

JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

Accommodation and Compliance Series

Employees with Cancer

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A service of the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy

Preface

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Authored by Beth Loy, Ph.D. Updated 03/22/10.

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 <http://askjan.org/soar>.

Information about Cancer

How prevalent is cancer?

The lifetime risk of developing cancer is 1 in 2 for men and 1 in 3 for women (Ries, et al., 2004).

What is cancer?

Cancer develops when cells in a part of the body begin to grow out of control. Although there are many kinds of cancer, they all start because of out-of-control growth of abnormal cells. Normal body cells grow, divide, and die in an orderly fashion. During the early years of a person's life, normal cells divide more rapidly until the person becomes an adult. After that, cells in most parts of the body divide only to replace worn-out or dying cells and to repair injuries. Because cancer cells continue to grow and divide, they are different from normal cells. Instead of dying, they outlive normal cells and continue to form new abnormal cells. Cancer cells often travel to other parts of the body where they begin to grow and replace normal tissue. This process, called metastasis, occurs as the cancer cells get into the bloodstream or lymph vessels of our body. When cells from a cancer like breast cancer spread to another organ like the liver, the cancer is still called breast cancer, not liver cancer (American Cancer Society, Inc., 2005).

What are the symptoms of cancer?

Some generalized symptoms and signs such as unexplained weight loss, fever, fatigue, or lumps may be seen in several types of cancer; however, other signs and symptoms are relatively specific to a particular type of cancer (American Cancer Society, Inc., 2005).

What causes cancer?

Cancer is caused by both external (chemicals, radiation, and viruses) and internal (hormones, immune conditions, and inherited mutations) factors. Different cancers have different risk factors. Causal factors may act together or in sequence to initiate or promote cancer. Risk factors may increase a person's risk but do not always "cause" the disease. Many people with one or more risk factors never develop cancer, while others with this disease have no known risk factors. Ten or more years can pass between exposures or mutations and detectable cancer (American Cancer Society, 2005).

How is cancer staged?

Staging is the process of finding out how much cancer there is in the body and where it is located. Doctors use this information to plan treatment and to help determine a person's outlook (prognosis). Cancers with the same stage usually have similar outlooks and are often treated the same way. Staging is also a way doctors can communicate with each other about a person's case. For most cancers, the stage is based on 3 main factors: the original (primary) tumor's size and whether the tumor has grown into other nearby areas, whether the cancer has spread to the nearby lymph nodes, and whether the cancer has spread to distant areas of the body (American Cancer Society, 2005).

How is cancer treated?

Treatment options may include surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, hormone therapy, and immunotherapy. Surgery is the oldest form of cancer treatment; sixty percent of people with cancer will have surgery. Radiation therapy uses high-energy waves, such as x-rays or gamma rays, to destroy cancer cells. Chemotherapy is the use of drugs to treat cancer. Systemic chemotherapy uses anticancer drugs that are usually given into a vein or by mouth to enter the bloodstream and reach all areas of the body. Hormone therapy is treatment with hormones, drugs that interfere with hormone production (American Cancer Society, 2005).

Cancer and the Americans with Disabilities Act

Is cancer a disability under the ADA?

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 (EEOC, 1992). Therefore, some people with cancer will have a disability under the ADA and some will not.

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 such an impairment (EEOC, 1992). For more information about how to determine whether a person has a disability under the ADA, visit <http://askjan.org/corner/vol02iss04.htm>.

Accommodating Employees with Cancer

(Note: People with cancer 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 cancer 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 with cancer 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. Has the employee with cancer been consulted regarding possible accommodations?
6. Once accommodations are in place, would it be useful to meet with the employee with cancer to evaluate the effectiveness of the accommodations and to determine whether additional accommodations are needed?
7. Do supervisory personnel and employees need training regarding cancer?

Accommodation Ideas:

Fatigue/Weakness:

- Reduce or eliminate physical exertion and workplace stress
- Schedule periodic rest breaks away from the workstation
- Allow a flexible work schedule and flexible use of leave time
- Allow work from home
- Implement ergonomic workstation design
- Provide a scooter or other mobility aid if walking cannot be reduced
- Provide parking close to the work-site
- Install automatic door openers
- Make sure materials and equipment are within reach range
- Move workstation close to other work areas, office equipment, and break rooms
- Reduce noise with sound absorbent baffles/partitions, environmental sound machines, and headsets
- Provide alternate work space to reduce visual and auditory distractions

Medical Treatment Allowances:

- Provide flexible schedules
- Provide flexible leave
- Allow a self-paced workload with flexible hours
- Allow employee to work from home
- Provide part-time work schedules

Respiratory Difficulties:

- Provide adjustable ventilation
- Keep work environment free from dust, smoke, odor, and fumes
- Implement a "fragrance-free" workplace policy and a "smoke free" building policy
- Avoid temperature extremes
- Use fan/air-conditioner or heater at the workstation
- Redirect air conditioning and heating vents

Skin Irritations:

- Avoid infectious agents and chemicals
- Avoid invasive procedures (activities that could be harmful to a person's skin condition)
- Provide protective clothing

Stress:

- Develop strategies to deal with work problems before they arise
- Provide sensitivity training to coworkers
- Allow telephone calls during work hours to doctors and others for support
- Provide information on counseling and employee assistance programs

Temperature Sensitivity:

- Modify work-site temperature
- Modify dress code
- Use fan/air-conditioner or heater at the workstation
- Allow flexible scheduling and flexible use of leave time
- Allow work from home during extremely hot or cold weather
- Maintain the ventilation system
- Redirect air conditioning and heating vents
- Provide an office with separate temperature control

Situations and Solutions:

An engineer working for a large industrial company had to undergo radiation treatment for cancer during working hours. She was provided a flexible schedule in order to attend therapy and also continue to work full-time.

A machine operator who was undergoing radiation therapy for cancer was accommodated by having his workstation moved. The move transferred the individual to an area of the plant where no radiation exposure existed.

A warehouse worker whose job involved maintaining and delivering supplies was having difficulty with the physical demands of his job due to fatigue from chemotherapy treatment. The individual was accommodated with a three-wheeled scooter to reduce walking. The warehouse was also rearranged to reduce the individual's climbing and reaching.

A secretary with cancer was having difficulty working full-time due to fatigue from chemotherapy treatments. Her employer accommodated her by allowing her to work part-time and allowing her to take frequent rest breaks while working.

A psychiatric nurse with cancer was experiencing difficulty dealing with job-related stress. He was accommodated with a temporary transfer and was referred to the employer's employee assistance program for emotional support and stress management tools.

A lawyer with cancer was experiencing lapses in concentration due to the medication she was taking. Her employer accommodated her by giving her uninterrupted time to work. She was also allowed to work at home two days a week.

Products:

There are numerous products that can be used to accommodate people with limitations. JAN's Searchable Online Accommodation Resource at <http://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: (877)781-9403
Fax: (304)293-5407
jan@askjan.org
<http://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
TTY: (877)889-5627
Fax: (202)693-7888
<http://www.dol.gov/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 Cancer Society

250 Williams Street
Atlanta, GA 30303
Toll Free: (800)227-2345
Direct: (404)315-1123
Fax: (404)315-9348
<http://www.cancer.org>

The American Cancer Society is the nationwide community-based voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by preventing cancer, saving lives, and diminishing suffering from cancer, through research, education, advocacy, and service.

American Institute for Cancer Research

1759 R Street NW
Washington, DC 20009
Toll Free: (800)843-8114
Direct: (202)328-7744
Fax: (202)328-7226
aicrweb@aicr.org
<http://www.aicr.org>

Provides general information on cancer and information on the society's programs and services.

Cancer Hope Network

2 North Rd., Suite A
Chester, NJ 07930
Toll Free: (877)467-3638
Direct: (908)879-4039
Fax: (908)879-6518
info@cancerhopenetwork.org
<http://www.cancerhopenetwork.org>

Cancer Hope Network is a program of personal support and encouragement offered to people undergoing chemotherapy or radiation therapy by persons who have experienced therapy themselves. A visit between a support person and the patient is arranged on a one-to-one basis and persons are matched according to their similarity of treatment.

Cancer Information Service

NCI Public Inquiries Office
6116 Executive Boulevard, MSC8322
Room 3036A
Bethesda, MD 20892-8322
Toll Free: (800)422-6237
TTY: (800)332-8615
cancergovstaff@mail.nih.gov
<http://cis.nci.nih.gov/>

Through its toll-free phone service, the CIS provides accurate, up-to-date information on cancer to patients and their families, health professionals, and the general public. Through the outreach program, the CIS serves as a resource for state and regional organizations by providing printed materials and technical assistance to cancer education, media campaigns, and community programs. The CIS offices are located at NCI-designated cancer centers and other health care institutions.

CancerCare, Inc.

275 Seventh Ave.
New York, NY 10001
Toll Free: (800)813-HOPE
Direct: (212)712-8400
info@cancerca.org
<http://www.cancerca.org>

CancerCare is a national non-profit organization whose mission is to provide free professional help to people with all cancers through counseling, education, information and referral and direct financial assistance.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Rd NE
Atlanta, GA 30333
Toll Free: (800)311-3435
Direct: (404)498-1515
<http://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.

National Bone Marrow Transplant Link

20411 W. 12 Mile Rd., Suite 108
Southfield, MI 48076
Toll Free: (800)546-5268
Direct: (248)358-1886
info@nbmtlink.org
<http://www.nbmtlink.org>

The National Bone Marrow Transplant Link is a reference for bone marrow transplantation, finances and medical insurance, information about peer support, and survivor stories.

National Cancer Institute

Suite 3036A
6116 Executive Boulevard
Room 3036A
Bethesda, MD 20892-8322
Toll Free: (800)422-6237
TTY: (800)332-8615
<http://www.nci.nih.gov>

The National Cancer Institute is the Nation's primary agency for cancer research.

National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship

1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 770

Silver Spring, MD 20910

Toll Free: (888)650-9127

Direct: (301)650-9127

Fax: (301)565-9670

info@canceradvocacy.org

<http://www.canceradvocacy.org>

The National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship (NCCS) is a grassroots network of individuals and organizations working on behalf of people with all types of cancer.

National Organization for Rare Disorders

55 Kenosia Avenue

PO Box 1968

Danbury, CT 06813-1968

Toll Free: (800)999-6673

Direct: (203)744-0100

TTY: (203)797-9590

Fax: (203)798-2291

orphan@rarediseases.org

<http://www.rarediseases.org/>

NORD is a unique federation of voluntary health organizations dedicated to helping people with rare "orphan" diseases and assisting the organizations that serve them. NORD is committed to the identification, treatment, and cure of rare disorders through programs of education, advocacy, research, and service.

References

American Cancer Society. (2005). *Detailed guide: Cancer, general information.*

Retrieved September 5, 2008, from

http://www.cancer.org/docroot/CRI/CRI_2_3x.asp?dt=72

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. (1992). *A technical assistance manual on the employment provisions (title I) of the Americans with Disabilities Act.*

Retrieved September 5, 2008, from <http://askjan.org/links/ADAтам1.html>

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