

Workplace Accommodations for Adults with Down Syndrome: What Caregivers Need to Know

October 9, 2025

NDSS Mission

*To create a world where individuals
with Down syndrome thrive*

NDSS Employment Program

NDSS' Employment Program seeks to increase access to the workforce for all people with Down syndrome by focusing on:

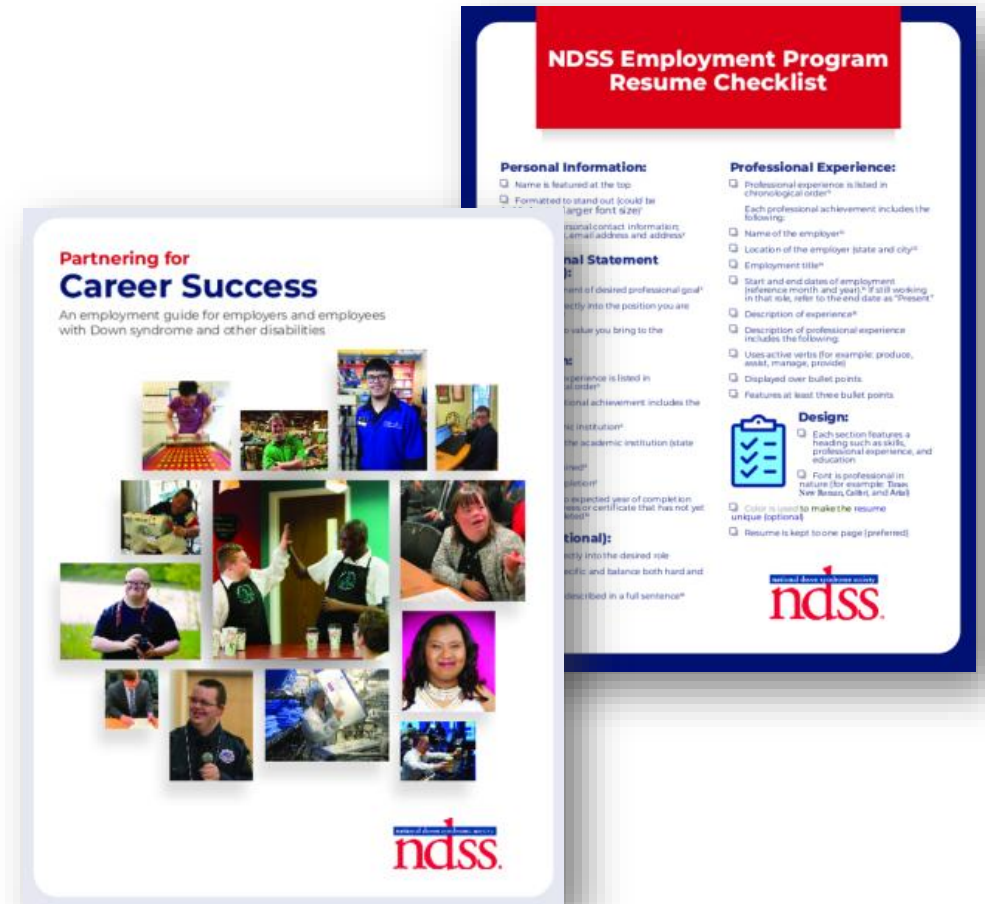
- Employment Policy and Advocacy
- Resource Development
- Private Sector Engagement
- Local Affiliate Support
- Raising Awareness
- Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment



NDSS Employment Resources

Check out our resources!

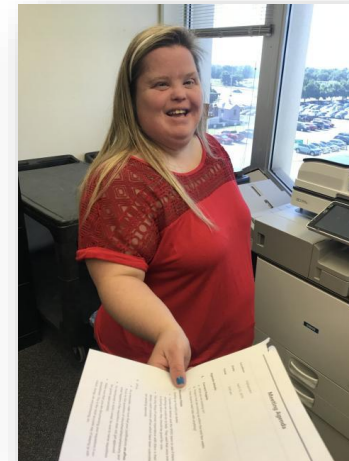
- [Partnering for Career Success](#)
- [Resume Resources](#)
 - Reference Guide
 - Resume Checklist
 - Template
- [Entrepreneurship Guide](#)
- [Volunteer Resource for Self-Advocates](#)
- and more!



Employment Success Stories

Your Loved One's Story Matters!

- We're collecting real stories to:
 - Break down stereotypes through examples of success
 - Showcase the talent, skills, and valuable contributions individuals with Down syndrome bring to the workplace
 - Celebrate the achievements of individuals with Down syndrome



Speaker Bio

Lisa DeMoss

- Lisa DeMoss has more than 26 years of experience in the field of disability services.
- She currently works for the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), helping employers and individuals navigate workplace accommodations and disability employment issues.
- Her background includes serving at a large nonprofit agency, where she supported employment, housing, job training, and day habilitation services for adults with disabilities.
- Lisa also worked in early intervention, coordinating health and disability services for a multi-county children's program.



**Cognitive/Neurological
Specialist Consultant**

WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATION SOLUTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DOWN SYNDROME: WHAT CAREGIVERS NEED TO KNOW

Lisa DeMoss, Consultant, MS, Cognitive/Neurological Team



AskJAN.org

JAN is a service of the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy/ODEP.

ASK JAN! WE CAN HELP



- Job Accommodation Network (JAN) was established in 1983
- National, free consulting service
- Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy/ODEP

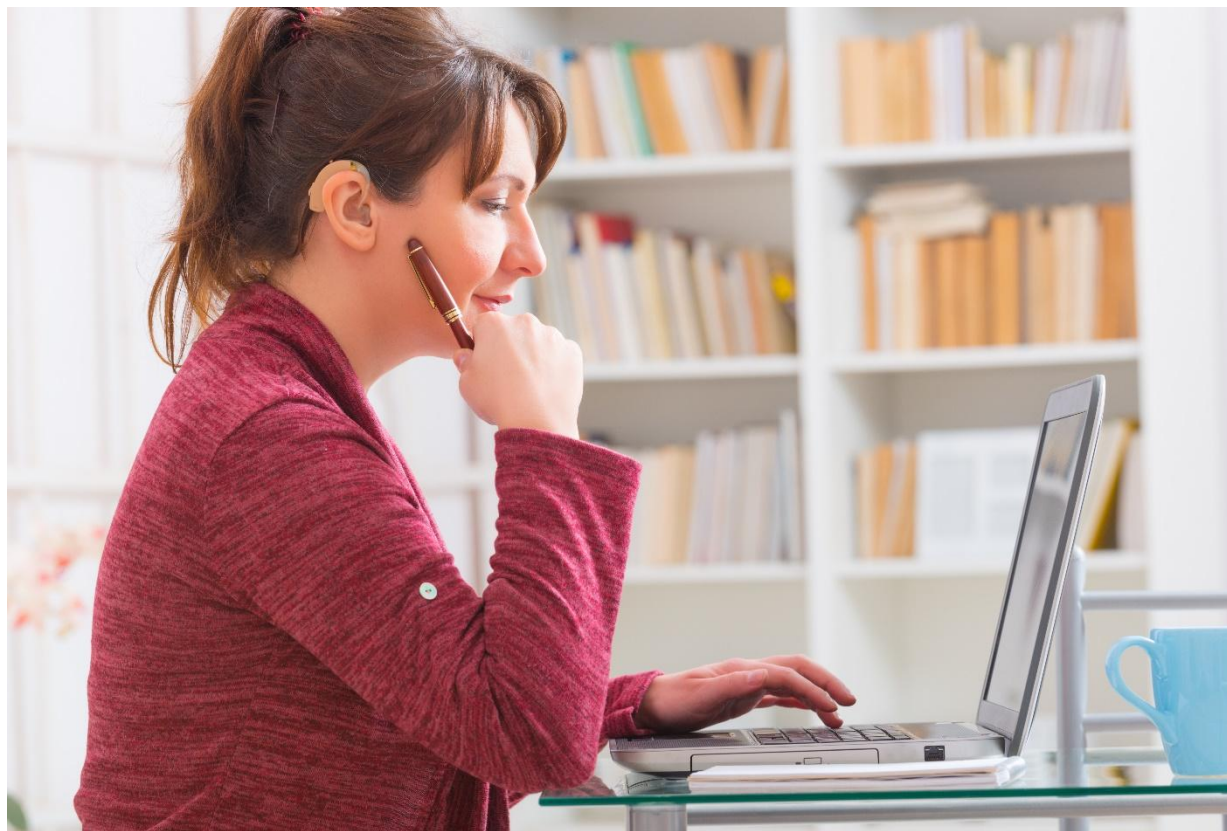
YOUR PARTNER IN THE ACCOMMODATION PROCESS



Practical guidance and technical assistance for employers, people with disabilities, and others on:

- Accommodation process strategies
- Job accommodation solutions
- Title I of the ADA and related legislation
- Self-employment and entrepreneurship options for people with disabilities

WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM JAN SERVICES?



For Employers



- Private Employers
- Federal Employers
- State & Local Governments



JAN Workplace Accommodation Toolkit

For Individuals



- Employees
- Job Seekers
- Entrepreneurs

For Others



- Rehabilitation & Medical Professionals
- Union Representatives
- Attorneys & Legal Representatives

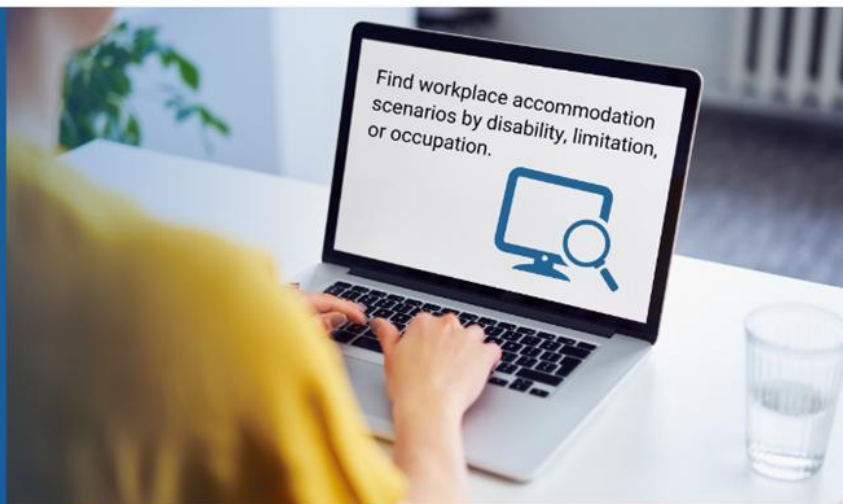
ASKJAN.ORG



Employers Individuals A to Z Situations & Solutions Finder MyJAN Publications Training About JAN

Curious about the ways employers accommodate workers with disabilities?

Search the **NEW Situations and Solutions Finder** at AskJAN.org



Practical Solutions | Workplace Success

JAN is the leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations. Need assistance exploring accommodation solutions?

Ask JAN! We can help.

(800) 526-7234

Employer Live Chat

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Job Accommodation Network

about a month ago

The Job Accommodation Network offers invaluable insights, practical ideas, and best practices for accommodating employees with all types of health conditions and disabilities. Need assistance finding accommodation solutions? Ask JAN! <https://AskJAN.org>



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Employer Live Chat

Show Reader

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

Modifications or Changes:

- To a job application process
- To the work environment or to the manner in which the position is customarily performed that enable a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of the position
- That enable an employee with a disability to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment as are enjoyed by other similarly situated employees without disabilities



DISCLOSURE

WHAT IS DISCLOSURE?

Disclosure is when you give out specific, personal information about your disability.

Important to provide:

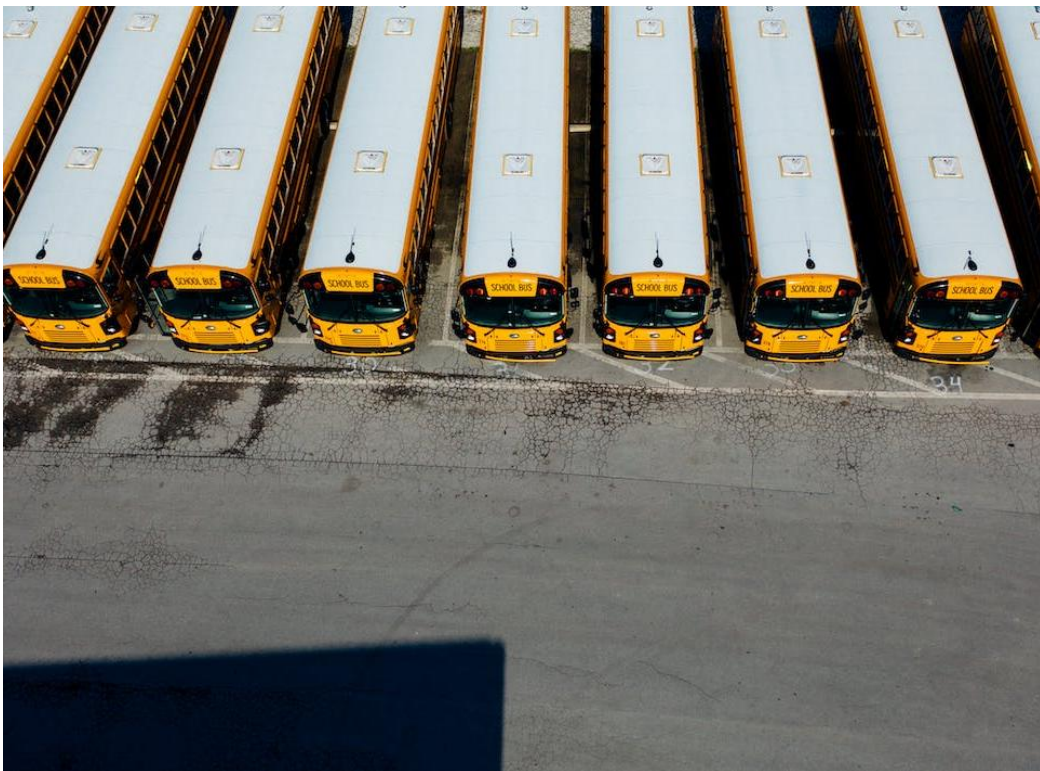
- 1) The nature of the disability
- 2) The limitations, or how the disability affects your capacity to learn and/or perform the job effectively
- 3) Accommodations you will need in order to do the job

SITUATION: ASKING FOR A REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

A production worker had difficulty grasping a plastic bottle to accurately apply an adhesive label and asked for help.



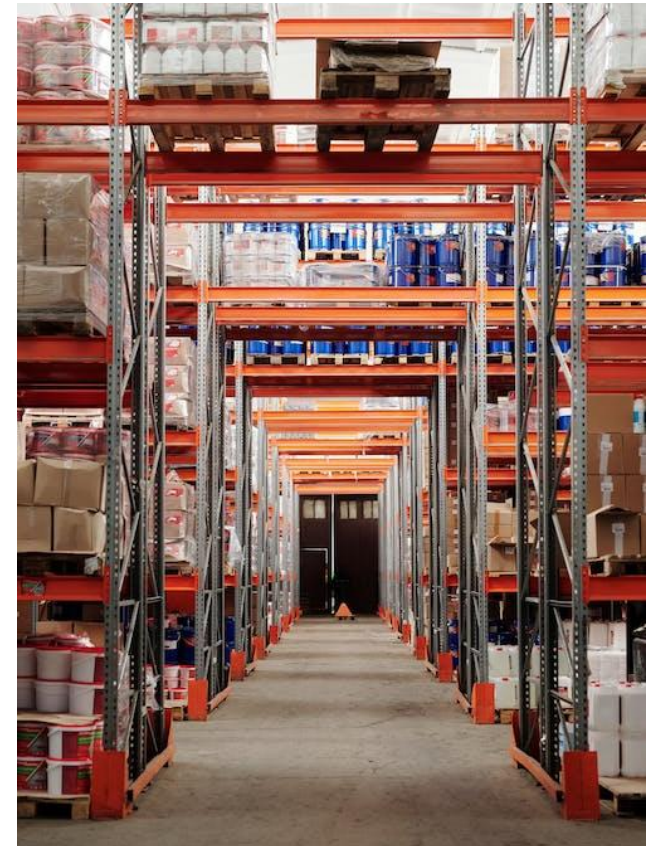
SITUATION: TO RECEIVE BENEFITS/PRIVILEGES OF EMPLOYMENT



A bus garage employee with a reading disability, compounded by high anxiety when attempting to read, missed instructions and important announcements that were sent by email.

SITUATION: UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES

A warehouse worker in Florida had no issues at work until the air conditioning broke down and she began to have difficulty regulating her body temperature. She needed to disclose and ask for an accommodation.



HOW TO DISCLOSE?

The individual must let the employer know:

- An adjustment or change at work is needed for a reason related to a medical condition

To request accommodation, an individual:

- May use “plain English”
- Need not mention the ADA
- May be requested by another person
- Need not use the phrase “reasonable accommodation”

WHO TO DISCLOSE TO?

Verbally or in writing, tell the...

- Employer
- Supervisor
- Staff member
- HR representative, or
- Another appropriate person
- [How to Request an Accommodation: Accommodation Form Letter](#)

DOCUMENTING A DISABILITY: WHEN TO DOCUMENT



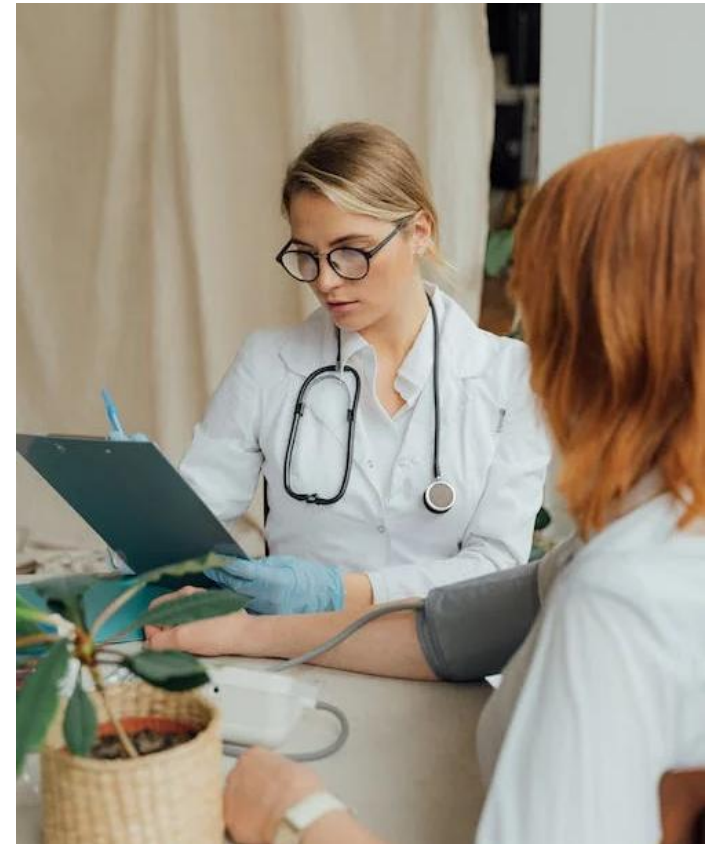
- When the disability is **NOT** known or obvious
- When the need for accommodation is **NOT** known or obvious
- Intellectual disabilities are “virtually” always qualified under the ADA

DOCUMENTING A DISABILITY: WHAT TO DOCUMENT

- Diagnosed impairment
- Major life activity substantially limited by the impairment:
 - Caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working.
 - Major bodily functions, including but not limited to, functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions.

DOCUMENTING A DISABILITY: WHO CAN DOCUMENT

- Medical doctors
- Psychiatrists and psychologists
- Nurses and physician assistants
- Physical or occupational therapists
- Speech therapists
- Vocational rehabilitation professionals
- Licensed mental health professionals
- Educational professionals



REASONS NOT TO DISCLOSE UPFRONT



- Unknown needs
- Not required under ADA
- Bad previous experience
- Uninformed about the ADA rights

THE 411 ON DISABILITY DISCLOSURE: A WORKBOOK FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

Originally produced by the U.S Department of Labor's [Office of Disability Employment Policy \(ODEP\)](#), the [411 on Disability Disclosure](#) helps people make informed decisions about disclosing a disability.





PERFORMANCE AND CONDUCT

SITUATION: PERFORMANCE



An employee with Down Syndrome had to roll silverware in a cloth napkin. The JAN user asked for accommodation solutions to help this employee find the hem of the napkin.

SOLUTION: PERFORMANCE

Accommodation ideas:

Show her the tactile difference and the visual difference between hem side up and down

Have a photo template in front of her as a reference

Use a bench knife/pan scraper so she can run along the edge to differentiate the hemmed edge



SITUATION: CONDUCT

An employee is written up after several verbal warnings for inappropriate conduct, placed on a thirty-day plan of improvement, and warned that if the behavior doesn't stop within that time she will be let go.

She discloses her disability and asks for accommodations to assist her in responding more appropriately to co-workers.



SOLUTION: CONDUCT

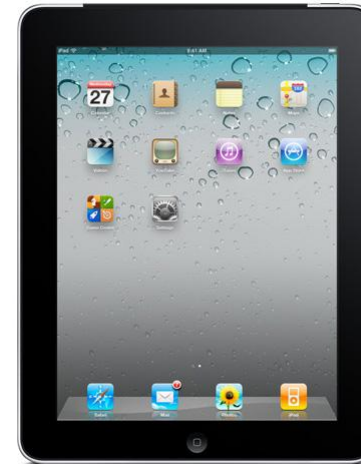
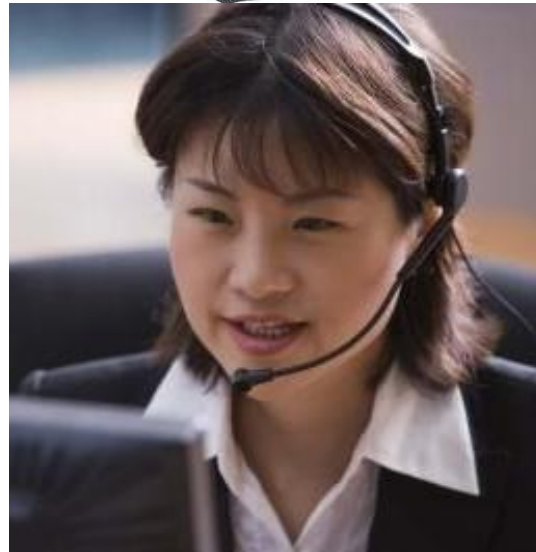


The employer puts the plan of improvement on hold until they receive medical documentation and can put accommodations into place but does not rescind the discipline that occurred before the disability was known. Once accommodations are put into place, the employer starts the PIP.



OPTIONS: JOB ACCOMMODATIONS

PURCHASING OR MODIFYING EQUIPMENT OR PRODUCTS



SITUATION: EQUIPMENT/PRODUCTS I

A mail clerk had difficulty remembering to go for his second mail collection run when he was involved in other tasks.



SOLUTION: EQUIPMENT/PRODUCTS I



The mail clerk was provided with a watch that had a timer set for when he needed to start his run. The watch vibrated to alert him it was time to go.

SITUATION: EQUIPMENT/PRODUCTS 2

An individual with Down Syndrome was in a transition to work position at a gym, cleaning equipment and working the front desk. The employee needed to alternate between tasks and was having difficulty staying on task and organized.



SOLUTION: EQUIPMENT/PRODUCTS 2



The WatchMinder watch was discussed to prompt task switching, a color-coded sticker system with a chart for timely equipment cleaning, and marking refill lines on cleaning products to indicate when cleaning products are low and must be refilled.

SITUATION: ACCESSIBLE WORKSITES

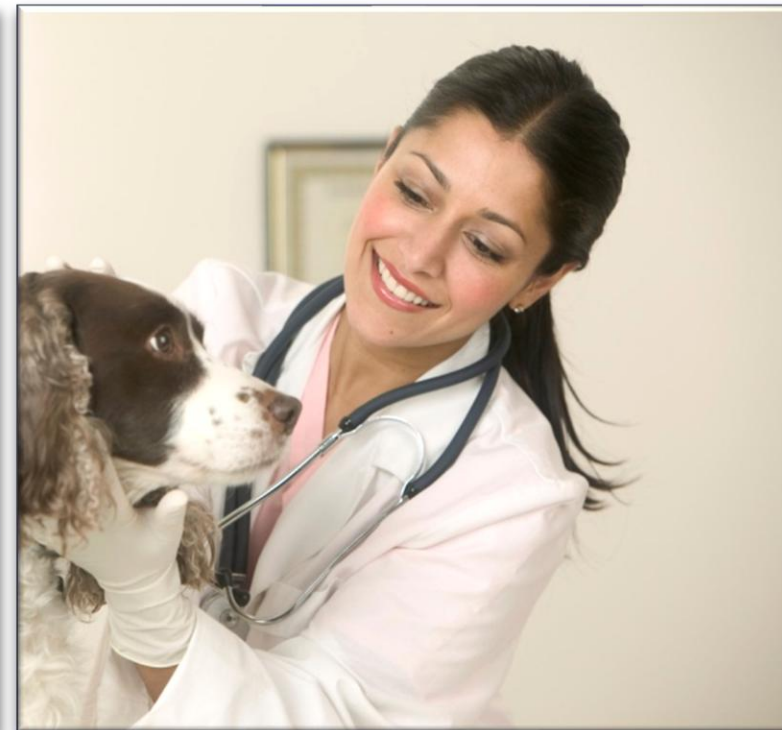
A food prep worker in a café had difficulty standing for her shift with only a thirty-minute lunch and short afternoon break. Her work became sloppy in the afternoons due to fatigue.



SOLUTION: ACCESSIBLE WORKSITES

The employee was provided with both an anti-fatigue mat to help her back and legs and a stand/lean stool that allowed her the ability to work in an upright position while her weight rested on the padded seat.





JOB RESTRUCTURING

SITUATION: JOB RESTRUCTURING



An employer required that all employees work overtime. An employee with Down Syndrome asked to be excused from overtime because of fatigue and exacerbation of symptoms.

SOLUTION: JOB RESTRUCTURING

The employer denied the request, stating that overtime is an essential function.

But the process doesn't end there!!



JOB RESTRUCTURING

Alternative accommodations may include:

- modified break schedule
- assigning challenging tasks when well rested
- Extended lunch with a nap area



MODIFYING SCHEDULE AND ALLOWING LEAVE TIME

SITUATION: MODIFIED SCHEDULE/LEAVE



A job coach contacted JAN advocating for an applicant with a disability. A job offer was made, but the schedule included unpredictable days and times. The applicant relied on public transportation to commute.

SOLUTION: MODIFIED SCHEDULE/LEAVE

JAN suggested asking for a schedule modification, specifically one that was consistent. This accommodation enabled the new hire to use the bus system to get to work on time.





MODIFYING POLICIES

SITUATION: MODIFIED POLICIES I



A newly hired dog groomer at a large pet store was able to perform the essential functions of the job with no problems, but the employer's policy only allowed limited training time. Due to short-term memory deficits, the groomer had difficulty moving through the modules on the set schedule.

SOLUTION: MODIFIED POLICIES I

She was accommodated with extended training and a more relaxed schedule for to complete the training. The employee was provided extra time with a trainer as well as materials to take home to study.



SITUATION: MODIFIED POLICIES 2

An employee who had difficulty with time management skills asked to use his phone and the apps he was accustomed to in order help him stay on task.



SOLUTION: MODIFIED POLICIES 2

The employer modified their “no cell phone use” policy and allowed this one employee to use the apps that would assist him in getting his work done in a timely manner.



PROVIDING READERS, INTERPRETERS, AND COACHES



SITUATION: READERS/INTERPRETERS/COACHES

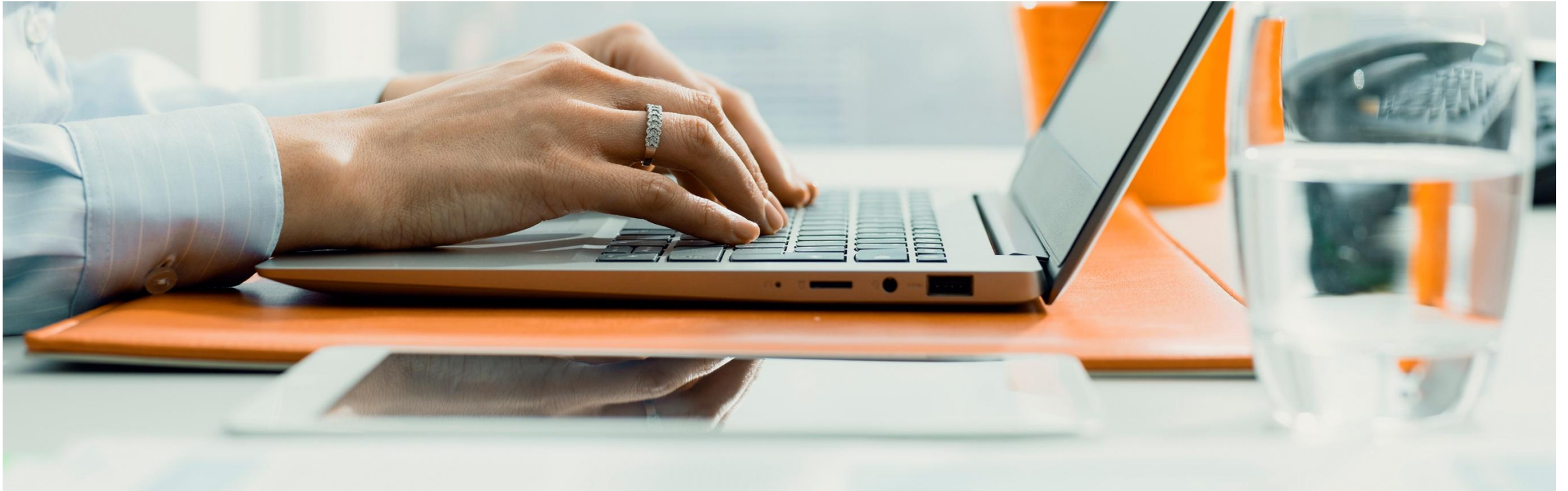
An employee had a job coach and employment specialist who had served him well during the job search, hiring, and training period. The job coach also worked during this time to locate supports for the employee that could be put into place when the job coach was done and exited the workplace.



SOLUTION: READERS/INTERPRETERS/COACHES



The employee's supervisor was pleased that a mentor, an older coworker who had befriended them, was identified. He would be able to help the employee in the same way the job coach had on a more long-term basis.



REASSIGNMENT

SITUATION: REASSIGNMENT



A cashier encountered extreme difficulty counting back change accurately after the automatic change counter was removed.

SOLUTION: REASSIGNMENT

When no effective accommodation could be provided, the employee was reassigned to a deli position where they would not have to handle money.





Action items:

- Visit askjan.org
- Go to the A to Z
- “By Disability” -Review the Intellectual Disabilities tab
- “By Limitation” look up a limitation your individual is experiencing

FOR MORE INFORMATION – CONTACT JAN

Visit	AskJAN.org
Call	800.526.7234 877.781.9403 (TTY)
Live Chat	@ AskJAN.org
Email	JAN@AskJAN.org
Social Media	Facebook and LinkedIn – Job Accommodation Network X – @JANatJAN

Questions?



Post-Webinar Survey



Don't Miss Our Next Webinar

From Overwhelmed to Empowered: Thriving While You Care

October 16

1 p.m. ET

Register at:

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Thanks for attending!

Have questions? Contact us at employment@ndss.org