JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

Accommodation and Compliance Series

JAN Workplace Accommodation Toolkit: Building Your Inclusive Workplace

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Employment Policy

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JAN'S Accommodation and Compliance Series

Introduction

JAN's Workplace Accommodation Toolkit is a free, comprehensive online resource for employers seeking to move beyond basic compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in order to create more disability-inclusive workplaces. The Toolkit provides guidance and resources for developing or updating accommodation policies and processes while leveraging the best proven practices available to date. The Toolkit contains actionable accommodation policies and processes from leading U.S. businesses, a suite of accommodation forms, training presentations, and role play videos modeling inclusive behaviors. The Toolkit also includes best and emerging practices for creating an inclusive workplace for people with disabilities during all phases of the employment life cycle. Within the Toolkit, one can find specific resource drawers for:

- Recruiters and Hiring Managers,

- Supervisors and Managers,

- Internal Reasonable Accommodation Subject Matter Experts (SME)/Consultants,

- Information Technology Team Members, and

- Employees with Disabilities and Their Allies.

The goal of this Toolkit is to provide resources for creating an exemplary organizational accommodation infrastructure thereby helping to ensure a disability-inclusive workplace. The Toolkit therefore provide resources to support organizational efforts to accommodate applicants, candidates, and employees with disabilities; to train those serving in roles critical to managing disability; and to promote disability inclusion throughout the workplace.

THE BASICS

Managing people with disabilities throughout the employee life cycle need not be difficult or complicated. It starts with recognizing and understanding the value that people with disabilities bring to the workplace. In organizations, there are a number of people in critical roles serving to ensure that applicants, candidates, new employees, and more senior employees feel comfortable and safe disclosing a disability or health condition and helping them feel that they will be given equal opportunity in a workplace free from discrimination.

These critical roles include recruiters and hiring managers who need to understand accommodations for recruiting, interviewing, and onboarding; supervisors and managers who need to know how to recognize an accommodation request as well as understand their role in the accommodation process; the reasonable accommodation SME whose responsibility it is to harmonize and centralize processes, support the training of all employees on workplace inclusion, and support corporate executives in building accessibility into all aspects of governance; and information technology team members responsible for providing digital accommodations as well as ensuring the accessibility of workplace tools. It is equally important that employees with disabilities and their allies understand the accommodation process as well as inform the organization on issues of accessibility and inclusion.

Good communication is essential for an inclusive, productive workplace. This is particularly important with individuals with disabilities who may be reluctant to ask for what they need to do their best work because they are unsure what response they might receive. In a [study](#) conducted by Cornell University, researchers found that the following factors may influence the decision not to disclose a disability at work. "Nearly three quarters of people with a disability viewed risks of being fired/not hired as being very important. This was followed by employer may focus on disability, fear of limited opportunities, and risk of losing health care. People with a disability rated the desire for privacy as less important than those without a disability. People with a disability were more likely to rate the risk of being fired/not hired, losing health insurance and fear of limited opportunities as very important factors than people without disabilities."

The study also suggested there are very important factors that may influence the decision to disclose a disability at work. "About two thirds of the respondents with disabilities rated the need for accommodation and supportive supervisor relationship as being very important. However the context of the workplace was important, with high ratings for having disability friendly workplace and knowing that the employer was actively recruiting people with disabilities. While the responses were quite consistent between groups, persons with a disability rated the importance of belief in new opportunities higher than individuals without a disability."

It is also important to note that employees most often disclosure there disability and request accommodation from their supervisors even when a process is in place for human resources or another team fulfills accommodation requests. Another Cornell finding suggests that employees with disabilities are at least 60% more likely to disclose their disability to their supervisor than to human resources.

People who are coming to terms with a disability may or may not know how to refer to their health situation in a work context and/or accommodations they need to meet performance requirements. Others may know very specifically what tools or technology they need to be successful in the workplace. In either case, it is incumbent upon all employee representatives serving in the various aforementioned critical roles to seek to understand what an applicant or employee is trying to convey and then help them to navigate your accommodation process. Each of the Toolkit "drawers" was designed to provide practical guidance and resources to ensure a coherent, harmonized process across lines of business.

For all members of the organization to increase their disability knowledge, please view:

- [JAN's Disability Awareness to Increase Your Comfort, Confidence, and Competence](#)
    - This 27 minute training module and accompanying transcript provides technical assistance on how to increase your comfort, confidence, and competence through disability awareness.

We also recommend the [United Spinal Association Etiquette Guide](#).

UNDERSTANDING ACCOMMODATIONS AND DISABILITY INCLUSION

A 2011 report, co-produced by the World Bank Group and the World Health Organization, indicated that globally there are more than 1 billion people with disabilities. Increasingly, chronic health conditions and disabilities are becoming more common in the workplace. This has major implications for employers large and small. How an employer engages, develops, recognizes, and supports job applicants and employees is critical to creating a diverse pool of talent in the workplace, and, more importantly, optimizing the productivity of every worker to increase job satisfaction and business performance. Every employee is different—from abilities to job needs, from how they consume information to how they prefer to collaborate and communicate with others. Employees with disabilities can make unique and significant contributions. This is particularly true if organizations are smart enough to effectively accommodate employees with disabilities who might need adjustments. For many, workplace accommodations enable the best of their abilities.

In the United States, workplace accommodations are defined as any change or adjustment to a job, the work environment, or the way things are usually done that would allow an individual with a disability to apply for a job, perform job functions, or enjoy equal access to benefits available to other individuals in the workplace. Examples of accommodations include service animals in the workplace, fragrance-free policies, assistive technologies (e.g., screen magnifiers, work space modifications), accessibility services (e.g., sign language interpreting for people who are deaf), or modifications to the existing digital assets to make these accessible or interoperable with assistive technologies.

For many companies, the accommodation process can be disjointed, reactive, and inconsistent across divisions or lines of business. This makes it difficult to enable new employees with disabilities to perform their job tasks successfully. It also creates challenges for aging employees with chronic health conditions who are working to remain productive. The results of poorly developed and implemented accommodation processes are lower retention rates, increased hiring and retraining costs, loss of highly qualified talent, and draining of essential institutional knowledge.

Accommodations provide equal opportunity for employees with disabilities and, if respectfully provided, create an inclusive workplace environment. With a global reputation for being a thought leader on disability and the workplace, the JAN team knows inclusion is not without challenges. In the early stages, it can feel daunting to adjust your current hiring, recruiting, and retention practices to be disability-inclusive and compliant. However, the reward merits the effort as research shows that the return on investment includes increasing your talent pool, higher retention rates, enhanced

engagement and productivity, and a stronger brand as an employer of choice for all talent.

Workplace disability inclusion means that applicants, candidates, and employees with disabilities have access to the same tools, workplace benefits, and opportunities for development and advancement as non-disabled employees. Workplace disability inclusion is built upon the foundation of a coherent and transparent accommodation policy and process.

For more on workplace disability inclusion, see:

- EARN's Inclusion @Work: A Framework For Building a Disability-Inclusive Organization.

 BUSINESS CASE FOR DISABILITY INCLUSION

As stated previously, over 1 billion people across the world live with some form of disability. This is nearly as many people who live in China. People with disabilities and their friends and family control over $8 trillion in annual disposable income. According to the U. S. Department of Labor, the disability market is the third largest market segment in the United States. Below is a graphic from the American Institutes for Research (AIR) provided in A Hidden Market: The Purchasing Power of People With Disabilities. The graphic shows that 1 in 5 adults or 64 million people in the United States report a disability and of those, 35% or 22 million people are of working age.

The AIR report also concludes that "The total disposable income for U.S. adults with disabilities is about $490 billion, while the "discretionary income for working-age people with disabilities is about $21 billion, which is greater than that of the African American ($3 billion) and Hispanic ($16 billion) market segments combined."

Accenture, a global company providing strategy, consulting, digital, technology and operations support to more than three-quarters of the Fortune Global 500, recently reported in Getting to Equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage the following:

Companies that championed people with disabilities outperformed others -

- Revenues were 28% higher, net income 200% higher, and profit margins were 30% higher.

Companies that improved internal practices for disability inclusion -

- Were almost four times more likely to see higher total shareholder returns.

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), an international community with a mission to develop accessible web standards provides the following elements for its business case for digital workplace accessibility and inclusion:

- Drive Innovation: Accessibility features in products and services often solve unanticipated problems.

- Enhance Your Brand: Diversity and inclusion efforts so important to business success are accelerated with a clear, well-integrated accessibility commitment.

- Extend Market Reach: The global market of people with disabilities is over 1 billion people with a spending power of more than $6 trillion. Accessibility often improves the online experience for all users.

- Minimize Legal Risk: Many countries have laws requiring digital accessibility, and the issue is of increased legal concern.

For more information about the business case for digital accessibility, go to:

https://www.peatworks.org/staff-training/business-case

Thus, the business case for disability inclusion is stronger than ever. People with disabilities and their families are a very large market share. People with disabilities also encompass a large and growing talent pipeline in a time when many industries are experiencing a shortage of talent. Becoming more disability inclusive also reduces the financial risk of the ADA. There is also evidence that being disability inclusive increases corporate innovation. A recent article in the Harvard Business Review reports "Not only do employees with disabilities comprise a large talent pool, it's a remarkably innovative one: 75% of them report having an idea that would drive value for their company (versus 66% of employees without disabilities)." Frances West, former Chief Accessibility Officer at IBM, suggests that in order for organizations to realize the full return-on-investment (ROI) resulting from the innovation people with disabilities/chronic health conditions bring to the workplace, inclusion must be "authentic." This authenticity results from complete integration of knowledge and understanding of disability throughout the corporate organization.

Read what JAN's employer customers report about the cost and benefits of workplace accommodation at [JAN's A to Z by Topic: Benefits and Costs of Accommodation](#).

For all members of the organization to better understand the value proposition for hiring, retaining, and advancing people with disabilities, go to:

- [JAN's The Value Proposition for Engaging People with Disabilities](#)

    - This 11 minute training module and accompanying transcript provides a brief overview of the value proposition for hiring, retaining, and marketing to people with disabilities.

Articles that illustrate the business advantages of hiring talent with disabilities include:

- Fast Company Article: https://www.fastcompany.com/90311742/why-companies-who-hire-people-with-disabilities-outperformed-their-peers

- SHRM: https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/behavioral-competencies/global-and-cultural-effectiveness/pages/4-ways-to-hire-more-people-with-disabilities.aspx

- Deloitte: https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/au/Documents/human-capital/deloitte-au-hc-diversity-inclusion-soup-0513.pdf

- Ft Mead Army Report re: Receive Quality Work: http://www.ftmeade.army.mil/staff/eeo/dis_myths.pdf

TOOLS FOR RECRUITERS AND HIRING MANAGERS

For employers who strive to have an diverse and inclusive workforce for people with disabilities, recruiters and hiring managers play a key role because they are often the first people that job applicants interact with and they typically decide which job applicants are right for the job and the work culture. In addition, recruiters and hiring managers play a key role in compliance with the ADA when a job applicant has a disability and needs an accommodation for the application process.

This section of the Toolkit provides information and resources for recruiters and hiring managers, including where to find applicants with disabilities, how to make the application/interview process more accessible and inclusive, the interactive process for applications and interviews, and more.

Where to Find Qualified Applicants with Disabilities

Employers may want to start their search for qualified people with disabilities by partnering with their [State Vocational Rehabilitation Program](#). Vocational rehabilitation

(VR), a state-supported division of services, assists individuals with disabilities who are pursuing meaningful careers. VR assists those individuals to secure gainful employment commensurate with their abilities and capabilities through local job searches and awareness of self-employment and telecommuting opportunities. In addition to VR, some states have separate agencies serving individuals who are blind and visually impaired. These agencies are provided at the link above.

Companies may want to consider partnering with the [Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation](#), national network of the 80 public Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs, supports a united or "one company" approach to working with business customers. The 80 VR Directors have each named a business consultant that functions as the designated point of contact for their agency. These 80 points of contact, through CSAVR leadership and support, form the National Employment Team or The NET. CSAVR also manages a national job bank, the Talent Acquisition Portal found at: https://tapability.org/

There are other job boards for qualified disability talent. These are provided below. Note: Many of these charge employers for access to the job bank.

- [AAPD Career Center](#)
- [Ability Jobs](#)
- [Disabledperson](#)
- [Gettinghired.com](#)
- [Hire Disability Solutions](#)
- [Our Ability](#)
- [Recruit Disability](#)
- [America's Job Exchange](#)
- [National Labor Exchange](#)

In addition, there are programs targeted to college students and recent graduates who have disabilities.

- [Career Opportunities for Students with Disabilities (COSD)](#)
- [Emerging Leaders](#)
- [Lime Connect](#)
- [Workforce Recruitment Program](#)

And, there are programs targeted to veterans with disabilities.

- [Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense Employment Center for Employers](#)
- [Job Opportunities for Disabled American Veterans](#)

Tips for Making Applications and Interviews More Accessible and Inclusive

Based on our experience at JAN, employers can take steps to make the application/interview process more accessible and inclusive for applicants with disabilities by:

- Ensuring that the equal employment opportunity statement and information about how to request an accommodation is front and center on hiring materials and career portal

- Modifying the applicant tracking system/career portal to ensure accessibility

- Modifying (caption and audio describe) recruiting videos or multimedia to ensure accessibility

- Informing candidates of the entire hiring process so they can decide if an accommodation is needed

- Ensuring physical accessibility of the interview site

- Planning for how to provide readers or interpreters for interviewing/onboarding before a request is made for these services

- Ensuring accessibility of pre-hire tests and informing candidates of the process for pre-hire tests in advance

- Providing pre-hire and onboarding materials in alternate formats (Braille, audio, large print) as needed

- Ensuring accessibility (captioned and audio described) of training videos or multimedia

- Ensuring accessibility of online HR systems

- Planning for allowing a service animal in an interview

To ensure your eRecruiting technologies are accessible to all job seekers—including those with disabilities go to: https://www.peatworks.org/talentworks

Accommodation Process for Applications and Interviews

Under the ADA, employers must consider providing accommodations for applicants with disabilities upon request. However, there often isn't a lot of time to get accommodations into place so many employers opt to streamline the accommodation process for the application/interview stage of employment.

One of the questions recruiters and hiring managers often have is whether they can ask applicants in advance if they will need an accommodation to participate in the hiring process. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the answer is yes — "an employer may tell applicants what the hiring process involves (for

example, an interview, timed written test, or job demonstration), and may ask applicants whether they will need a reasonable accommodation for this process."

A best practice would be to add an accommodation statement to your career portal, application, or other recruiting materials. Below is sample language.

"If you require reasonable accommodation in completing this application, interviewing, completing any pre-employment testing, or otherwise participating in the employee selection process, please direct your inquiries to…"

In general, applicants with disabilities have the responsibility to request an accommodation. So most often, the accommodation process begins when an applicant with a disability requests an accommodation because of a challenge faced during the hiring or onboarding process. [Disclosure of a disability](#) and a request for accommodation has two parts:

- a medical condition causes the challenge, and

- the specific challenge related to the task at hand.

Example: A person who wants to apply for a job contacts you and says: "The online application won't work with my screen reader" or "I keep getting timed out during the test." To effectively accommodate the applicant, you may need to ask for additional information about the challenge so you can explore accommodation ideas. Although employers are allowed to require medical documentation when an applicant requests an accommodation and the disability and need for accommodation are not obvious, some employers prefer not to require medical documentation at the application stage or they require less documentation than they would for an employee requesting accommodation.

But what happens if you invite applicants to request accommodations for the hiring process and an applicant with an obvious disability shows up for a job interview, but has not requested an accommodation? Can you ask the applicant about it?

When deciding whether to ask for more information when an applicant has an obvious disability or mentions a disability during the job interview, ask yourself, "How does this information impact the interview?" and, "How does this information about a disability impact assessment of qualifications and ability to perform the job?" If you don't need the information to determine whether the applicant is qualified, then you probably shouldn't ask for it. If you think the applicant might need an accommodation, but you're not sure, one approach that might work is to simply ask whether there is anything the applicant needs to complete the interview. This way you are not mentioning disability or accommodation, but you are addressing the challenge.

Example: An applicant with an obvious hearing impairment does not ask for accommodations for the interview, but you notice immediately that he is missing some of what you are saying to him. You might want to let him know that it appears he is missing some of what you are saying and ask him if there is anything you can do to improve communication.

Example: An applicant for an office job shows up for the interview using a wheelchair. The fact that the applicant uses a wheelchair does not appear to be relevant to determining whether the applicant is qualified so you should not ask about it.

Another question recruiters or hiring managers often have is what to do if an applicant has an obvious disability, indicates he can perform the job, doesn't mention his disability, but you think his disability might interfere with job performance. In this type of situation, a recruiter or hiring manager may ask a particular applicant or candidate to describe or demonstrate how he would perform a job if there is reasonable belief that the person will not be able to perform the job because of a known disability.

The other main question hiring managers have is whether they can ask applicants if they will need accommodations on the job if they are hired. Here the answer is generally no. However, according to the EEOC, "when an employer could reasonably believe that an applicant will need reasonable accommodation to perform the functions of the job, the employer may ask that applicant certain limited questions. Specifically, the employer may ask whether s/he needs reasonable accommodation and what type of reasonable accommodation would be needed to perform the functions of the job."

The employer could ask these questions if:

- The employer reasonably believes the applicant will need reasonable accommodation because of an obvious disability;

- The employer reasonably believes the applicant will need reasonable accommodation because of a hidden disability that the applicant has voluntarily disclosed to the employer; or

- An applicant has voluntarily disclosed to the employer that s/he needs reasonable accommodation to perform the job.

Unless these conditions are met, a recruiter or hiring manager should not ask about accommodations on the job. It is important for recruiters and hiring managers to be aware of the company's policy and process for accommodation, particularly when it comes to medical information. At times, candidates may offer information to accompany their request for accommodation. So be prepared. The confidentiality of this information is key to inclusion and compliance.

- For more information, see [Preemployment Disability-Related Questions and Medical Examinations](#).

Role Play Training Videos and Accompanying Presentations

The following role play videos and presentation slide decks depict situations that are frequently experienced in the workplace. These videos include scenarios in multiple industries with people of varying disabilities during all phases of the employee's life cycle. Each scenario culminates in a solution to the accommodation situation highlighted. Videos showing the accommodations and solutions are accompanied by a slide presentation providing salient learning points from the video.

- JAN's Interviewing an Individual on the Autism Spectrum
  - PowerPoint Slides
  - Download High Definition (948 MB)
  - Download Standard Definition (489 MB)
- JAN's Hiring an Individual with an Anxiety and Stuttering Disorder
  - PowerPoint Slides
  - Download High Definition (254 MB)
  - Download Standard Definition (70.1 MB)

Resources

Articles specific to hiring recruiters and managers:

- Resources for Finding Qualified Applicants With Disabilities
- Opening Doors to All Candidates: Tips for Ensuring Access for Applicants with Disabilities
- Making a Statement – About Reasonable Accommodation and Equal Opportunity
- Affirmative Action and Disability: What Can Employers Ask?
- Job Application/interview Stage Dos and Don'ts
- Incorporate Reasonable Accommodation Practices into your Onboarding Process
- Making Pre-employment Testing Accessible: WellPoint Offers a Best Practice
- Testing Accommodations
- Job Applicants and the ADA - Fact Sheet
- Tips for Designing Accessible Websites, Including the Self-Assessment SNAP Tool
- Preemployment Disability-Related Questions and Medical Examinations
- Talent Acquisition Course and Certification

Important to Note: Confidentiality

All personnel must respect employee confidentiality. Ensuring the confidentiality of all medical information obtained in connection with a request for reasonable accommodation, as well as the confidentiality of all associated communications during the interactive process, is required by federal law.

All documentation must be kept in a file separate from an individual's personnel file. Non-medical information obtained during this process is shared on an as-needed basis with those involved in providing a reasonable accommodation.

TOOLS FOR SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS

For employers who strive to have a diverse and inclusive workforce for people with disabilities, supervisors and managers play a key role. One of the most important roles they play is recognizing disability disclosures and requests for accommodations from the employees they supervise. According to research by Cornell University, employees with disabilities are at least 60% more likely to disclose their disability to a supervisor than to human resources. While in many workplaces, supervisors and managers are not responsible for managing the entirety of the interactive accommodation process, it is important for them to:

- Be disability aware and know the etiquette of disability,

- Recognize a request for an accommodation,

- Be familiar with company accommodation policies and processes particularly when it comes to the supervisor/managers responsibilities within this process, and

- Support human resources or the company's reasonable accommodation subject matter expert to implement and monitor accommodations.

This section of the Toolkit provides information and resources for supervisors and managers, including information about how to recognize a disclosure and request for accommodation, accommodations most frequently requested when retaining or returning an employee to the workplace, and more.

Accommodation Process for Employees

The cornerstone for inclusive employment is providing reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities. In general, employees have the responsibility to request an accommodation. However, supervisors and managers need to know whether they should ever ask an employee whether an accommodation is needed. According to the EEOC, "an employer may ask an employee with a known disability whether s/he needs a reasonable accommodation when it reasonably believes that the employee may need an accommodation. For example, an employer could ask a deaf employee who is being sent on a business trip if s/he needs reasonable accommodation. Or, if an employer is scheduling a luncheon at a restaurant and is uncertain about what questions it should ask to ensure that the restaurant is accessible for an employee who uses a wheelchair, the employer may first ask the employee. An employer also may ask an employee with

a disability who is having performance or conduct problems if s/he needs reasonable accommodation."

Supervisors and managers need to know what to do when they suspect that an employee needs an accommodation – should they talk with the employee or contact the reasonable accommodation subject matter expert?

For more information about when it's okay to ask whether an accommodation is needed, see Mother May I? Must I? Should I?

Most often, the accommodation process begins when employees with disabilities request accommodations because they have encountered challenges in performing their jobs or accessing benefits of employment such as participating in training or attending a holiday party. As mentioned, regardless of who processes accommodations, it's often the supervisors and managers who receive the initial accommodation request. Therefore, it's very important that they be able to recognize a request. Disclosure of a disability and a request for accommodation has two parts:

- An employee has a medical condition, and
- The medical condition is creating a challenge.

Here are some examples of accommodation requests from the EEOC:

Example A: An employee tells her supervisor, "I'm having trouble getting to work at my scheduled starting time because of medical treatments I'm undergoing." This is a request for a reasonable accommodation.

Example B: An employee tells his supervisor, "I need six weeks off to get treatment for a back problem." This is a request for a reasonable accommodation.

Example C: A new employee, who uses a wheelchair, informs the employer that her wheelchair cannot fit under the desk in her office. This is a request for reasonable accommodation.

Example D: An employee tells his supervisor that he would like a new chair because his present one is uncomfortable. Although this is a request for a change at work, his statement is insufficient to put the employer on notice that he is requesting reasonable accommodation. He does not link his need for the new chair with a medical condition.

These examples illustrate that it doesn't take much to put a supervisor or manager on notice that an accommodation might be needed and that the interactive process should begin or that the person who processes accommodations should be notified. The interactive process is simply an ongoing conversation between an employer and employee in order to discover or develop an effective accommodation – one that enables the employee with a disability to overcome the challenge at work. This conversation needs to accomplish two things:

1. Gathering the information necessary to make an accommodation, and

2. Demonstrating engagement in a good faith effort to resolve the workplace challenge with the employee.

Most often while supervisors and managers may receive a disclosure and request for an accommodation, they are not the ones who process the request. The accommodation process is most typically managed by a person or team steeped in knowledge of the ADA and disability.

However, once an accommodation has been determined, supervisors and managers may have the responsibility for supporting the implementation and monitoring of the accommodation. Under the ADA, information about an employee's request for accommodation and subsequent communications are only to be shared on an "as need to know" basis. Thus, medical and other information regarding how an accommodation was determined is not typically shared with supervisors and managers. However, they may still play a crucial role in ensuring the accommodation is implemented effectively and maintained over time.

For example, if equipment is involved, the supervisor or manager may need to make sure it's properly installed and the employee is trained in its use. If the accommodation involves a schedule change or policy modification, the supervisor or manager may need to determine how the change will affect work flow and make sure there is adequate coverage. If the accommodation involves an outside service, the supervisor or manager may need to make sure the service is provided promptly and effectively. If the accommodation is a reassignment, the supervisor or managers needs to make sure the employee has time to acclimate to the new job.

In addition, supervisors/managers can support the effective accommodation of an employee by:

- Making sure all necessary steps are taken to implement the accommodation. A good way to do this is to check to see if the accommodation is actually working.

- Communicating with human resources or the reasonable accommodation subject matter expert during the implementation of the accommodation.

Another important part of the interactive process is monitoring accommodations after they are in place. In some cases, an accommodation stops being effective for various reasons such as: the employee's limitations change, workplace equipment changes, the job changes, or the workplace itself change. Because changes occur, supervisors or managers may need to periodically check on the ongoing effectiveness of accommodations. The most important way to monitor accommodations is to encourage ongoing communication. Employees who are receiving accommodations need to understand that they should let their supervisor or manager know if there are changes or problems with the accommodation and who specifically to contact.

To learn more, or use JAN's interactive process, see:

- [Interactive Process Module](#)

- [Interactive Process Publication](#)

Productivity Standards

Monitoring and maintaining productivity standards is an important part of the job of supervisors and managers. Under the ADA, employees with disabilities can be held to the same productivity standards as all other employees, but they may need accommodations in order to do so. When talking with any employee who is having difficulty meeting productivity standards, supervisors and managers need be alert for accommodation requests. In many cases, employees may decide to disclose a disability at the time they are confronted with job performance problems. The following guidance from the EEOC provides information and practical suggestions for dealing with disclosures that occur during performance evaluations: https://www.eeoc.gov/facts/performance-conduct.html

Accommodations for Retaining and Returning Employees Back to Work

Based on our experience at JAN, employers provide the following accommodations in order to retain employees with disabilities:

Accommodations for retaining employees:

- Modifying schedules or allowing flex time and/or remote work, for example allowing an employee with MS to telework during flare-ups

- Making the workplace or workstation accessible, for example providing a reserved parking space for an employee with chronic fatigue

- Modifying or creating policies, for example allowing an employee to bring a recently acquired service animal into the workplace

- Providing assistive technology, for example providing a screen reader for an employee who has progressive vision loss

- Purchasing a service, for example an interpreter, closed captioning, and/or computer-aided transcriptions for an employee with hearing loss

- Restructuring a job, for example removing marginal functions for an employee on the autism spectrum to minimize face to face communications

- Adjusting the work location, for example moving an employee with attention deficit to a location with fewer distractions

- Adjusting supervisory methods, for example putting instructions in writing for an employee with memory loss

- Providing accommodations for emergency evacuation, for example ensuring effective communication for employees with hearing loss or safe means of egress for employees with mobility impairments

- Reassigning to another position when an employee with a disability can no longer perform the essential functions of the current job

Accommodations for return-to-work:

Return-to-work programs are part of a business' strategy to retain valued employees and to enhance the productivity of its workforce. The ultimate purpose of a return-to-work program is to make changes and provide accommodations so employees with injuries or medical conditions can return to work from a leave of absence. Supervisors and managers can play a key role in returning employees to work by helping develop a list of light duty tasks, helping identify which regular duties and which light duty tasks an employee can safely perform, monitoring the employee's progress, and perhaps most importantly, making sure the employee is treated in a positive manner while working back up to full duty.

More information about return-to-work can be found at:
https://askjan.org/topics/return.cfm

Role Play Training Videos and Accompanying Presentations

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- JAN's Hiring an Individual with an Anxiety and Stuttering Disorder

  - PowerPoint Slides

  - Download High Definition (254 MB)

  - Download Standard Definition (70.1 MB)

- JAN's Accommodating an Employee with Non-Apparent Disabilities

  - PowerPoint Slides

  - Download High Definition (630 MB)

  - Download Standard Definition (324 MB)

- JAN's Managing the Performance with a Non-Apparent Disability

  - PowerPoint Slides

- Download High Definition (1.03 GB)
- Download Standard Definition (540 MB)

- JAN's Retaining an Individual with Chronic Health Conditions
  - PowerPoint Slides
  - Download High Definition (168MB)
  - Download Standard Definition (49.0 MB)
- JAN's Returning a Back-Injured Employee to Work
  - PowerPoint Slides
  - Download High Definition (359 MB)
  - Download Standard Definition (94.2 MB)
- JAN's Advancing an Individual who is Deaf
  - PowerPoint Slides
  - Download High Definition (238 MB)
  - Download Standard Definition (82.4 MB)
- JAN's Retaining an Individual with an Intellectual Disability After a Change in Supervisor
  - PowerPoint Slides
  - Download High Definition (254 MB)
  - Download Standard Definition (70.1 MB)
- JAN's Performance and Conduct Management of an Employee with Opioid Addiction
  - PowerPoint Slides
  - Download High Definition (222 MB)
  - Download Standard Definition (60.5 MB)

Resources

- What to say when an employee asks about a co-workers' accommodation
- Employers' Practical Guide to Negotiating and Requesting Reasonable Accommodations Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Educating the Workforce about the ADA & Accommodations
- How to Determine Whether a Person Has a Disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA)
- Mother May I? Must I? Should I?

- [Reasonable Accommodation and Undue Hardship Under the Americans with Disabilities Act](#)
- [FMLA/ADA Training for Supervisors and Managers](#)

Important to Note: Confidentiality

All personnel must respect employee confidentiality. Ensuring the confidentiality of all [medical information](#) obtained in connection with a request for reasonable accommodation, as well as the confidentiality of all associated communications during the interactive process, is required by federal law.

All documentation must be kept in a file separate from an individual's personnel file. Non-medical information obtained during this process is shared on an as-needed basis with those involved in providing a reasonable accommodation.

TOOLS FOR REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS

Ensuring a robust interactive process in order to negotiate effective workplace accommodations for people with disabilities throughout the employee life cycle can feel daunting, but we are here to help make the complex simpler. The most important aspect is to have transparent, actionable policies and processes as well as effective training on these processes for all involved, but with a particular focus on supervisors and managers. In organizations that are getting ready to designate or hire a Reasonable Accommodation Subject Matter Expert (RA SME), it is helpful to have a solid job description. To start, we have three [sample job descriptions](#) that you can customize to meet your needs.

What To Do First

As you begin your role as a RA SME, there are a number of actions you may want to consider. All of these actions will help you to develop an effective accommodation infrastructure thereby creating a disability inclusive workplace.

1. Collaborate with Your Colleagues with Disabilities

At JAN, there are three categories of employees with disabilities that we hear from/of most often. These include:

- Aging employees with chronic health conditions
- Entry level and younger employees with disabilities
- Veterans with service-related injuries and conditions

As the disability SME, it is vitally important to fully engage with your colleagues because collaborating with the person who is living with a disability is an essential and required part of the interactive accommodation process.

That said, in JAN's experience, aging employees typically do not consider themselves disabled - they just "do not see as well as they used to" or "hear as well as they used to." Aging employees with chronic health conditions are therefore less likely to be aware of digital accessibility accommodations they might benefit from to address challenges they are having at work. Thus, in working with these employees, you may need to depend on external resources such as JAN to identify and deploy an effective accommodation. In this circumstance there also may be a bit of experimentation needed, trying various devices to see which solutions work best.

On the other hand, younger generations of employees with disabilities often have benefitted from accommodations as an integral part of their academic experience, and as a result of regulations like the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) school-based integration and accommodation requirements and the ADA. As a result, they are often much more likely to have tried various assistive technologies and know which solutions work best for them. They also may view their disabilities as empowering and informing their ability to contribute to their team and company, and while not always, are often better at advocating for what they need.

Veterans with service-related injuries and conditions tend to be similar to aging employees, frequently not considering themselves to be disabled, even when their injury or condition is significant. They, too, are likely to be less familiar with the accommodation process and the various assistive technologies available to address their workplace challenge.

2. Develop Robust Actionable Policies and Processes

Whether you are refreshing your RA policies and processes or creating them from scratch, you may want to review the sample JAN policies and procedures, containing a number of best and emerging processes, as well as many of the examples provided by companies known for being disability-inclusive. Public sector examples of accommodation policies may be helpful as well.

Often it is good to conceptualize the process as a flow chart to more clearly understand how accommodation requests will be handled. In developing or refreshing your accommodations program, a good source for information is Deb Dagit's Accommodating People with Disabilities: A Guide for Employers and Disability Awareness to Increase Your Comfort, Confidence, and Competence.

3. Develop Accompanying Accommodation Forms

Good processes include forms to support communication and implementation at all phases of the interactive process. You may also want to review and consider adapting JAN's sample accommodation-related forms or adapting example forms provided by disability-inclusive companies.

4. Develop Checklists

Process checklists can helpful to manage the accommodation process. When hiring individuals with a disability, consider our sample onboarding checklist. When accommodating existing employees, consider examples of accommodation checklists offered by our partners.

5. Communicate and Educate

Communicate and educate company employees, including the program's executive sponsor and others whose cooperation is important to the program's success. First, be sure to develop and prominently display an equal opportunity statement. And second, train employees so everyone understands the value of engaging people with disabilities. Sample JAN trainings include The Value Proposition for Engaging People with Disabilities and Disability Awareness to Increase Your Comfort, Confidence, and Competence. For more information, see examples of training offered by disability-inclusive companies. EY also has a few resources you may find of value, including a Non-Visible Disabilities Guide as well as two inclusion-related checklists.

6. Track Requests

Tracking accommodation requests is essential for an inclusive and compliant workplace. For ideas in tracking requests, please review examples of accommodation tracking from our partners or consider purchasing tracking software. For a list of potential metrics to track, please reference the "Sample Accommodation Metrics" section of the Toolkit.

JAN offers a free, downloadable mobile workplace accommodation case management app (MAS App) to help U.S. businesses create inclusive workplaces for employees with disabilities. The app is designed to provide real-time case management while guiding talent acquisition and managers through best and emerging accommodation practices. The app is available in IOS or Android.

7. Review Job Descriptions

In many cases the RA SME may be asked by managers to review their job descriptions and guide them in understanding how to describe the essential functions of a position. Guidance that will be helpful when supporting managers in this regard can be found at JAN's A to Z: Job Descriptions.

The Interactive Process

On the job, employers often want to know whether they must ask employees if they need accommodations. The accommodation process most often begins when an employee requests an adjustment because of a medical issue; generally it is an employee's responsibility to let the employer know that an accommodation is needed. However, employers are allowed to ask if an accommodation is needed under certain circumstances. According to the EEOC, "an employer may ask an employee with a

known disability whether s/he needs a reasonable accommodation when it reasonably believes that the employee may need an accommodation. For example, an employer could ask a deaf employee who is being sent on a business trip if s/he needs reasonable accommodation. Or, if an employer is scheduling a luncheon at a restaurant and is uncertain about what questions it should ask to ensure that the restaurant is accessible for an employee who uses a wheelchair, the employer may first ask the employee. An employer also may ask an employee with a disability who is having performance or conduct problems if s/he needs reasonable accommodation."

Supervisors may only ask whether or not an employee needs and accommodation when:

- The employee has an obvious or known disability, and
- The employer has a reasonable belief that the employee may need an accommodation because of the disability.

For more information, see [Reasonable Accommodation and Undue Hardship under the ADA](#).

Also, you may want to read a JAN Enews Article entitled [Mother May I? Must I? Should I?](#)

Disclosure of a disability and a request for accommodation has two parts:

- disability, chronic health condition, or impairment causes the challenge, and
- a specific challenge they are having related to their job duties.

An example of a request for an accommodation during the employee life cycle might be "I hurt my back last week, and I'm having problems lifting boxes" or "I have been diagnosed with diabetes and need a private space to give myself an insulin injection." To accommodate the employee, you will want to ask additional information if necessary about the challenge related to a disability. This challenge may be related to the employee's performance of the essential functions of the job or when a disability prevents the employee from enjoying the benefits and privileges of work such as attending an offsite training.

In order to support an inclusive and compliant workplace, recruiters, hiring managers, or supervisors need to anticipate requests for accommodation or adjustments at work. In anticipating requests, it is important to begin thinking through the process before a request is made. Below are a number of questions to be ready to ask when a disclosure of a disability and a request for an accommodation is made.

Questions to Consider:

- What limitations is the employee experiencing?
- How do these limitations affect the employee and the employee's job performance?

- What specific job tasks are problematic as a result of these limitations?

- What accommodations has the person had in the past that were successful, or does the person know of accommodations available to reduce or eliminate these problems?

- If accommodations are not known or obvious, what internal and external resources are available to me to find an effective accommodation (e.g., internal accommodation consultant or subject matter expert or JAN)?

- Once the accommodation is made, what other company personnel do I need to inform of this adjustment (e.g., Do I need to communicate with security so they know an individual has been granted a flexible schedule and therefore will be working late on certain days)?

- Is training required because of the accommodation (e.g., a person accommodated with text enlargement software may require training on the software)?

- How often do I need to follow up to ensure the accommodation continues to be effective?

Making adjustments to the workplace, with the goal of bringing out the best in everyone and fostering enhanced inclusion, requires an understanding of what is referred to as the interactive process. The interactive process is simply the ongoing conversation between you and the candidate or employee. This productive dialogue needs to accomplish two purposes:

1. Provide you with the information necessary to make the workplace adjustment consistent with your commitment to equal opportunity, and

2. Demonstrate you engaged in a good faith effort to resolve the workplace challenge with the individual.

To learn more, or use JAN's process, please follow these links to access training on the interactive process.

- [Interactive Process Module](#)

- [Interactive Process Publication](#)

For more information on the importance of and the process for implementing the interactive process, visit [JAN's A to Z by Topic: Interactive Process](#).

Types of Workplace Accommodations

There are various categories of workplace accommodations. The most common include

- Purchasing or Modifying Equipment or Products

- Making Work-site Accessible

- Job Restructuring

- Modifying Schedule and Allowing Leave Time

- Modifying Methods (e.g., tests, communication, training)

- Modifying Policies

- Providing Readers and Interpreters

- Reassignment

For access to accommodation ideas, go to the By Accommodation Tab on JAN's A to Z. For examples of accommodations, see JAN's A to Z by Topic: Success Stories.

Training Frontline Managers and Supervisors

Front line supervisors and managers play an important role in promoting inclusion and complying with the ADA. On a day to day basis, they usually have the most contact and the closest relationships with employees. In fact, research shows that employees with disabilities are more likely to disclose to the supervisor than to the human resources department so it's also important to train front line managers and supervisors how to deal with a disclosure or accommodation request.
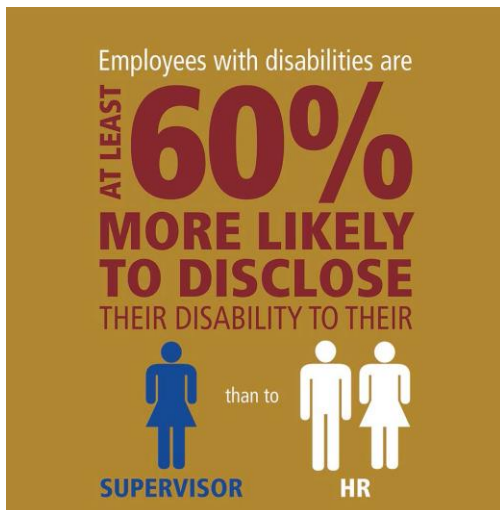
In addition, supervisors and managers may need training so they know how to appropriately interact with employees with disabilities. Some of the problems that can occur when the front line isn't trained include: making inappropriate or discriminatory comments, asking illegal medical questions, and disclosing confidential medical information to coworkers.

As a starting point in training front line supervisors and managers, see the following JAN resources:

- Disability Etiquette

- Recognizing an Accommodation Request

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

- [ADA Medical Inquiry Rules](#)
- [ADA Confidentiality Rules](#)
- [Educating the Workforce about the ADA & Accommodations](#)

For more information on training, see:

- Disability Management Employer Coalition's [FMLA/ADA Training for Supervisors and Managers](#).
- [Disability Inclusion Consultants](#)
- [Disability Awareness Trainers](#)

Sample Forms and Policies

For information on sample forms and policies, visit:

- [Sample and Partner Example Accommodation Policies, Processes, Forms, and Training](#)
- [Sample Forms](#)

Role Play Training Videos and Accompanying Presentations

The following role play videos and presentation slide decks depict situations that are frequently experienced in the workplace. These videos include scenarios in multiple industries with people of varying disabilities during all phases of the employee's life cycle. Each scenario culminates in a solution to the accommodation situation highlighted. Videos showing the accommodations and solutions are accompanied by a slide presentation providing salient learning points from the video.

- [JAN's Interviewing an Individual on the Autism Spectrum](#)
  - [PowerPoint Slides](#)
  - [Download High Definition (948 MB)](#)
  - [Download Standard Definition (489 MB)](#)
- [JAN's Hiring an Individual with an Anxiety and Stuttering Disorder](#)
  - [PowerPoint Slides](#)
  - [Download High Definition (254 MB)](#)
  - [Download Standard Definition (70.1 MB)](#)
- [JAN's Accommodating an Employee with Non-Apparent Disabilities](#)
  - [PowerPoint Slides](#)
  - [Download High Definition (630 MB)](#)
  - [Download Standard Definition (324 MB)](#)

- [JAN's Managing the Performance with a Non-Apparent Disability](#)
  - [PowerPoint Slides](#)
  - [Download High Definition (1.03 GB)](#)
  - [Download Standard Definition (540 MB)](#)
- [JAN's Retaining an Individual with Chronic Health Conditions](#)
  - [PowerPoint Slides](#)
  - [Download High Definition (168MB)](#)
  - [Download Standard Definition (49.0 MB)](#)
- [JAN's Returning a Back-Injured Employee to Work](#)
  - [PowerPoint Slides](#)
  - [Download High Definition (359 MB)](#)
  - [Download Standard Definition (94.2 MB)](#)
- [JAN's Advancing an Individual who is Deaf](#)
  - [PowerPoint Slides](#)
  - [Download High Definition (238 MB)](#)
  - [Download Standard Definition (82.4 MB)](#)
- [JAN's Retaining an Individual with an Intellectual Disability After a Change in Supervisor](#)
  - [PowerPoint Slides](#)
  - [Download High Definition (254 MB)](#)
  - [Download Standard Definition (70.1 MB)](#)
- [JAN's Performance and Conduct Management of an Employee with Opioid Addiction](#)
  - [PowerPoint Slides](#)
  - [Download High Definition (222 MB)](#)
  - [Download Standard Definition (60.5 MB)](#)

Sample Accommodation Program Metrics

There are software programs to assist with tracking metrics. JAN has a list of [accommodation tracking tools](#) to consider. Accommodation program metrics may include the following:

- Accommodation inquiry tracking

- Disclosed reason/need for RA and associated type of request for accommodation

- Accommodations provided and reported by supervisor

- Accommodations provided and reported by RA team

- Total accommodation time - from request to implementation

- Actions taken by interdepartmental team to implement RA

- Accommodations denied with documentation

- Accommodations appealed

- Appeal notations and outcome

- Days lost from work by employee

Satisfaction with reasonable accommodation is important, too. In order to measure the effectiveness of your program, it is considered a best practice to conduct a post-accommodation satisfaction inquiry and document the outcome with the new hire or employee receiving the accommodation and their manager. This step allows you to verify that the accommodation is working for all parties and ideally should not only occur right after the accommodation is provided, but at six-month intervals thereafter.

Using Third Party Vendors to Process Accommodation Requests

For information on using third party vendors, visit JAN's A to Z by Topic: Third Party Vendors.

Building on a Strong Foundation, Best and Emerging Practices

There are a number of best and emerging practices in developing a successful accommodations program. Below are a number of such practices.

- Create a single point of contact for accommodation requests – an RA consultant. Managers need to have readily available support and should not be expected to implement the RA process alone. It is very important they know who can assist them without spending too much time searching for this information.

- Build an internal business case that is communicated to everyone in the company. Analyze your company's lost productivity time, cost of short and long-term leave, and cost of recruitment and hiring.

- Train everyone in the company about the importance of engaging people with disabilities and how to engage. For more information, see:

- - JAN's The Value Proposition for Engaging People with Disabilities. This 11-minute training module and accompanying transcript provides a brief overview of the value proposition for hiring, retaining, and marketing to people with disabilities.

  - JAN's Disability Awareness to Increase Your Comfort, Confidence, and Competence. This 27-minute training module and accompanying transcript provides technical assistance on how to increase your comfort, confidence, and competence through disability awareness.

- Hire Inclusion consultants

- Hire Disability etiquette trainers

- Start with a robust return-to-work program and build a stay-at-work program from there. For more information see JAN's A to Z by Topic: Return to Work Programs.

- Purchase or develop an accommodation tracking system customized to your company. It can be as simple as a spreadsheet, but ensure you capture sufficient information about accommodations granted so that new supervisors and others such as your information technology team are alerted to an employee's accommodation status when needed. For ideas in tracking requests, please review examples of accommodation tracking from our partners or consider purchasing tracking software. For a list of potential metrics to track, please reference "Sample Accommodation Metrics" in this section.

- Encourage use of outside resources like JAN to obtain accommodation ideas or discuss a specific situation in confidence.

- Develop a centralized accommodation fund with expedited procurement. For more information see JAN's Best Practices in Establishing a Centralized Accommodation Fund.

- Ensure the accessibility of your Applicant Tracking Systems or Career Portal. For more information, see JAN's Online Applications and Web Accessibility resources and PEAT's TalentWorks.

- Ensure your pre-hire tests are accessible. For more information, see JAN's Making Pre-employment Testing Accessible: WellPoint Offers a Best Practice and Testing Accommodations.

- Incorporate good accommodation practices into your onboarding process (includes checklist).

- Identify and collaborate with your IT Team on issues of accessibility. Suggest an accessibility expert be embedded or developed for the team. Request an IT Team member join the [International Association of Accessibility Professionals](#).

- Learn more about assistive technologies. Here are three excellent forums where to learn more:

    - [CSUN Conference on Disabilities](#)

    - [M-Enabling Summit](#)

    - [ATIA](#)

- Develop a list of preapproved accommodation items not requiring a full RA assessment and the associated process. These "fast track" adjustments might include things like stand/sit desks, ergonomic chairs, flexible work arrangements, and closed captioning for large meetings.

- Focus on performance, equal opportunity, and business requirements instead of delving into the medical details. This will avoid privacy concerns and ensure that the conversation is about business needs.

- Harmonize the accommodation program including investing in creating and sustaining collaborative relationships with other departments that often can assist with an RA including: Safety, Procurement, Benefits (leave), Information Technology, Legal, HR Business Partners, and Facilities.

- Provide boilerplate accessibility contract language when purchasing products and services to those involved in procurement. For more information see the GSA's [BuyAccessible Wizard](#). Use the PEAT [BuyIT! Guide](#), the online resource that helps employers and their purchasing staff build accessibility and usability into their information and communication technology procurement processes.

- Assess your technology accessibility practices using the PEAT [TechCheck](#) benchmarking tool.

- Develop a "Task Bank" for return to work. A Task Bank is a list of tasks and jobs that an injured employee is able to perform given his/her medical restrictions while transitioning back to into the workplace. For more information, see [The Task Bank](#).

- Provide training and tips for enhancing informal communication and participation with employees who have disabilities. This includes manager training to foster inclusion by encouraging employees with disabilities to participate in informal gatherings, team building, and developmental opportunities such as training and professional meetings. For more information, see JAN's [Disability Etiquette](#).

- Create a disability-inclusive culture. You can read more on how in [EARN's Inclusion @Work: A Framework For Building a Disability-Inclusive Organization](#) and read [EARN Employer Success Stories](#).

Developing an Employee Resource Group

An employee resource group (ERG) is a voluntary group led by employees to represent a common interest, such as disability. For additional information, see:

- [Resource Groups 101: A Primer on Starting Them & Using Them for Business Goals](#) - DiversityInc

- [Disability Employee Resource Group Compendium: Employer Best Practices](#) - Viscardi Center

- [Do You Need an Employee Resource Group for People with Disabilities?](#) - SHRM

- [EY's Resource Groups Connect Members With Its Culture, Community and Clients](#) - DiversityInc

Resources

As an RA SME/Consultant, you will want to invest in your own ongoing development. This includes JAN resources:

- [Searchable Online Accommodation Resource](#)

- [Assistive Technology Solution Showcase](#)

- [Webcast Series](#)

- [Newsletter](#)

- [Blog](#)

- Social Networks ([Twitter](#), [Facebook,](#) [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#))

This may also include attending conferences sponsored by the following organizations:

- [Disability:IN](#)

- [Disability Management Employers Coalition](#)

- [National Industry Liaison Group](#)

- [Return-to-Work Institute at the WCI 360 Workers' Compensation Conference](#)

- [CSUN Conference on Disabilities](#)

- [M-Enabling Summit](#)

- [ATIA](#)

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All documentation must be kept in a file separate from an individual's personnel file. Non-medical information obtained during this process is shared on an as-needed basis with those involved in providing a reasonable accommodation.

TOOLS FOR TECHNOLOGY PROFESSIONALS WHO SUPPORT DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY REQUESTS

Information Technology (IT) professionals are increasingly tasked with responding to internal and/or external requests to assist with digital accessibility from applicants, candidates, employees, and/or customers who are living with a disability. Ensuring digital accessibility for people with disabilities may be uncharted territory for many IT professionals, and can feel daunting. JAN developed this repository of resources to share best practices and external resources to make what can be a complex process simpler.

Our objective is that those who use these resources are able to save themselves time and effort, while providing more efficient and effective solutions for individuals with disabilities. This typically requires a collaborative process between IT professionals and individuals with disabilities working together to identify and implement the most appropriate digital accessibility solutions.

To understand more about how technology professionals support the implementation of accommodations involving digital accessibility, please watch this webcast featuring Kevin Grogg | Assistive Technologies Service Owner | EY Technology - Desktop Experience for Ernst & Young. Download transcript here.

Basics of Workplace Digital Accessibility

Digital accessibility levels the playing field for people with various disabilities enabling equal employment opportunities and workplace inclusion. In a 2011 final report of the Center of Development Expertise (CODE) for Accessibility Task Force, digital accessibility is defined as "The ability for a user to perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with hardware, software, websites, and documents regardless of age and ability." The CODE Task Force funded by the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)was comprised of executives and developers from leading information

technology companies as well as service providers such as JAN, the group considered ways to promote accessible design in software and hardware development, especially related to workplace information and communications technology.

Digital accessibility fits into the broad definition of what many call "universal accessibility" or "access-for-all." The Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University defines universal accessibility as "the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design."

Comcast Corporation, a leader in developing universally accessibility products and services, is working to refine accessibility. Tom Wlodkowski, VP of Customer Experience at Comcast Corporation suggests: "*At Comcast we are actually trying to shift away from the term accessibility because accessibility is often thought of as a feature. Instead we use the term 'inclusive experience' or the degree to which all of us can use something effectively and independently from the get go.*" Thus, accessibility is an essential element of any fully inclusive product and service.

- For more information about digital accessibility, please explore https://www.peatworks.org/staff-training/digital-accessibility and https://www.deque.com/accessibility-beginners-guide/

- To understand more about digital accessiblity, please consider reviewing this PowerPoint deck provided by eSSENTIAL Accessibility.

Assistive Technologies

The Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA) defines assistive technology (AT) as "any item, piece of equipment, software program, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities." AT is essential for many people in order to become employed, successfully meet the essential functions of their job, and advance within an organization. Thus, assistive technologies are one type of accommodation employers must consider when accommodating applicants, candidates, and employees with disabilities. For more information on digital accessibility and assistive technologies please go to: https://www.peatworks.org/get-started To view a series of videos showing how specific assistive technologies work, please go to JAN's Solution Showcase at: https://askjan.org/events/Multimedia-Training-Microsite.cfm#spy-scroll-heading-2

Interoperability

Assistive technology and information technology interoperability is critically important to achieving broader digital inclusion. This ability of different IT networks, applications, and components, including assistive technologies, to exchange and use information, i.e. to "talk" to each other is fundamental to creating an accessible ecosystem for colleagues and consumers with a broad range of disabilities." From a Microsoft article entitled Interoperability & Achieving Digital Inclusion: Microsoft's Commitment. In JAN's experience with employers, interoperability is a major barrier to workplace inclusion,

both with regards to obtaining and retaining employment. This is why workplace accessibility subject matter expertise and swift response time to IT requests are so essential to an effective reasonable accommodations process.

Important Note: One of the most frequently cited concerns of individuals who are using digital access solutions at work is losing their interoperability access when there is a systems, security and/or software update. It is vitally important:

- When changes are made to IT tools that a process is in place to ensure that employees with disabilities are able to maintain access and productivity in a manner that is comparable to employees who do not have a disability.

- Make accessibility continuity a priority in your acceptance criteria before rolling out any changes or additions.

Accommodations and Digital Accessibility

The ADA was signed into law on July 26, 1990, and is a wide-ranging law intended to make American society more accessible to people with disabilities. In 2008, the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) was passed, its purpose, to broaden the definition of disability, which had been narrowed by preceding U.S. Supreme Court decisions.

The ADA is divided into five Titles. While digital accessibility is important in all of the Titles of the ADA, for the purposes of this Toolkit, we focus on the Employment or Title I of the ADA. Title I requires covered employers to provide reasonable accommodations for applicants and employees with disabilities and prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in all aspects of employment. Reasonable accommodation includes, for example, restructuring jobs, making work-sites and workstations accessible, modifying schedules, providing services such as interpreters, and modifying equipment and policies. The ADA requires that businesses with 15 or more employees must provide reasonable accommodations to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of employment.

For more information about accessible workplace technology and the ADA, please go to: https://www.peatworks.org/policy-matters

Using the following "RACI" task assignments we offer the following as a quick reference guide for key contributors within your digital access solutions team. Be:

- **R**esponsible: Doing The Task: This person who acts on the task or deliverable. They are responsible for getting the work done or making the decision. It can sometimes be more than one person, but try to minimize the amount of people involved.

- **A**ccountable: Owning The Task: This person or role is responsible for the overall completion of the task or deliverable. They won't get the work done but are responsible for making sure it's finalized. Ideally, this should be one person rather than a group to avoid confusion in terms of who actually owns the task.

- **C**onsulted: Assisting: This person, role or group will provide information useful to completing the task or deliverable. There will be two-way communication between those responsible and those consulted.

- **I**nformed: Keeping Aware: These people or groups will be kept up to date on the task or deliverable. This could be on progress, or when the task or deliverable is completed. They won't be asked to feedback or review, but they can be affected by the outcome of the task or deliverable. There should be one-way communication to these roles or groups.

[Download Digital Access Roles and Responsibilities Chart](#)

The Digital Access Roles and Responsibilities section of this resource drawer was informed by information from the Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology (PEAT). PEAT is a multi-faceted initiative to foster collaboration and action around accessible technology in the workplace. Guided by a consortium of policy and technology leaders, PEAT works to help employers, [IT](#) companies, and others to understand why it pays to build and buy accessible technology, and how to do so. Like JAN, PEAT is funded by the [U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)](#).

This information can be found on the PEAT website: https://www.peatworks.org/staff-training/roles

You will find invaluable tips, tools and resources for IT professionals and other key stakeholders involved in ensuring digital access for all. We encourage you to refer to these resources in building your digital access strategy.

For short videos for pitching the importance of digital accessibility to your CEO, go to: [14 short videos](#)

Job Description of a Digital Accessibility Subject Matter Expert

In our experience at JAN, digital accessibility subject matter experts can bridge two common barriers to digital inclusion: 1) challenges presented by knowledge and language differences between Human Resources professionals who traditionally provide ADA related accommodations and professionals in the information technology function; and 2) lack of internal knowledge of the many and diverse assistive technology solutions that are available, and the associated interoperability issues that need to be proactively managed.

Overcoming accessibility barriers to workplace inclusion of people with disabilities is best accomplished by designating one or more accessibility subject matter experts. The starting point is to create a clear and detailed job description.

Three companies – Charter Communications, Workday, and EY – have embraced the idea of employing professions to ensure digital accommodations are effective for applicants, candidates, employees and customers with disabilities who are the point people in resolving interoperability challenges posed when assistive technologies and workplace productivity tools do not readily work together. Job descriptions for these digital accessibility professionals can be downloaded:

- [Charter Communications Accessibility Architect](#)
- [Workday IT Professional](#)
- [EY Service Owner for Assistive Technology](#)

Accessibility Challenges During the Employment Life Cycle

At the Job Accommodation Network, the accessibility challenges we hear most often include:

- Applicants – Inaccessible career portals and/or applicant tracking systems: Many company Career Portals contain multimedia that is not captioned nor audio described; have not been designed to be operable with a screen reader; and do not prominently display a phone number or email address to request an accommodation.

- Candidates – If the company utilizes pre-employment assessments, these need to be accessible and have a point of contact to request any needed accommodations. If the assessment process includes demonstrating how a job will be performed and utilizes a digital platform, this must be accessible. Hiring managers need to know how they can quickly access digital solutions when needed so that candidates with disabilities are on equal footing with other candidates they are evaluating.

- New Hires – Inaccessible on-boarding tools and resources: Companies need to be ready to provide accommodations policy and procedure information as well as job specific training tools in accessible formats. Also it is important to be sure any onboarding software tools, including post-employment assessments, are interoperable with various types of assistive devices including screen readers and magnifiers. If there is an active disability focused Employee Resource Group a best practice is to provide this information so that they can access this resource, and in some companies this group may provide a "buddy" to assist with the on-boarding process.

- Employees – Inaccessible productivity and learning tools: All employees need to be able to access the same IT tools their colleagues utilize for things like: taking time off; expense reimbursement; job-related applications; internal company communications; and training resources essential for employees to perform their job effectively and advance in their career.

Note: The worst situation that in our experience at JAN happens all too often, is when a new employee with a disability is unable to be productive for weeks or sometimes even months while digital accessibility issues are being worked through. This significantly impacts team and individual morale, and can result in managers not being willing to hire talent with disabilities going forward.

One of the more common scenarios we see is companies who are desperate to hire talent in their customer service center where there is often high turnover and low engagement, but who cannot tap into skilled talent with visual disabilities because the IT applications that are used are not accessible. Many of these IT applications were created or purchased by the company many years ago and are difficult and costly to replace or remediate. The irony is that the business case is quite compelling to replace these tools with accessible ones when you look at the cost associated with finding, training, and retaining talent for high volume, high turnover jobs. The bottom line and brand of the company suffers in obvious and measurable ways, but due to a quarterly revenue obsession vs. looking at the longer term benefits to universal access, this ubiquitous challenge remains in most companies whose customers are frustrated by phone trees, long waiting times, and staff that struggle to meet their customers' needs because they are often learning their jobs as new employees.

It is well documented that people with disabilities, especially those with visual conditions, are significantly unemployed, and that hiring talent with disabilities reduces turnover, enhances overall team performance, and boosts engagement. The solution to many customer service woes is abundantly clear, and IT professionals who create, purchase and maintain these applications are the solution to enhancing company performance and customer satisfaction.

Getting Started

As you begin your role as the subject matter expert on digital accessibility, there are a number of steps you may want to consider. All of these steps will help you to answer the major question of a digital SME. According to Tom Wlodkowski, VP of Customer Experience at Comcast Corporation, that question is "How do we better understand the technology needs of our employees with disabilities."

1. Collaborate with Your Colleagues with Disabilities

At JAN, there are three categories of employees with disabilities that we hear from/of most often. These include:

- Aging employees with chronic health conditions

- Entry level and younger employees with disabilities
- Veterans with service-related injuries and conditions

As IT access professionals it is vitally important to fully engage with your colleagues because collaborating with the person who is living with a disability is an essential and required part of the interactive accommodation process.

That said, in JAN's experience, aging employees typically do not consider themselves disabled - they just "do not see as well as they used to" or "hear as well as they used to." Aging employees with chronic health conditions are therefore less likely to be aware of digital accessibility accommodations they might benefit from to address challenges they are having at work. Thus, in working with these employees, you may need to depend on external resources such as JAN to identify and deploy an effective accommodation. In this circumstance there also may be a bit of experimentation needed, trying various devices to see which solutions work best.

On the other hand, younger generations of employees with disabilities often have benefitted from accommodations as an integral part of their academic experience, and as a result of regulations like the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) school-based integration and accommodation requirements and the ADA. As a result, they are often much more likely to have tried various assistive technologies and know which solutions work best for them. They also may view their disabilities as empowering and informing their ability to contribute to their team and company, and while not always, are often better at advocating for what they need.

Veterans with service-related injuries and conditions tend to be similar to aging employees, frequently not considering themselves to be disabled, even when their injury or condition is significant. They, too, are likely to be less familiar with the accommodation process and the various assistive technologies available to address their workplace challenge.

Fortunately as an IT professional you do not need to know or utilize any specific language when collaborating with a colleague with a disability to identify and install an enabling technology solution. As long as you and the employee are following whatever procedure the organization has adopted for providing an accommodation for a disability, you can focus on what you do best, providing technology solutions.

That said, we have heard from many people who contact JAN that they are concerned about saying or doing the "wrong thing" when interacting with a person with a disability and would like to build their confidence in how to be a respectful ally. While most people with disabilities are accustomed to and comfortable with engaging with people who are not familiar with their situation and are hesitant to speak with them, it is still appreciated when people take the time to understand basic etiquette.

Towards that end, we offer some basic disability etiquette resources:

JAN's Disability Awareness to Increase Your Comfort, Confidence, and Competence. This 27 minute training module and accompanying transcript provides technical assistance on how to increase your comfort, confidence, and competence through disability awareness. To view training module go to: https://jan.adobeconnect.com/aware/

We also recommend the United Spinal Association Etiquette Guide and JAN's Blog Disability in the Workplace - Old School, New School.

http://www.unitedspinal.org/pdf/DisabilityEtiquette.pdf

2. Learning about assistive technologies most often used in the workplace

Assistive and accessible technologies enable employees with various conditions including visual, hearing, cognitive, speech, mobility, and dexterity to address the challenges posed by digital tools that were not developed to be universally accessible for all.

Some of the more commonly used enabling tools include:

To view a series of videos showing how specific assistive technologies work, please go to JAN's Solution Showcase at: https://askjan.org/events/Multimedia-Training-Microsite.cfm#spy-scroll-heading-2

- Alternate keyboards
- Augmentative communication devices
- Braille refreshable displays and printers/readers
- Amplified headsets
- Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART)
- Video relay phones
- On-screen keyboards
- Video audio description
- Video captioning
- Text-to-speech reading technologies
- Screen magnifiers
- Speech-to-text software
- Alternative mouses

These hardware and software solutions are just some of the products used to enable access for applicants /candidates with disabilities and the productivity of employees with disabilities. It is important to note that any exploration of assistive or accessibility options should begin with understanding the built in resources that already exist within

commonly used workplace tools. Being aware of and conversant with these built in features is important as it would make a world of difference if all employees would adopt these universally accessible tools and platforms that not only benefit employees with disabilities, but in many cases also increase the productivity of non-disabled employees. As a respected and relied upon IT subject matter expert, you can help influence your colleagues to make use of these resources normative and preferred over technology that is less accessible.

To learn more about common assistive technologies and how they work, please view the following videos available in JAN's Solution Showcase.

Provide Solution Showcase Videos.
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=9m4B75Twd5Oakm_PU8wibttw4jF89utW

3. Conduct an accessibility review of your organization

Conducting a digital accessibility review of the workplace is essential towards creating an inclusive workplace. An excellent guide to conducting a comprehensive review of all aspects of your digital workplace can be found at: https://www.peatworks.org/techcheck

Another option that has worked for many companies is to conduct accessibility audits with either internal testers from the company's disability-focused employee resource groups or external testers from digital accessibility vendors.

4. Clearly understand your companies policy and procedures and your role in responding to requests for digital accommodations:

- Review your companies reasonable accommodation policies and procedures

- Identify whether you have and who the Executive Sponsor is for the process as they may be needed to legitimize your authority to acquire and install technology solutions (Note if you do not have an Executive Sponsor, you will want to advocate for one to be identified).

- Understand who else in your organization is involved in fulfilling requested accommodations, what they bring to the table, and how you may need to collaborate with them

- Understand the process for initiating a digital accommodation request as many companies have some kind of electronic case management or accommodation tracking systems that you may need to access and contribute to

- Be prepared to serve as a liaison or bridge between the information technology team and colleagues who are responsible for other aspects of facilitating the accommodations process. Depending on the nature of the accommodation, level of employee, and how the request for an accommodation came about, may include representatives from:

- Human Resources
- Employee Relations
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Facilities, Ergonomics
- Environmental Health and Safety
- Security and/or
- Legal

Training specific to these various roles can be found at: https://www.peatworks.org/staff-training/roles

Companies have various drivers for providing accessibility, and it is not unusual for the focus on access to initially become a priority with customers, and then over time, come to include employee accommodations needs.

- There are various models for designating and deploying digital accessibility subject matter expert(s). Below are three models or approaches utilized by JAN clients that we often hear of:

- ADA Accommodations Team – The digital subject matter expert or team answers to the ADA Accommodations Lead and is only responsible for employee-related digital accommodations, internal facing requests only.

- Disability Advisory Council – The digital subject matter expert is guided by a cross-functional group often lead by someone from Human Resources which is composed of marketing, communications and branding, legal, risk management, facilities, etc. Support for accessibility is provided throughout the enterprise, fulfilling both external and internal requests.

- Information Technology Team – The digital subject matter expert answers to the information technology team and ultimately to the Chief Information Office, supporting both internal and external enterprise-wide accessibility needs.

5. Increase your knowledge of what triggers the accommodations process.

The workplace accommodation process most often begins when a person with a disability or chronic health condition requests an adjustment at work when their disability is linked to a challenge at work. This could occur at any point in the employment lifecycle such as:

- Applying for a job
- Onboarding
- Performance of their job, or
- Enjoying the benefits and privileges of work

If it is obvious that an applicant or employee's disability is impacting their ability to fully participate and/or contribute at work, then the hiring manager or supervisor must initiate the accommodations process. The conversation that takes place is otherwise known as the "Interactive Process" which is quite simply collaboratively identifying with the candidate or employee the adjustments that are needed, with the goal of bringing out the best in everyone and fostering true inclusion.

This productive dialogue needs to accomplish two purposes:

- Provide you with the information necessary to make the workplace adjustment consistent with your commitment to equal opportunity, and

- Demonstrate you engaged in a good faith effort to resolve the workplace challenge with the individual.

Effective accommodation processes have the following elements:

- A step-by-step process for disclosing the need for and negotiating an accommodation throughout the employee lifecycle including pre-hire, onboarding, stay-at-work, and return-to-work (includes occupational workers' compensation and non-occupational)

- Clear roles/responsibilities are important because making workplace adjustments is a team effort. A supervisor may be responsible for providing a flexible schedule; facilities may need to widen a doorway; absence management may need to offer additional leave.

- Timeframes for various steps of the process are essential; how soon after the disclosure and request for an adjustment is the supervisor required to communicate with the employee? How long before the accommodation is implemented? Clear commitments regarding when the person can expect a response are essential towards understanding whether or not your process is effectively implemented. That said, it is acknowledged that timeframes can shift due to specific circumstances involved. (e.g. vendor does not deliver equipment when promised). Stating a timeframe does not mean that it is not changeable, it just means the commitment is revisited and shifted if/as needed and every effort is made to mitigate delays.

- Keeping the lines of communication open is critical. Applicants, new hires, and employees need to know that they are valued and that progress is occurring in relation to the accommodation being requested. A good process stipulates how and how often this communication should occur.

Consistency in implementation of the accommodation processes is essential to the success of the program. JAN has developed six process steps that are easily adaptable for your accommodations process including:

- Step 1: Recognizing an Accommodation Request

- Step 2: Gathering information

- Step 3: Exploring Accommodation Options
- Step 4: Choosing an Accommodation
- Step 5: Implementing the Accommodation
- Step 6: Monitoring the Accommodation

To learn more about the interactive process, please follow these links to access a training and a publication regarding the interactive process.

Just-in-Time Training Module

https://askjan.org/events/Multimedia-Training-Microsite.cfm#spy-scroll-heading-5

Publication

https://askjan.org/topics/interactive.cfm

JAN also provides a number of Just-in-Time training videos depicting various scenarios for effectively managing the Interactive Process. Each video is accompanied by a downloadable PowerPoint presentation of important lessons. These role play videos highlighting effective interactive accommodation practices can be found at: https://askjan.org/toolkit/index.cfm#tools-for-consultants:videos

6. Expedite the procurement process for acquiring accessibility solutions.

JAN clients report that they are providing accommodations within two weeks of receiving a request for an accommodation. If feasible, do your best to improve your process by suggesting the following:

- Build accessibility language into company contracts with vendors and hold them to these commitments,

- To learn more about procuring accessibility technology, go to Disability:IN's Accessible Technology Procurement Toolkit,

- Notify the vendor and request an expeditious reply when an applicant, candidate, employee, or customer reports an accessibility challenge when using their product or service,

- Purchase multiple licenses for often requested technologies (e.g. screen readers, screen magnifiers) to hasten the implementation process,

- Develop a catalogue of often requested technologies or code fixes to save time and effort vs. reinventing the wheel, and

- Suggest that an expedited procurement process be established for accommodations requests, particularly those that an applicant, candidate or new employee may need.

Best and Emerging Workplace Accessibility Practices

There are a number of best and emerging practices noted below that have been successfully utilized by digital access subject matter experts to enhance workplace inclusion:

- Ask to be designated as the acknowledged enabling technology point of contact for digital access inquiries. With your IT and procurement colleagues, work towards ensuring all workplace hardware and software products and services that are purchased or developed are accessible from day one. Serving as an accessibility expert and advocating for accessibility will decrease the amount of time spent accommodating employees individually, creating remediations of existing tools, and increase the productivity of all employees. For more information on purchasing accessible technology, please go to: https://www.peatworks.org/Buy-IT

- Work with your CIO and leadership team to encourage a centralized approach to responding to digital accommodations requests that ensures all business units in the company have similar messaging and an understanding of the business case for both external and internal facing products and services to be accessible.

- Advocate for and contribute to the development of an enterprise-wide digital accessibility plan with the eventual goal of making all internal and external digital assets accessible. Insights into such planning can be found in EY's 2017 Accessibility and Inclusion Plan

- Build mutually beneficial relationships outside of IT with internal representatives from human resources, marketing and branding, legal, risk management, diversity and inclusion, procurement and other key functions in order to both understand common concerns but also to identify partners to expeditiously work through issues that arise during the accommodations process.

- Develop a list of external contacts at the companies from which you purchase your assistive technology products or services. Let them know about the mutually beneficial reasons to support you and your company in solving any interoperability issues that may occur, and how this will likely help them to maintain a productive and lasting working relationship.

- Suggest that the company invest in proactively evaluating the applicant tracking system, pre-hire assessments, human resource information systems, and productivity tools. Consider using a "secret shopper" approach, asking the disability-focused ERG members to confidentially use the tools and provide you with their feedback. If you do not have an ERG, or they do not have the ability to collaborate in this manner, then consider using one of JAN's free SNAP tool to review your career portal or contract with a digital accessibility vendor to conduct the review. Suggestions for hiring a consultant or conducting user testing on workplace digital technologies can be found at: https://www.peatworks.org/staff-training/hiring-consultants-testers. For more information about the accessibility of pre-hire tests go to: http://askjan.org/ENews/2014/Enews-V12-I4.htm#1

- Work with those involved in procurement to provide boiler plate accessibility contract language when purchasing products and services. For more information: https://www.peatworks.org/buy-IT/solicitation

- Test digital workplace tools on a "greenfield basis" versus after they are deployed and then may need remediation. Remediation is more costly and time consuming. Encourage internal and external developers to adopt the mindset that accessibility issues are similar to "bugs" to resolve instead of an additional task to be completed.

- Learn more about how creating accessible products and services can lead to innovation and the development of better products or everyone. More information can be found at: Center for Talent Innovation Research Report: http://www.talentinnovation.org/publication.cfm?publication_90

- Encourage others to become certified in digital accessibility.

- Encourage the organization to establish a position overseeing all accessibility. A Chief Accessibility Officer not only sends the signal that the organization is serious about disability inclusion but centralizes all of policies, procedures, and decision making.

Role Play Training Videos and Accompanying Presentations

The following role play videos and presentation slide decks depict situations that are frequently experienced in the workplace. These videos include scenarios in multiple industries with people of varying disabilities during all phases of the employee's life cycle. Each scenario culminates in a solution to the accommodation situation highlighted. Videos showing the accommodations and solutions are accompanied by a slide presentation providing salient learning points from the video.

- JAN's Interviewing an Individual on the Autism Spectrum
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  - Download High Definition (948 MB)

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  - PowerPoint Slides
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    - Download Standard Definition (60.5 MB)

Digital Accessibility Resources

As an accessibility manager, you will want to invest in your own on-going development. This may include attending training conferences such as:

- Accessing Higher Ground
- Assistive Technology Industry Association
- CSUN Assistive Technology Conference
- M-Enabling Conference

You may also want to explore resources from the Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology (PEAT), including:

- TechCheck – a tool to help employers assess their technology accessibility practices
- Talent Works – an online resource that helps employers and human resources (HR) professionals make their eRecruiting technologies accessible to all job seekers
- Buy-IT! – a guide for purchasing accessible technology

Free Web Accessibility Assessment Tools Built Into Web Browsers:

- For Mozilla Firefox, use Total Validator and Web Developer.
- For Chrome, use the Web Developer Toolbar.
- For Opera, access a number of built-in accessibility tools. Look under the "View," "Style" menu to view some of those features.

Free Accessibility Assessment Tools:

- ODEP/JAN SNAP
- Cynthia Says
- Deque
- Functional Accessibility Evaluator at University of Illinois at Urbana – Champaign
- IBM

- Level Access
- Paciello Group
- Spanish-language accessibility tool TAW Online
- WebAIM WAVE
- W3C Website Code Validator

Accessibility Consultants:

- Accessibility OZ
- Accessible Computing, Inc.
- Audio Eye
- Bender Consulting Services, Inc.
- Deque Systems
- Essential Accessibility
- IBM
- Jim Thatcher
- Keymind, A Division of Axiom Resource Management, Inc.
- Knowbility
- Level Access
- New Editions Consulting, Inc.
- Paciello Group
- Ramp WEB, Inc.
- WebAIM

Web Accessibility Certifications:

- International Association of Accessibility Professionals
- Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access Georgia Institute of Technology
- RampWEB
- Web AIM Accessible Site Certification with the Paciello Group

Digital Accessibility Training:

- http://jimthatcher.com/webcourse1.htm
- https://www.levelaccess.com/solutions/training/
- http://webaim.org/

- http://www.rampweb.com/Accessibility_Services/accessibility_training.php
- https://www.criterion508.com/webaccessibilitytraining
- http://www.fred.net/dhark/acc101.html
- http://www.ledet.com/courses/861-Web-Accessibility-and-Section-508-Training-Training-Class

Important to Note: Confidentiality

All personnel must respect employee confidentiality. Ensuring the confidentiality of all medical information obtained in connection with a request for reasonable accommodation, as well as the confidentiality of all associated communications during the interactive process, is required by federal law.

All documentation must be kept in a file separate from an individual's personnel file. Non-medical information obtained during this process is shared on an as-needed basis with those involved in providing a reasonable accommodation.

TOOLS FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES AND ALLIES

Employees with disabilities can be active participants in making the workplace more inclusive and in getting the accommodations they need to be successful in the workplace. In addition, workplace allies can provide supports such as mentorship and advocacy.

This section of the Toolkit provides information and resources for employees with disabilities and their allies, including rights under the ADA, how to request and negotiate workplace accommodations, a sample request form, and more.

Disclosure and Requesting an Accommodation

It is the responsibility of a candidate or employee to request an accommodation or adjustment from an employer, therefore all employees need to invest the time to seek out and understand the organization's RA policy, process steps, and, when requested, forms associated with requesting and receiving a workplace adjustment.

Government regulatory guidance specifies that there are no "magic words" required to request an accommodation. That said, it is suggested that you look into and understand your organization's reasonable accommodation (RA) process and then think through how you want to request an accommodation so that you feel fully prepared and are clear about the nature of your request and what you think would help you to reach/sustain your full potential to contribute at work.

If you are not a person with a disability yourself, you should know that many times coworkers feel more comfortable speaking with a peer than talking with a manager or HR professional. By making the time to learn how the accommodations process works in your company, you can be prepared to help someone who may be feeling vulnerable and help to enhance inclusion.

It is important to remember that most disabilities are not obvious/visible and there is stigma associated with many health conditions. By supporting your colleagues, you are creating an environment where, in the event you acquire a temporary or long-term health condition, you will be more likely to receive similar support.

Disclosure and requesting an accommodation has two parts:

- Telling your employer you have a medical condition, and

- Describing the challenge your medical condition presents in your workplace.

For a step-by-step process on requesting and negotiation a reasonable accommodation, see JAN's Consultants' Corner: Volume 03, Issue 04. By using these steps and informing your employer that you have a disability and any associated challenges you are experiencing, you and your employer can work together to identify an accommodation solution that is effective. It is important to focus on what you need to perform the duties of your job when requesting the accommodation. It is not suggested you focus on your medical diagnosis, and only provide the health information required by your employer. You can read more about whether to or how to disclose at JAN's A to Z: By Topic: Disclosure.

Sample Accommodation Request Form

If your company does not have a form to use to request an accommodation, consider using JAN's sample accommodation request letter. You can use this information and suggestions to engage in a productive conversation with your employer.

JAN offers a free, downloadable mobile workplace accommodation case management app (MAS App) to help U.S. businesses create inclusive workplaces for employees with disabilities. The app is designed to provide real-time case management while guiding talent acquisition and managers through best and emerging accommodation practices. The app is available in IOS or Android.

Types of Workplace Accommodations

There are various categories of workplace accommodations. The most common include

- Purchasing or Modifying Equipment or Products

- Making Work-site Accessible

- Job Restructuring

- Modifying Schedule and Allowing Leave Time
- Modifying Methods (e.g., tests, communication, training)
- Modifying Policies
- Providing Readers and Interpreters
- Reassignment

For access to accommodation ideas, go to the By Accommodation Tab on JAN's A to Z. For examples of accommodations, see JAN's A to Z by Topic: Success Stories.

Role Play Training Videos and Accompanying Presentations

The following role play videos and presentation slide decks depict situations that are frequently experienced in the workplace. These videos include scenarios in multiple industries with people of varying disabilities during all phases of the employee's life cycle. Each scenario culminates in a solution to the accommodation situation highlighted. Videos showing the accommodations and solutions are accompanied by a slide presentation providing salient learning points from the video.

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    - PowerPoint Slides
    - Download High Definition (222 MB)
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Resources

As an individual, you will want to invest in your accommodation and ADA knowlege. This includes reviewing and using the following JAN resources:

- For Individuals Portal
- ADA Library
- Employees' Practical Guide to Negotiating and Requesting Reasonable Accommodations Under the ADA
- Searchable Online Accommodation Resource (AT)
- Assistive Technology Solution Showcase
- Webcast Series
- JAN is here for YOU!

- [Understanding and Applying the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act and Its Regulations](#)

Important to Note: Confidentiality

All personnel must respect employee confidentiality. Ensuring the confidentiality of all [medical information](#) obtained in connection with a request for reasonable accommodation, as well as the confidentiality of all associated communications during the interactive process, is required by federal law.

All documentation must be kept in a file separate from an individual's personnel file. Non-medical information obtained during this process is shared on an as-needed basis with those involved in providing a reasonable accommodation.

 DEFINITIONS

Understanding key definitions as a part of the Toolkit is important. Review these terms and learn more about the Toolkit's vocabulary:

- [Absence Management](#)**:** A program that attempts to control company absences due to illness or injury with an emphasis on controlling unexplained and excessive absenteeism. Broader programs may be known as "total absence management."

- [Accessibility](#)**:** Refers to the design of products, devices, services, or environments for people with disabilities. The concept of accessible design ensures both "direct access" (i.e. unassisted) and "indirect access" meaning compatibility with a person's assistive technology (for example, computer screen readers).

- [ADA/ADAAA](#)**:** A Federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public. The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. Amendments to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) signed into law on September 25, 2008, clarify and reiterate who is covered by the law's civil rights protections. The "ADA Amendments Act of 2008" revises the definition of "disability" to more broadly encompass impairments that substantially limit a major life activity.

- [Centralized Accommodation Fund](#)**:** Company-wide general fund that would help to pay for employee accommodations. This helps to reduce the strain on hiring managers and supervisors about the needed budget for hiring people with disabilities.

- Disability**:** For purposes of the ADA/ADAAA the term 'disability' means, with respect to an individual--a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual; a record of such an impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment.

  - Essential Functions: Duties that are fundamental to a position that the individual holds or desires that he/she cannot do the job without performing them. Evidence of what constitutes an essential function may include, but is not limited to: Reasonable Accommodation Coordinator's judgment; written job descriptions; the amount and/or proportion of time spend performing the function; the consequences of not requiring a function; and the work experience of incumbents. A function can be "essential" if, among other things: 1) The position exists specifically to perform that function; 2) Only a limited number of employees are available to perform the function; 3) The function is so specialized and the individual is hired based on their ability to perform the function; and 4) The function cannot be delegated.

- Expedited Accommodation Procurement**:** The process of speeding up the procurement and implementation of necessary job related accommodations. For example, some companies have I-buy systems that eliminate the need for invoicing.

- Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)**:** A Federal law that entitles eligible employees of covered employers to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons with continuation of group health insurance coverage under the same terms and conditions as if the employee had not taken leave.

- Harmonizing Accommodation Process**:** The process of bringing consistency to the accommodation process so that it is better understood by the employer and the employee. There has been a need to streamline processes that help to identify personnel roles and responsibilities.

- Interactive Process**:** A process where employers and applicants/employees with disabilities who request accommodations work together to identify and implement effective reasonable accommodation.

  - Job Analysis**:** Method of identification of the essential functions of an occupation to determine necessary skills for successful job performance. This includes: physical and mental requirements, stress, work environment, and physical hazards.

- Job Description**:** A document developed by the employer that provides an understanding the duties and responsibilities related to a job. A job description typically consists of six major components: 1) essential job functions; 2) knowledge and critical skills; 3) physical demands; 4) environmental factors; 5) the roles of the ADA and other federal laws such as the Occupational Safety Health Act (OSH Act); and 6) any explanatory information that may be necessary to clarify job duties or responsibilities.

- Reasonable Accommodation**:** A change or adjustment that enables a person with a disability to apply for a job, perform job duties, or enjoy the benefits and privileges of employment that are equal to those enjoyed by similarly situated employees without disabilities. The change/adjustment promotes equal employment opportunity for an individual with a disability.

- Stay at Work (SAW)/Return to Work (RTW)**:** An organized effort on the part of the employer to help recovering employees return to or stay at work. This can include but is not limited to: temporarily limited hours, modified duties, or transitional jobs as well as permanent accommodations including modified or alternate jobs.

- Task Bank**:** A list of previously identified jobs in various departments within a company. A task bank can be an efficient and proper way to identify jobs that need to be completed. This type of tool is highly important for someone who is managing RTW/SAW programs. You can use the following hyperlink to Presagia's Test Bank publication, https://askjan.org/toolkit/upload/PresagiaTaskBankWhitepaper.pdf under the "Task Bank."

- Third Party Administrator (TPA)**:** A TPA is an organization that processes claims and performs other administrative services in accordance with a service contract, usually in the field of employee benefits like Short Term/Long Term Disability(STD/LTD), Workers' Compensation, FMLA, and the ADA reasonable accommodation process.

- Transitional Work: This is temporary work that helps to bridge the gap to a full recovery for an injured (occupational or non-occupational) employee. This type of work tends to be less physically and mentally demanding.

 TOOLKIT COLLABORATORS

Thank you to the following companies who made the time to share their reasonable accommodation insights, best practices, and unmet needs. We could not have produced this Toolkit without your generous and thoughtful collaboration.

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