would we be okay shipping a product to you and letting you have at it? At JAN we are getting lots of accommodation questions on equipment when it comes to this basically, you know, mandated telework due to state orders.

So is the employer responsible to deliver and set up those at-home workstations? This isn't addressed by the EEOC, but here at JAN we'd say that better business practice, that if it's safe for an employer representative to set up the equipment and make sure that the employee is set up for success, that's probably ideal.

## [Resources]

I provided the link to the federal resource Telework.gov, as this is the main hub of teleworking information specific to federal workers, but they also have these two tools that I thought are useful. It's the Self-Assessment and the Safety Checklist. The self-assessment is how a good telework arrangement begins. Employees are encouraged to consider the following factors in making an honest determination about their telework capabilities, record any concerns you may have and how you will address them in order to telework. So this assessment walks you through general considerations, self-management, technology, communication, and appropriate space. And then the safety checklist is designed to assess the overall safety of an alternative worksite. I am now going to pass it back to Matthew for some additional resources.

MATTHEW MCCORD:

We wanted to include some helpful resources for doing some in-house ergonomic assessments. This eTool from OSHA illustrates simple, inexpensive principles that will help you create a safe and comfortable computer workstation. There is no single "correct" posture or arrangement of components that will fit everyone. However, there are basic design goals, some of which is shown on slide 12, to consider when setting up a computer workstation or performing computer-related tasks.

The Department of Defense and the Computer/Electronic Accommodation Program offers this guide which provides illustrations of proper workstation ergonomics. They also provide a checklist for implementation of these strategies as well as tips for prevention of repetitive stress injuries. As we have gone over, ensuring proper ergonomics in the workplace is a smart business decision, because it increases employee productivity and satisfaction while also reducing possible injuries or reinjuries.

In addition to the previous resources, we also have ergonomic tips to share. Colorado State University pushed out some ideal tips. We have really gone over many of these things, but use a good chair (if possible). If you don’t have a good chair, figure out what features you are missing and try filling in those gaps by adding some pillows for back/leg support. Raise up your chair. Most kitchen tables and desks are too high. Use a seat cushion or a pillow and folded blankets if needed to prop yourself up more. Support your feet such as by using a phone book or a stepstool if they don’t firmly touch the ground while you're sitting. Raise up that monitor by using books or old shoeboxes, any bulk item you might have bought that you don’t need to use for its intended purpose any more could work for this. And using external equipment. It is essential that that monitor is separated from the keyboard and the mouse. The top of the monitor should be at least slightly below eye level, shoulders relaxed, with the elbows around 90 degrees.

HumanTech also has some helpful tips to improve home office ergonomics. One feature that is very helpful is the templates they have hyperlinked for do-it-yourself laptop stands. And they have even more resources, which we have linked on this slide as well.

The National Institute of Health offers a tool, with accompanied pictures and explanations, for various exercises for each category listed on this slide. Each category has between two to eight different movements or stretches to do, so it’s very comprehensive. I was happy to see that I already did some of these to help reduce my own strains.

So with all this talk of equipment adjustments and being mindful of positioning and postures, what would be the number one takeaway from all of this? Really getting up and moving is probably what we need to do the most. Our bodies are simply not designed to stay in static positions for long periods of time, and that includes sitting at a computer too. This doesn’t mean you have to stop working though. Take a phone call while standing and walking around your office space. Do neck stretches while you are typing up that report. Give yourself a wrist massage while you are on that Zoom call. It can also be helpful to set reminders on your computer or phone to remind you to stand up and move. Old habits are hard to break. Also practice the 20-20-20 rule. For every 20 minutes of computer use, take 20 seconds, and look at something that's 20 ft away.

We also wanted to plug the JAN "Coronavirus Disease of 2019" page. It has a lot of useful resources on it from handling accommodation requests to reduce exposure to COVID, which medical conditions may be at higher risk of COVID, and more. This slide as well as the next are all links to COVID-19 resources on our site we thought would be helpful to point out.

One link on this slide that I wanted to point out in particular is the fourth one: "Accommodation Strategies for Returning to Work During the COVID-19 Pandemic." If telework cannot be continued and returning to the office is required, that resource will provide suggestions for helping to minimize exposures to COVID that might be helpful to look into. Here are a few links to helpful resources regarding COVID-19 that are now housed on the JAN site as well. And that will be all for our training today. Please feel free to contact us at JAN if you have any questions on anything you saw or any accommodation issues you may have.