

Tips for Providing and Maintaining Job Accommodations

In “Five Practical Tips for Providing and Maintaining Effective Job Accommodations,” Job Accommodation Network (JAN) provides helpful information for employers who want to improve their ability to provide and maintain effective job accommodations. JAN explains that there are many reasons for employers to provide job accommodations for all employees. By offering accommodations, employers attract good employees, retain an experienced workforce, and meet legal obligations under title I of the ADA and similar state laws. Providing accommodations is not costly. According to a recent JAN survey, more than half of employers reported no cost for providing an accommodation and the rest of employers reported a typical cost of \$500.

The first tip for employers is to **develop written accommodation policies and procedures**. Written policies and procedures can help all employees be aware of them, insure consistency when processing accommodation requests, and help document employers’ efforts to provide effective accommodations. Employers should try to keep these written policies and procedures flexible and simple so that they are useful. Employers should appoint a responsible person, supervisors or managers, or a team to implement and oversee accommodation policies and procedures. Then, everyone - all employees, including supervisors, managers, and staff – should be informed of the written policies and procedures.

The second tip is to **train all managers and supervisors on recognizing and responding to an accommodation request**. Even if they are not actually be responsible for processing accommodation requests, all managers and supervisors need to know how to recognize a request, especially from an employee who might be protected by the ADA. Employees file complaints under the ADA primarily when an employer did not respond to an accommodation request. When a request is recognized and received, employers also need to let managers and supervisors know what to do to make sure it is processed. Training everyone how to recognize and respond to a request will help make sure the policies and procedures are used effectively. This can be done when employees requesting accommodations use plain English, such as needing “an adjustment or change at work for a reason related to a medical condition.” The employee does not have to mention the ADA or legal terminology, and a supervisor or manager should treat it as an accommodation request until a definite determination is made.

The third tip involves **having a process to determine effective accommodations**. Employers should start with the employee, who often knows what is needed and can suggest effective options. The employee’s medical provider is another good option. With the employee’s permission, the medical provider may provide useful information about the employee’s limitations and effective accommodation options. If neither of these options is effective, employers can contact outside resources such as JAN.

The fourth tip is to **monitor and update accommodations**. Once an accommodation is successfully determined and implemented, it may need to be monitored and updated

periodically. This is true if the accommodation involved equipment or software. Keeping communication lines open with employees is important in monitoring so that accommodations can be reviewed before performance problems result. Finally, employers may want to document their efforts in case a dispute arises with the employee. Documentation that contains medical information must be maintained confidentially.

The fifth tip is to **train new employees**. If a new manager or supervisor does not know about existing accommodations, they may make changes that negatively affect these accommodations. Changes made by a new manager or supervisor are acceptable; however these may affect an accommodation for an employee with a disability. A new accommodation may be necessary. New managers and supervisors, as well as new staff, need to be trained on job accommodation policies and procedures before a problem occurs. New employee training helps insure that accommodation policies and procedures will continue to be effective.

To view the complete informative guide, go to www.jan.wvu.edu/media/FivePracticalTips.doc