

# JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

## Accommodation and Compliance Series

# Accommodation and Compliance Series: Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Job Accommodation Network  
PO Box 6080  
Morgantown, WV 26506-6080  
(800)526-7234 (V)  
(877)781-9403 (TTY)  
[jan@askjan.org](mailto:jan@askjan.org)  
[AskJAN.org](http://AskJAN.org)



**ODEP**  
Office of Disability  
Employment Policy

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

## 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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Updated 09/12/2022.

## **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 Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)**

Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) is a type of anxiety disorder that affects millions of adults. Other conditions can accompany OCD, resulting in a dual-diagnosis, including eating disorders, other anxiety disorders, and depression. Symptoms of OCD include persistent, upsetting thoughts (obsessions) and the use of rituals (compulsions) to control the anxiety those thoughts produce. These rituals can end up controlling individuals with OCD and negatively impact their personal and work life, resulting in the need for accommodations at work. Common problems in the workplace for employees with OCD that may require reasonable accommodation include attendance and punctuality issues, the ability to meet deadlines and stay organized, and problems maintaining concentration and managing distractions.

### **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and the Americans with Disabilities Act**

The ADA does not contain a list of medical conditions that constitute disabilities. Instead, the ADA has a general definition of disability that each person must meet. A person has a disability if he/she has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having 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 Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)**

People with OCD may develop some of the limitations discussed below, but seldom develop all of them. Also, the degree of limitation will vary among individuals. Be aware that not all people with OCD will need accommodations to perform their jobs and many others may only need a few accommodations. The following is only a sample of the possibilities available. Numerous other accommodation solutions may exist.

### **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**

##### Attentiveness/Concentration

- Alerting Devices
- Alternative Lighting
- Applications (apps)
- Apps for Memory
- Behavior Modification Techniques
- Calendars and Planners
- Cubicle Doors, Shields, and Shades
- Electronic Organizers
- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines

- Flexible Schedule
- Full Spectrum or Natural Lighting Products
- Job Coaches
- Job Restructuring
- Marginal Functions
- Modified Break Schedule
- Noise Canceling Headsets
- Personal On-Site Paging Devices
- Professional Organizers
- Sound Absorption and Sound Proof Panels
- Task Separation
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Timers and Watches
- Uninterrupted "Off" Work Time
- Verbal Cues
- Visual Schedulers
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace
- Written Instructions

#### Disruptive Behavior

- Apps for Miscellaneous Mental Health / Control of Anger & Emotions
- Behavior Modification Techniques
- Counseling/Therapy
- Cubicle Doors, Shields, and Shades
- Disability Awareness/Etiquette Training
- Employee Assistance Program
- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
- Flexible Schedule
- Habit Monitoring
- Job Coaches
- Job Restructuring

- Noise Canceling Headsets
- On-site Mentoring
- Periodic Rest Breaks
- Reminders
- Social Skill Builders
- Strobe Lights
- Supervisory Methods
- Support Animal
- Support Person
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Training Modifications
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace
- Written Instructions

#### Executive Functioning Deficits

- Apps for Concentration
- Apps for Memory
- Calendars and Planners
- Checklists
- Color Coded System
- Cubicle Doors, Shields, and Shades
- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
- Extra Time
- Flexible Schedule
- Form Generating Software
- Full Spectrum or Natural Lighting Products
- Job Coaches
- Job Restructuring
- Marginal Functions
- Memory Software
- Modified Break Schedule

- Noise Canceling Earbuds
- Noise Canceling Headsets
- On-site Mentoring
- Recorded Directives, Messages, Materials
- Reminders
- Sound Absorption and Sound Proof Panels
- Speech Recognition Software
- Sun Boxes and Lights
- Sun Simulating Desk Lamps
- Timers and Watches
- Written Instructions

#### Managing Time

- Applications (apps)
- Apps for Organization/ Time Management
- Calendars and Planners
- Checklists
- Color Coded System
- Electronic Organizers
- Marginal Functions
- PDAs, Notetakers, and Laptops
- Personal On-Site Paging Devices
- Reminders
- Task Separation
- Timers and Watches
- Written Instructions

#### Memory Loss

- Additional Training Time / Training Refreshers
- Apps for Memory
- Calendars and Planners
- Electronic Organizers

- Job Coaches
- Memory Software
- Professional Organizers
- Recorded Directives, Messages, Materials
- Reminders
- Social Skill Builders
- Support Person
- Verbal Cues
- Visual Schedulers
- Written Instructions

#### Non-compliant Behavior

- Apps for Miscellaneous Mental Health / Control of Anger & Emotions
- Behavior Modification Techniques
- Counseling/Therapy
- Cubicle Doors, Shields, and Shades
- Disability Awareness/Etiquette Training
- Employee Assistance Program
- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
- Flexible Schedule
- Habit Monitoring
- Job Coaches
- Job Restructuring
- Noise Canceling Headsets
- On-site Mentoring
- Periodic Rest Breaks
- Reminders
- Social Skill Builders
- Strobe Lights
- Supervisory Methods
- Support Animal



- Support Person
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Training Modifications
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace
- Written Instructions

#### Organizing/Planning/Prioritizing

- Applications (apps)
- Apps for Organization/ Time Management
- Calendars and Planners
- Color-coded Manuals, Outlines, and Maps
- Electronic Organizers
- Ergonomic Equipment
- Job Coaches
- Job Restructuring
- On-site Mentoring
- Organization Software
- Personal On-Site Paging Devices
- Professional Organizers
- Reminders
- Supervisory Methods
- Task Identification
- Task Separation
- Timers and Watches
- Visual Schedulers
- Written Instructions

#### Spasm/Tic/Tremor/Blinking

- Aide/Assistant/Attendant
- Alternative Input Devices
- Alternative Keyboards
- Alternative Mice

- Alternative Mice - Limiting Tremors
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Device
- Auto-dialers
- Book Holders
- Breath and Mouth Controlled Alternative Computer Input Devices
- Compact Material Handling
- Door Knob Grips and Handles
- Eating Aids
- Ergonomic and Pneumatic Tools
- Ergonomic Equipment
- Expanded Keyboards
- Extra Grip Gloves
- Forearm Supports
- Grip Aids
- Hands Free Resuscitation Devices
- Hands-free Telephones
- Job Restructuring
- Keyguards
- Money Handling Products
- On-Screen Keyboards
- One-Handed Keyboards
- Outgoing Voice Amplification - Telephone
- Padded Edging
- Page Turners
- Periodic Rest Breaks
- Personal On-Site Paging Devices
- Protective Eyewear
- Scribe/Notetaker
- Speech Recognition Software
- Switches
- Tongue Touch Keyboards/Mice

- Tool Balancers
- Typing / Keyboarding Aids
- Vacuum Lifts
- Vacuum Pickup Tools
- Voice Amplification
- Voice Recognition Memory Devices
- Word Prediction/Completion and Macro Software
- Writing Aids

#### Stress Intolerance

- Apps for Anxiety and Stress
- Behavior Modification Techniques
- Counseling/Therapy
- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
- Flexible Schedule
- Job Restructuring
- Marginal Functions
- Modified Break Schedule
- Supervisory Methods
- Support Animal
- Support Person

#### Unable to Work Alone

- Alerting Devices
- Apps for Anxiety and Stress
- Apps for Memory
- Behavior Modification Techniques
- Counseling/Therapy
- Disability Awareness/Etiquette Training
- Employee Assistance Program
- Flexible Schedule
- Job Restructuring

- Plan of Action
- Supervisory Methods
- Support Animal
- Support Person

## **Work-Related Functions**

### 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

### Stress

- Apps for Anxiety and Stress
- Behavior Modification Techniques
- Counseling/Therapy
- Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
- Flexible Schedule

- Job Coaches
- Job Restructuring
- Marginal Functions
- Modified Break Schedule
- Monitor Mirrors
- Odor Control
- On-site Mentoring
- Service Animal
- Simulated Skylights and Windows
- Strobe Lights
- Supervisory Methods
- Support Animal
- Support Person
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Uninterrupted Work Time

## Situations and Solutions:

### **A baker with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) repeatedly checked ingredients for recipes.**

The individual was accommodated with a computerized checklist for each baked good recipe on the menu. He was allowed time in the morning to arrange and check off items to be used during the day. When he felt the urge to recheck the ingredients he could do this quickly by using his daily checklist. This checklist was placed in a handheld computer that resembled the two-way radios used by all employees.

### **An employee with obsessive compulsive personality disorder works as an administrative assistant for a physician's office.**

After being hired, she discloses her condition and requests accommodations in the form of written instructions, checklists, and a private workspace. The employer agrees to the accommodations. A few weeks into the job, the employee tells her supervisor she does not like the documentation system the office is using, and will be making changes as she sees fit. The supervisor explains that will not be tolerated, that she needs to follow their protocol, but the employee follows through with making her own changes. The supervisor takes disciplinary action and tells the employee if she continues to go against the employer's protocol that she could be terminated. The employee responds by writing an e-mail to the supervisor outlining how her way of doing things is better and why the employer should make the changes she is suggesting. The employer insists it will not make the changes and the employee needs to comply. The employee continues to defy the employer's instruction and is terminated.

### **A truck driver who had OCD and specific issues with cleanliness was required to drive another person's truck when his broke down.**

His employer insisted that he get back out on the road as soon as possible. The employee was not afforded the time he needed to clean out the truck before he used it. Once the employee explained to his employer that he had obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and what solutions would work to help him, the employer allowed the driver a more relaxed starting time for his next run when he had to use someone else's truck so that he could adequately clean it out before leaving. The driver had the supplies he needed, as he carried a cleaning kit with him for quick cleansing jobs that needed to be done along the way in his own truck.

### **An elementary teacher with OCD couldn't get to work on time to do the early bus duties, but had no problems doing the after-school ones.**

She asked to be accommodated by exchanging her early duties with another teacher who preferred to do the early duties in place of the after-school ones. The accommodation was approved, allowing her to do the after-school duty for both her own turns and the other teacher's turns, but no early morning duty as the other teacher would do the early bus duties for both of them.

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

### **American Psychiatric Association**

1000 Wilson Blvd  
Suite 1825  
Arlington, VA 22209-3901  
Toll Free: (888) 357-7924  
Direct: (703) 907-7300  
[apa@psych.org](mailto:apa@psych.org)  
<https://www.psychiatry.org/>



The American Psychiatric Association is an organization of psychiatrists working together to ensure humane care and effective treatment for all persons with mental illness, including substance use disorders. It is the voice and conscience of modern psychiatry. Its vision is a society that has available, accessible quality psychiatric diagnosis and treatment.

### **Anxiety and Depression Association of America**

8701 Georgia Ave.  
Suite #412  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
Direct: (240) 485-1001  
Fax: (240) 485-1035  
<https://adaa.org/>

ADAA is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to the prevention, treatment, and cure of anxiety and mood disorders, OCD, and PTSD and to improving the lives of all people who suffer from them through education, practice, and research.

### **BPDWORLD**

<http://www.bpdworld.org>

BPDWORLD has information that focuses on borderline personality disorder (BPD) The Web site has a lot of information available to all, including depression, self-harm, anxiety and much more. The site offers the best support services available on the net with forums, chat, peer support ticket system, live chat to our volunteers and a great journal system.

### **Brain & Behavior Research Foundation**

90 Park Avenue,  
16th Floor  
New York, NY 10016  
Toll Free: (800) 829-8289  
Direct: (646) 681-4888  
[info@bbrfoundation.org](mailto:info@bbrfoundation.org)  
<https://www.bbrfoundation.org>

The Brain & Behavior Research Foundation is committed to alleviating the suffering caused by mental illness by awarding grants that will lead to advances and breakthroughs in scientific research.

### **Eating Disorder Hope**

Toll Free: (888) 206-1175

<http://www.eatingdisorderhope.com/>

Eating Disorder Hope's mission is to offer hope, information and resources to individual eating disorder sufferers, their family members and treatment providers. The organization began with the help and advice of colleagues, professors, and other organizations specializing in eating disorders.

### **International OCD Foundation Inc.**

PO Box 961029

Boston, MA 02196

Direct: (617) 973-5801

Fax: (617) 973-5803

[info@iocdf.org](mailto:info@iocdf.org)

<http://iocdf.org/>

The International OCD Foundation is a donor-supported nonprofit organization. Founded in 1986 by a small group of individuals with OCD, the Foundation has grown into an international membership-based organization serving a broad community of individuals with OCD and related disorders, their family members and loved ones, and mental health professionals and researchers around the world. We have affiliates in 25 states and territories in the US, in addition to global partnerships with other OCD organizations and mental health non-profits around the world.

### **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](mailto: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.

**Mental Health America**

500 Montgomery Street  
Suite 820  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Toll Free: (800) 969-6642  
Direct: (703) 684-7722  
Fax: (703) 684-5968  
<https://www.mhanational.org>

Mental Health America – founded in 1909 – is the nation's leading community-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness and to promoting the overall mental health of all Americans. Their work is driven by their commitment to promote mental health as a critical part of overall wellness, including prevention services for all, early identification and intervention for those at risk, and integrated care and treatment for those who need it, with recovery as the goal.

**National Alliance on Mental Illness**

3803 N. Fairfax Dr.,  
Ste. 100  
Arlington, VA 22203  
Toll Free: (800) 950-6264  
Direct: (703) 524-7600  
<http://www.nami.org>

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. NAMI advocates for access to services, treatment, supports and research and is steadfast in its commitment to raise awareness and build a community for hope for all those in need.

**National Center for Biotechnology Information**

8600 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, MD 20894  
[pubmedcentral@ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](mailto: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 Institute of Mental Health**

6001 Executive Boulevard  
Rockville, MD 20852  
Toll Free: (866) 615-6464  
Direct: (301) 443-4513  
Fax: (301) 443-4279  
[nimhinfo@nih.gov](mailto:nimhinfo@nih.gov)  
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

NIMH offers a variety of publications and other educational resources to help people with mental disorders, the general public, mental health and health care practitioners, and researchers gain a better understanding of mental illnesses and the research programs of the NIMH. All publications and educational materials are written by science writers, in collaboration with NIMH scientists and outside reviewers.

**Remedy's Health Communities**  
<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.

**Tourette Syndrome "Plus"**  
940 Lincoln Place  
North Bellmore, NY 11701-1016  
Direct: (516) 785-2653  
[admin@tourettesyndrome.net](mailto:admin@tourettesyndrome.net)  
<http://www.tourettesyndrome.net/>

This document was developed by the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (#OD-38028-22-75-4-54). The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Labor. Nor does mention of tradenames, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Labor.