



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

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 schedule and leave time
- 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 exacerbate skin condition)
- Provide alternative and 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
- Allow flexible work environment:
 - o Flexible scheduling
 - o Modified break schedule
 - o Leave for counseling
 - o Work from home/Flexi-place

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.