

JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

Accommodation and Compliance Series

Accommodation and Compliance Series: Employees with Allergies

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Preface

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is funded by a grant from the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor. JAN makes documents available with the understanding that the information be used solely for educational purposes. The information is not intended to be legal or medical advice. If legal or medical advice is needed, appropriate legal or medical services should be contacted.

JAN does not endorse or recommend any products or services mentioned in this publication. Although every effort is made to update resources, JAN encourages contacting product manufacturers/vendors and service providers directly to ensure that they meet the intended purposes. This guarantees that the most up-to-date information is obtained.

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JAN'S Accommodation and Compliance Series

Introduction

JAN's Accommodation and Compliance Series is designed to help employers determine effective accommodations and comply with Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Each publication in the series addresses a specific medical condition and provides information about the condition, ADA information, accommodation ideas, and resources for additional information.

The Accommodation and Compliance Series is a starting point in the accommodation process and may not address every situation. Accommodations should be made on a case by case basis, considering each employee's individual limitations and accommodation needs. Employers are encouraged to contact JAN to discuss specific situations in more detail.

For information on assistive technology and other accommodation ideas, visit JAN's Searchable Online Accommodation Resource (SOAR) at <https://AskJAN.org/soar>.

Information about Allergies

An allergy is an inflammatory reaction that occurs when a person ingests, inhales, or touches a substance to which their body's immune system has become sensitized. Common allergens include foods such as peanuts and tree nuts, animal-related materials such as pet dander, and airborne substances such as pollen.

The immune system of a person with allergies produces antibodies, which cause reactions that can range from itchiness, digestive distress, or inflamed sinuses to serious medical emergencies such as anaphylaxis. Allergies can be managed through various treatment options including medication, avoidance of substances to which one is allergic, and immunotherapy.

In addition, individuals sometimes refer to other conditions as "allergies." For example, an employee with reactive airway disease might say they are allergic to perfumes when in fact their airways react to perfumes due to their respiratory condition rather than an antibody reaction. Likewise, individuals with conditions such as dermatitis may describe themselves as allergic to the substances that cause them to experience skin irritation although they may not have a formally diagnosed allergy.

Allergies and the Americans with Disabilities Act

The ADA does not contain a definitive list of medical conditions that constitute disabilities. Instead, the ADA defines a person with a disability as someone who (1) has

a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more "major life activities," (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment. For more information about how to determine whether a person has a disability under the ADA, see [How to Determine Whether a Person Has a Disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act \(ADAAA\)](#).

Accommodating Employees with Allergies

People with allergies have various limitations, depending on the type and severity of the allergy. Therefore, effective accommodations will vary. The following information provides suggestions for processing an accommodation request related to allergies and some general accommodations to explore. Numerous other accommodation solutions may exist.

Questions to Ask:

Does the employee know what the specific allergen(s) is?

Before accommodations can be fully explored, it is useful to find out what the specific allergen is. In some cases, the employee may not know, but may have a general idea.

How is the allergy triggered?

Many allergies are triggered by inhaling the allergen, but other types of triggers are possible such as the allergen touching the skin. In some cases, there might be more than one type of exposure at issue. Knowing how the allergy is triggered can help an employer explore accommodation options.

Questions to Consider:

1. What limitations is the employee experiencing?
2. How do these limitations affect the employee and the employee's job performance?
3. What specific job tasks are problematic as a result of these limitations?
4. What accommodations are available to reduce or eliminate these problems? Are all possible resources being used to determine possible accommodations?
5. Once accommodations are in place, would it be useful to meet with the employee to evaluate the effectiveness of the accommodations and to determine whether additional accommodations are needed?
6. Do supervisory personnel and employees need training?

Accommodation Ideas:

Limitations

Coughing Excessively

- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
- Noise Abatement
- Policy Modification
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace

Dietary Needs

- Flexible Schedule
- Mini Refrigerators/ Electric Coolers
- Policy Modification

Headache

- Air Cleaners & Purifiers
- Alternative Lighting
- Anti-Glare Filters for Fluorescent Lights
- Cubicle Doors, Shields, and Shades
- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
- Flexible Schedule
- Full Spectrum or Natural Lighting Products
- Job Restructuring
- Lighting Gel Filters
- Marginal Functions
- Modified Break Schedule
- Non-Fluorescent Lighting
- Task Lighting
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

Nausea

- Flexible Schedule
- Mini Refrigerators/ Electric Coolers
- Odor Control
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

Respiratory Distress/Breathing Problem

- Air Cleaners & Purifiers
- Air Cleaners - Chemical/Odor Removal
- Air Cleaning Systems
- Air Purifiers for Multiple Chemical Sensitivity
- Alternative Cleaning Supplies
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Device
- Carpet Alternatives, Sealants, and Sustainable Flooring
- Escape Hoods
- Flexible Schedule
- Floor Cleaning/Stripping Products - Chemical Sensitivity
- Low/No Odor Paints and Stains
- Mask Brackets and Frames
- Masks - Respirator
- Masks – General/Chemical/Allergen
- Odor Control
- Outgoing Voice Amplification - Telephone
- Personal Air Cleaner (Neckworn)
- Personal On-Site Paging Devices
- Powered Air Purifying Respirator (PAPR)
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Voice Amplification

Skin Rash/Blisters/Sores

- Alternative Cleaning Supplies
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Device
- Disability Awareness/Etiquette Training

- Job Restructuring
- Odor Control
- Outgoing Voice Amplification - Telephone
- Policy Modification
- Touchless Faucets
- Voice Amplification

Work-Related Functions

Air Quality/Irritants

- Air Cleaners & Purifiers
- Air Cleaners - Chemical/Odor Removal
- Air Cleaning Systems
- Air Purifiers - No Ozone
- Air Purifiers for Multiple Chemical Sensitivity
- Alternative Cleaning Supplies
- Carpet Alternatives, Sealants, and Sustainable Flooring
- Escape Hoods
- Flexible Schedule
- Floor Cleaning/Stripping Products - Chemical Sensitivity
- Low/No Odor Paints and Stains
- Mask Brackets and Frames
- Masks - Respirator
- Masks – General/Chemical/Allergen
- Odor Control
- Personal Air Cleaner (Neckworn)
- Powered Air Purifying Respirator (PAPR)
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

Policies

- Additional Training Time / Training Refreshers
- Aide/Assistant/Attendant

- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
- Flexible Schedule
- Marginal Functions
- Modified Break Schedule
- Periodic Rest Breaks
- Physical/Social Distancing Signage
- Policy Modification
- Reassignment
- Service Animal
- Sleep Alerting Devices
- Strobe Lights
- Supervisory Methods
- Support Animal
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Touchless Faucets

Situations and Solutions:

An office worker with severe allergies was having reactions to cleaning wipes used during the pandemic.

The employee was given a private office space, allowed to clean the space with a different cleaner and provided a HEPA air purifier.

An employee with a severe allergy to bee stings asked to park closer to the worksite to avoid exposure.

Because of limited parking close to the worksite, the employer instead sprayed for bees in the parking lot and along the route to the worksite and developed a plan of action should a bee sting occur.

An employee with allergies to multiple allergens asked to bring her service animal to work to help with detecting and avoiding allergens.

The employer granted the request.

An employee was experiencing an allergic reaction to mold in the old building she worked in.

The employee was allowed to telework until the mold could be located and eradicated.

A social worker with an allergy to smoke asked not to work with clients who smoke.

It was not possible for the employer to only assign the social worker to non-smoking clients, so the employee was reassigned to a social work position that did not involve in-person contact with clients.

Products

There are numerous products that can be used to accommodate people with limitations. JAN's Searchable Online Accommodation Resource at <https://AskJAN.org/soar> is designed to let users explore various accommodation options. Many product vendor lists are accessible through this system; however, JAN provides these lists and many more that are not available on the Web site upon request. Contact JAN directly if you have specific accommodation situations, are looking for products, need vendor information, or are seeking a referral.

Resources

Job Accommodation Network

West Virginia University
PO Box 6080
Morgantown, WV 26506-6080
Toll Free: (800) 526-7234
TTY: (304) 293-7186
Fax: (304) 293-5407
jan@askjan.org
<https://askjan.org>

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is a free consulting service that provides information about job accommodations, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the employability of people with disabilities.

Office of Disability Employment Policy

200 Constitution Avenue,
NW, Room S-1303
Washington, DC 20210
Toll Free: (866) 633-7365
odep@dol.gov
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep>

The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) is an agency within the U.S. Department of Labor. ODEP provides national leadership to increase employment opportunities for adults and youth with disabilities while striving to eliminate barriers to employment.

Allergy & Asthma Network

8229 Boone Boulevard,
Suite 260
Vienna, VA 22182
Toll Free: (800) 878-4403
Fax: (703) 288-5271
<http://www.allergyasthmanetwork.org/main/>

Allergy & Asthma Network is the leading nonprofit organization whose mission is to end the needless death and suffering due to asthma, allergies and related conditions through outreach, education, advocacy and research.

American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology

555 East Wells Street
Suite 1100
Milwaukee, WI 53202-3823
Direct: (414) 272-6071
info@aaaai.org
<http://www.aaaai.org/home.aspx>

The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology is dedicated to the advancement of the knowledge and practice of allergy, asthma and immunology for optimal patient care.

American College of Allergy, Asthma, & Immunology

85 West Algonquin Road
Suite 550
Arlington Heights, IL 60005
Direct: (847) 427-1200
Fax: (847) 427-1294
mail@acaai.org
<http://acaai.org/>

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

8201 Corporate Drive
Suite 1000
Landover, MD 20785
Toll Free: (800) 727-8462
info@aafa.org
<http://www.aafa.org/>

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) is the premier patient organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with asthma and

allergies and their caregivers, through education, advocacy and research. AAFA, a not-for-profit organization founded in 1953, provides practical information, community based services, support and referrals through a national network of chapters and educational support groups. AAFA also sponsors research toward better treatments and a cure for asthma and allergic diseases.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Rd
Atlanta, GA 30333
Toll Free: (800) 232-4636
<https://www.cdc.gov/>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are dedicated to protecting the health and safety of people - at home and abroad, providing credible information to enhance health decisions, and promoting health through strong partnerships.

Chemical Sensitivity Foundation

P.O. Box 283
Topsham, ME 04086
<http://www.chemicalsensitivityfoundation.org/>

The primary goal of the Chemical Sensitivity Foundation, a 501(c)3 nonprofit foundation, is to raise public awareness about multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS). The following two videos will help viewers understand this condition that is making it extremely difficult for large numbers of people to remain in the workforce or find a safe place to live.

Food Allergy Research & Education

7925 Jones Branch Dr.,
Suite 1100
McLean, VA 22102
Toll Free: (800) 929-4040
Fax: (703) 691-2713
<http://www.foodallergy.org/>

The goal of the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network is to raise public awareness, to provide advocacy and education, and to advance research on behalf of all those affected by food allergies and anaphylaxis.

Kids With Food Allergies

5049 Swamp Rd, Ste 303
PO Box 554
Fountainville, PA 18923
Direct: (215) 230-5394
Fax: (215) 340-7674
<http://www.kidswithfoodallergies.org/>

Kids With Food Allergies improves the day-to-day lives of families raising children with food allergies and empower them to create a safe and healthy future for their children.

Mayo Clinic

13400 E. Shea Blvd.
Scottsdale, AZ 85259
Direct: (480) 301-8000
<http://www.mayoclinic.org/>

The Mayo Clinic's mission to inspire hope and contribute to health and well-being by providing the best care to every patient through integrated clinical practice, education and research.

MedlinePlus

8600 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20894
custserv@nlm.nih.gov
<https://medlineplus.gov>

MedlinePlus is the National Institutes of Health's Web site for patients and their families and friends. Produced by the National Library of Medicine, the world's largest medical library, it brings you information about diseases, conditions, and wellness issues in language you can understand. MedlinePlus offers reliable, up-to-date health information, anytime, anywhere, for free.

National Center for Biotechnology Information

8600 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20894
pubmedcentral@ncbi.nlm.nih.gov
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>

The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information.

National Fibromyalgia & Chronic Pain Association

31 Federal Avenue
Logan, UT 84321
Toll Free: (801) 200-3627
info@fmcpaware.org
<http://www.fmcpaware.org/>

The National Fibromyalgia & Chronic Pain Association (NFMCPA) is a 501(c)3 not for profit organization. We support people with chronic pain illnesses and their families and friends by contributing to caring, professional, and community relationships. Through continuing education, networking with support groups and advocates, and affiliation with professional organizations, the members of the NFMCPA have a place to be informed, get involved, and recognize achievements.

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

5601 Fishers Lane
MSC 9806
Bethesda, MD 20892-9806
Toll Free: (866) 284-4107
Direct: (301) 496-5717
Fax: (301) 402-3573
ocpostoffice@niaid.nih.gov
<http://www.niaid.nih.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

NIAID conducts and supports basic and applied research to better understand, treat, and ultimately prevent infectious, immunologic, and allergic diseases.

National Jewish Health

1400 Jackson Street
Denver, CO 80206
Toll Free: (877) 225-5654
Direct: (303) 388-4461
<http://www.nationaljewish.org/>

National Jewish Health is known worldwide for treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders, and for groundbreaking medical research. Founded in 1899 as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health remains the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to these disorders. *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked National Jewish Health as the number one or number two hospital in pulmonology on its Best Hospitals list ever since pulmonology was included in the rankings.

Remedy's Health Communités

<http://www.healthcommunities.com>

Remedy Health Media is America's fastest growing health information and technology company. We are a leading provider of clinical resources and wellness tools that help millions of patients and caregivers live healthier, more fulfilled lives.

Our mission is to empower patients and caregivers with the information and applications needed to efficiently navigate the healthcare landscape and as a result, to permit better health outcomes through use of our products and services.

The Environmental Illness Resource

162 Bramham Drive
Oakdale Court
Harrogate, North Yorkshire, England HG3 2-2UB
Toll Free: (441) 423-528055
support@ei-resource.org
<http://www.ei-resource.org/>

The Environmental Illness Resource seeks to provide those with environmental illnesses with information of the highest quality in the hope that this will lead to improved quality of life and perhaps even recovery of good health. In addition, to provide a free and open online community in which members may exchange information between themselves and support each other in their healing journeys.

United States Environmental Protection Agency

Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20460
Direct: (202) 272-0167
<http://www3.epa.gov/>

Our mission is to protect human health and the environment.

World Allergy Organization

555 East Wells Street
Suite 1100
Milwaukee, WI 53202-3823
Direct: (414) 276-1791
Fax: (414) 276-3349
info@worldallergy.org
<http://www.worldallergy.org/>

The World Allergy Organization (WAO) is an international umbrella organization whose members consist of 97 regional and national allergology and clinical immunology societies from around the world. By collaborating with member societies, WAO provides direct educational outreach programs, symposia and lectureships to members in nearly 100 countries around the globe.

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