

# JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

## Accommodation and Compliance Series

### Employees with Burn Injuries

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

## Preface

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is a service of the Office of Disability Employment Policy of the 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.

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

## **Information about Burn Injuries**

### **How prevalent are burn injuries?**

Burns are one of the most common household injuries. It is estimated that about 1.25 million burn injuries occur each year in the United States. Due to burn prevention and education programs, this rate has actually dropped by 50% in the last 30 years. Also, because of the advances in treatment of burns an individual is now much more likely to survive a serious burn injury. Since more individuals are surviving even the most severe of burn injuries, especially those burned as children, there are more burn survivors in the workplace (American Burn Association, 2000).

### **What causes burn injuries and how are they classified?**

Burns are usually caused by heat (thermal burns), such as fire, or hot liquids. Burns can also be caused by chemicals and radiation such as sun light and electricity (Merck, 2003).

Burns are classified in three ways: first, second and third degree:

- First degree burns are the most common type of burn injury. This involves only the top layer of skin and is characterized by pain, redness, and swelling. Sunburn is a typical first degree burn (Merck, 2003).
- Second degree burns involve the first and second layer of skin. They are characterized by blistering of the skin, redness, and swelling and are very painful (Merck, 2003).

- Third degree burns are the most severe and often result in extensive scarring. They can require a long recovery time and may result in severe limitations (Merck, 2003).

## **Burn Injuries and the Americans with Disabilities Act**

### **Are burn injuries 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 burn injuries 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 Burn Injuries**

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

### **Accommodation Ideas:**

#### Gross Motor Impairment:

- Modify the work-site to make it accessible
- Provide parking close to the work-site
- Provide an accessible entrance
- Install automatic door openers
- Provide an accessible restroom and break room
- Provide an accessible route of travel to other work areas used by the employee
- Modify the workstation to make it accessible
- Adjust desk height if wheelchair or scooter is used
- Make sure materials and equipment are within reach range
- Move workstation close to other work areas, office equipment, and break rooms
- Provide material lifts
- Provide stand/lean stools
- Provide anti-fatigue matting

### Fine Motor Impairment:

- Implement ergonomic workstation design
- Provide alternative computer access
- Provide alternative telephone access
- Provide arm supports
- Provide writing and grip aids
- Provide a page turner and a book holder
- Provide a note taker
- Provide anti-vibration gloves
- Provide tool balancers

### Heat Sensitivity:

- Reduce work-site temperature
- Use cool vest or other cooling clothing
- Use fan/air-conditioner at the workstation
- Allow flexible scheduling and flexible use of leave time
- Allow work from home during hot weather

### Cold Sensitivity:

- Increase work-site temperature
- Use portable space heaters
- Dress in layers using thermal material or fleece
- Wearing gloves
- Provide heated clothing
- Allow work from home during cold weather

### Working Effectively with Supervisors:

- Provide positive praise and reinforcement
- Provide written job instructions
- Develop written work agreements that include the agreed upon accommodations
- Communicate performance standards and the consequences of not them
- Allow for open communication to managers and supervisors
- Establish written long term and short term goals
- Develop strategies to deal with problems before they arise
- Develop a procedure to evaluate the effectiveness of the accommodation

### Interacting with Coworkers:

- Educate all employees on their rights to accommodations
- Provide sensitivity training to coworkers and supervisors

- Do not mandate that employees attend work-related social functions
- Encourage all employees to move non-work related conversations out of work areas

#### Difficulty Handling Stress and Emotions:

- Provide praise and positive reinforcement
- Refer to counseling and employee assistance programs
- Allow telephone calls during work hours to doctors and others for needed support
- Allow the presence of a support animal
- Allow the employee to take breaks as needed

#### Sleep Disorder:

- Allow flexible work hours
- Allow frequent breaks
- Allow work from home

#### **Situations and Solutions:**

A drafting engineer has third degree burns to 80% of his body. He is limited in sitting for extended periods. JAN provided him information on sit/stand work stations.

A school teacher with burn injuries to both hands was having trouble writing, particularly when she has to reach overhead to write on the chalkboard. JAN provided information on assistive writing aids such as pen/pencil grips and devices to make holding a pen/pencil easier. A desktop tablet that projected onto a screen in front of the classroom allowed her to do traditional board writing using a pen/tablet computer system.

A person employed as a ground maintenance laborer was recovering from severe burns of his head, neck, and back. His job required him to work outside during most of the day. Due to the scars he was unable to sweat to cool his body temperature and he was concerned about getting sunburned. His employer provided him with a hat, long sleeved light cotton shirts and a cool vest. He was given a portable beach umbrella to provide him shade and he was encouraged to take breaks as often as he needed them. The employer also changed his schedule to an earlier start time so that he could work mainly during the morning hours.

A consultant employed by a federal agency has severe limitations in fine motor movements as a result of burns to her hands. She has difficulty writing and typing. Her job requires her to use a computer to enter data and maintain files. An articulating keyboard tray was added to her desk, allowing her to bring the keyboard closer to her body. She was also given a split keyboard and a trackball mouse that allows her to use her fingers to move the cursor and type, eliminating the need for her to use her thumbs. The individual combined these devices with speech recognition.

## 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.

### **Alberta Burn Rehabilitation Society**

136 - 6325 Gateway Boulevard  
Edmonton, AB T6H5H-6  
Direct: (780)433-3273  
Fax: (780)433-8572  
abrs@accessweb.com  
<http://www.burnrehab.com>

The Alberta Burn Rehabilitation Society is dedicated to the support and rehabilitation of burn survivors and their families, and to preventing burn injuries through education and awareness.

**American Burn Association**

625 North Michigan Ave  
Suite 2550  
Chicago, IL 60611  
Direct: (312)642-9260  
Fax: (312)642-9130  
info@ameriburn.org  
<http://www.ameriburn.org>

Dedicated to promoting and supporting burn-related research, education, care, rehabilitation, and prevention.

**Burn Survivor Resource Center**

Toll Free: (800)669-7700  
<http://www.burnsurvivor.com>

One stop resource center to ensure professional information is made available to the burn survivor, to the many people who are searching for critical information on behalf of a loved one, to the family, and to the professionals.

**Burn Survivors Throughout The World, Inc.**

16193 Lone Star Ranch Drive #102  
Conroe, TX 77302  
Toll Free: (866)712-6164  
Direct: (936)647-2256  
info@burnsurvivorsttw.org  
<http://www.burnsurvivorsttw.org/home.html>

BSTTW offers membership, a peer support team, education, advocacy, medical referrals, a free medical treatment program, medical equipment, legal referrals, healing weekends, public awareness for the burn survivor community and the public worldwide.

**Flicker of Hope Foundation**

8624 Janet Lane  
Vienna, VA 22180  
Direct: (703)698-1626  
Fax: (703)698-6225  
info@flickerofhope.org  
<http://www.flickerofhope.org/>

FHF was founded with the purpose of providing emotional and practical support for burn survivors and their families. This support is presented in the form of counseling, scholarship opportunities, and the sharing of useful information.

**Foundation for Burns and Trauma, Inc.**

PO Box 1329

Phoenix, AZ 85001

Direct: (602)230-2041

Fax: (602)230-2157

<http://www.azburn.com>

Assisting burn victims and their families in becoming burn survivors, through different programs, rehabilitation, treatment, and research.

**International Society for Burn Injuries**

Elisabeth Greenfield, RN, MSN

2172 US Highway 181 South

Floresville, TX 78114

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

One of the main aims of our society is to disseminate knowledge and stimulate prevention in the field of burns.

**Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors, Inc.**

1835 R W Berends Dr. SW

Grand Rapids, MI 49519-4955

Toll Free: (800)888-2876

Direct: (616)458-2773

Fax: (616)458-2831

[info@phoenix-society.org](mailto:info@phoenix-society.org)

<http://www.phoenix-society.org>

Information and resources for burn survivors.

**Shriners Hospitals for Children**

2900 Rocky Point Dr.

Tampa, FL 33607

Toll Free: (800)237-5055

Direct: (813)281-0300

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

Network of 22 hospitals that provide expert, no-cost orthopedic and burn care to children under 18.

## References

- American Burn Association. (2000). *Burn incidence and treatment in the US: 2000 fact sheet*. Retrieved September 4, 2008, from [http://www.ssw.uga.edu/Images/1108657422\\_burn%20incidence%20and%20treatment%20in%20the%20us.pdf](http://www.ssw.uga.edu/Images/1108657422_burn%20incidence%20and%20treatment%20in%20the%20us.pdf)
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. (1992). *A technical assistance manual on the employment provisions (title I) of the Americans with Disabilities Act*. Retrieved December 14, 2005, from <http://askjan.org/links/ADAтам1.html>
- Merck & Co, Inc. (2003). Burns. In *The Merck manual home edition: Online medical library* (1st ed., sec. 24, chap. 289). Retrieved December 21, 2005, from [http://www.merck.com/mmhe/sec24/ch289/ch289a.html#sb289\\_1](http://www.merck.com/mmhe/sec24/ch289/ch289a.html#sb289_1)

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