

BAC – ACCOMMODATIONS BY DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION

A reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a job, the work environment, or the way things usually are done that enables a qualified individual with a disability to enjoy an equal employment opportunity. An equal employment opportunity means an opportunity to attain the same level of performance or to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment as are available to an average similarly-situated employee without a disability.

The ADA requires reasonable accommodation in three aspects of employment: 1) to ensure equal opportunity in the application process, 2) to enable a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of a job, and 3) to enable an employee with a disability to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment.

Disability

Mental Health disability is a condition that disrupts a person's:

- Thinking
- Mood
- Feelings
- Ability to relate to others
- Daily functioning
- Lowers ability to cope with ordinary demands of daily life



Questions to Ask

1. What limitations is the employee 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 been consulted regarding possible accommodations?
6. Once accommodations are in place, would it be useful to meet with the employee to evaluate the effectiveness of the accommodations and to determine whether additional accommodations are needed?
7. Do supervisory personnel and employees need training?

ANXIETY

Anxiety disorders affect millions of American adults. These disorders include generalized anxiety disorder, acute stress disorder, substance-induced anxiety disorder, anxiety disorder due to a general medical condition, anxiety disorder not otherwise specified, panic disorder with or without agoraphobia, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, social phobia, and specific phobias. Individuals with anxiety disorders may experience feelings of panic; extreme physical, mental, or emotional stress; and intense fear. Due to the highly individualized nature of mental health impairments, symptoms can present in numerous ways and significantly impact the functionality of individuals with Anxiety Disorders.



Common anxiety signs and symptoms include:

- Feeling nervous, restless or tense
- Having a sense of impending danger, panic or doom
- Having an increased heart rate
- Breathing rapidly (hyperventilation)
- Sweating
- Trembling
- Feeling weak or tired
- Trouble concentrating or thinking about anything other than the present worry
- Having trouble sleeping
- Experiencing gastrointestinal (GI) problems
- Having difficulty controlling worry
- Having the urge to avoid things that trigger anxiety

Accommodations:

- Modified break schedule
- Noise cancelling headphones
- Job coaching
- Anxiety reducing applications (apps)

BIPOLAR DISORDER

Bipolar disorder is a brain disorder marked by periods of elevated mood (mania), and prolonged periods of sadness and hopelessness (depression). These shifts in mood are severe as compared to the average person. Inflated self-esteem or grandiosity.

Signs and symptoms of mania

- Decreased need for sleep
- More talkative than usual
- Distractibility
- Increase in goal-directed activity
- Excessive involvement in activities that have a high potential for painful consequences (spending sprees, sexual indiscretions, other risky behaviors)

Signs and symptoms of depression include distinct periods of:

- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism for most of the day
- Diminished interest or pleasure in more, or all, activities
- Significant weight loss

- Insomnia or hypersomnia
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Feelings of worthlessness and guilt
- Loss of appetite and weight or weight gain
- Diminished ability to think or concentrate
- Recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal ideation

Accommodations:

- Apps for concentration
- Employee Assistance Program
- Job restructuring
- Checklists

Depression

Major depression is “persistent and can significantly interfere with an individual’s thoughts, behavior, mood, activity, and physical health. Among all medical illnesses, major depression is the leading cause of disability in the United States and many other developed countries.”

Depression is an illness that involves feelings of sadness lasting for two weeks or longer, often accompanied by a loss of interest in life, hopelessness, and decreased energy. Such distressing feelings can affect one’s ability to perform the usual tasks and activities of daily living. This is considered to be clinical depression. It is very different from a temporary case of “the blues” triggered by an unhappy event or stressful situation. Depression affects the mind, but this does not mean “it’s all in your head.”

Depression is a medical illness linked to changes in the biochemistry of the brain. Depression is not a weakness of character. Being depressed does not mean a person is inadequate. It means the person has a medical illness that is just as real as diabetes or ulcers. Like other medical disorders, clinical depression should not be ignored or dismissed. A clinically depressed person cannot simply “snap out of it” any more than a person with an ulcer could simply will it away.



Signs and symptoms of depression

Although depression may occur only once during your life, people typically have multiple episodes. During these episodes, symptoms occur most of the day, nearly every day and may include:

- Feelings of sadness, tearfulness, emptiness or hopelessness
- Angry outbursts, irritability or frustration, even over small matters
- Loss of interest or pleasure in most or all normal activities, such as sex, hobbies or sports
- Sleep disturbances, including insomnia or sleeping too much
- Tiredness and lack of energy, so even small tasks take extra effort
- Reduced appetite and weight loss or increased cravings for food and weight gain
- Anxiety, agitation or restlessness
- Slowed thinking, speaking or body movements
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt, fixating on past failures or self-blame

- Trouble thinking, concentrating, making decisions and remembering things
- Frequent or recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts or suicide
- Unexplained physical problems, such as back pain or headaches

Accommodations:

- Alternative lighting
- Anti-fatigue matting
- Rest area/private space
- Flexible scheduling

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER:

Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) is a type of anxiety disorder that affects millions of adults. Other conditions can accompany OCD, resulting in a dual-diagnosis, including eating disorders, other anxiety disorders, and depression. Symptoms of OCD include persistent, upsetting thoughts (obsessions) and the use of rituals (compulsions) to control the anxiety those thoughts produce. These rituals can end up controlling individuals with OCD and negatively impact their personal and work life, resulting in the need for accommodations at work. Common problems in the workplace for employees with OCD that may require reasonable accommodation include attendance and punctuality issues, the ability to meet deadlines and stay organized, and problems maintaining concentration and managing distractions.



Signs and symptoms

Common obsessive thoughts in OCD include:

- Fear of being contaminated by germs or dirt or contaminating others
- Fear of losing control and harming yourself or others
- Intrusive sexually explicit or violent thoughts and images
- Excessive focus on religious or moral ideas
- Fear of losing or not having things you might need
- Order and symmetry: the idea that everything must line up “just right”
- Superstitions; excessive attention to something considered lucky or unlucky

Common compulsive behaviors in OCD include:

- Excessive double-checking of things, such as locks, appliances, and switches
- Repeatedly checking in on loved ones to make sure they’re safe
- Counting, tapping, repeating certain words, or doing other senseless things to reduce anxiety
- Spending a lot of time washing or cleaning
- Ordering or arranging things “just so”
- Praying excessively or engaging in rituals triggered by religious fear
- Accumulating “junk” such as old newspapers or empty food containers

Accommodations:

- Checklists
- Journaling apps
- On site Mentoring
- Support animal

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a trauma-related disorder caused by an individual's exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one or more of the following ways:

- directly experiences the traumatic event;
- witnesses the traumatic event in person;
- learns that the traumatic event occurred to a close family member or close friend (with the actual or threatened death being either violent or accidental); or
- experiences first-hand repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event (not through media, pictures, television, or movies unless work-related).

The disturbance, regardless of its trigger, causes clinically significant distress or impairment in the individual's interactions and capacity to work. Be aware that some individuals with PTSD will never need an accommodation, while other may need accommodations that change over time.



Signs and symptoms

Intrusive memories

Symptoms of intrusive memories may include:

- Recurrent, unwanted distressing memories of the traumatic event
- Reliving the traumatic event as if it were happening again (flashbacks)
- Upsetting dreams or nightmares about the traumatic event
- Severe emotional distress or physical reactions to something that reminds you of the traumatic event

Avoidance

Symptoms of avoidance may include:

- Trying to avoid thinking or talking about the traumatic event
- Avoiding places, activities or people that remind you of the traumatic event

Negative changes in thinking and mood

Symptoms of negative changes in thinking and mood may include:

- Negative thoughts about yourself, other people or the world
- Hopelessness about the future

- Memory problems, including not remembering important aspects of the traumatic event
- Difficulty maintaining close relationships
- Feeling detached from family and friends
- Lack of interest in activities you once enjoyed
- Difficulty experiencing positive emotions
- Feeling emotionally numb

Changes in physical and emotional reactions

Symptoms of changes in physical and emotional reactions (also called arousal symptoms) may include:

- Being easily startled or frightened
- Always being on guard for danger
- Self-destructive behavior, such as drinking too much or driving too fast
- Trouble sleeping
- Trouble concentrating
- Irritability, angry outbursts or aggressive behavior
- Overwhelming guilt or shame

Accommodations:

- Visualization techniques
- Two way radio
- Door mirror to see people approaching
- Uninterrupted work time