



Fact Sheet Series

Workplace Accommodations: Low Cost, High Impact

Annually Updated Research Findings Address the Costs and Benefits of Job Accommodations
Updated: 09/01/09

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JAN'S ACCOMMODATION FACT SHEET SERIES

Workplace Accommodations: Low Cost, High Impact **Annually Updated Research Findings Address the Costs and Benefits of Job Accommodations** **Updated: 09/01/09**

Recent amendments to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) refocused attention on workplace accommodations by broadening the definition of disability; more coverage means more employees will likely be entitled to workplace accommodations. This increased attention has some employers concerned about the costs of providing job accommodations. However, a study conducted by the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), a service of the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), shows that workplace accommodations not only are low cost, but also positively impact the workplace in many ways.

The JAN study has been ongoing since 2004. JAN, in partnership with the University of Iowa's Law, Health Policy, and Disability Center (LHPDC) interviewed 1,182 employers between January 2004 and December 2006 who contacted JAN. In addition, JAN, in partnership with the West Virginia University School of Applied Social Sciences (SASS) interviewed 366 employers between June 28, 2008, and July 31, 2009, who contacted JAN. Employers in the JAN study represented a range of industry sectors and sizes and contacted JAN for information about workplace accommodations, the ADA, or both. Approximately eight weeks after their initial contact, the employers were asked a series of questions about the situation they discussed with JAN and the quality of the services JAN provided.

The study results consistently showed that the benefits employers receive from making workplace accommodations far outweigh the low cost. Employers reported that providing accommodations resulted in such benefits as retaining valuable employees, improving productivity and morale, reducing workers compensation and training costs, and improving company diversity. These benefits were obtained with little investment. The employers in the study reported that a high percentage (56%) of accommodations cost absolutely nothing to make, while the rest typically cost only \$600.

And to top off these positive results about the cost and benefits of workplace accommodation, the employers in the study also reported that JAN understood their needs and provided information that met their needs. In addition, 98% of employers stated that they would use JAN services again for assistance with workplace accommodations.

What is the bottom line? Workplace accommodations are low cost and high impact, and JAN can help employers make them, free of charge.



Finding #1: Employers want to provide accommodations so they can retain valued and qualified employees.

Of the employers who called JAN for accommodation information and solutions, most were doing so to retain or promote (82%) a current employee. On average (including those persons who had just been given a job offer or who were newly hired), the employees had been with the company about seven years, with an average wage of about \$14 for those paid by the hour, or an average annual salary of about \$48,200. In addition, the individuals tended to be fairly well-educated, with 43% having a college degree or higher.

Finding #2: Most employers report no cost or low cost for accommodating employees with disabilities.

Of the employers who gave cost information related to accommodations they had provided, 251 out of 447 (56%) said the accommodations needed by employees cost absolutely nothing. Another 164 (37%) experienced a one-time cost. Only 23 (5%) said the accommodation resulted in an ongoing, annual cost to the company and 9 (2%) said the accommodation required a combination of one-time and annual costs; however, too few of these employers provided cost data to report with accuracy. Of those accommodations that did have a cost, the typical one-time expenditure by employers was \$600. When asked how much they paid for an accommodation beyond what they would have paid for an employee without a disability who was in the same position, employers typically answered around \$320.

Finding #3: Employers report accommodations are effective.

Employers who implemented accommodations at the point they were interviewed were asked to rank the effectiveness of the accommodations on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being extremely effective. Of those responding, 74% reported the accommodations were either very effective or extremely effective.

Finding #4: Employers experience multiple direct and indirect benefits after making accommodations.

Employers who made accommodations for employees with disabilities reported multiple benefits as a result. The most frequently mentioned direct benefits were: (1) the accommodation allowed the company to retain a qualified employee, (2) the accommodation increased the worker's productivity, and (3) the accommodation eliminated the costs of training a new employee.

The most widely mentioned indirect benefits employers received were: (1) the accommodation ultimately improved interactions with co-workers, (2) the accommodation increased overall company morale, and (3) the accommodation increased overall company productivity. The following table gives the percentage of

employers who reported experiencing direct and indirect benefits as a result of having made an accommodation.

Direct Benefits		%
Company retained a valued employee		88%
Increased the employee's productivity		72%
Eliminated costs associated with training a new employee		59%
Increased the employee's attendance		52%
Increased diversity of the company		43%
Saved worker's compensation or other insurance costs		39%
Company hired a qualified person with a disability		16%
Company promoted an employee		11%
Indirect Benefits		
Improved interactions with co-workers		69%
Increased overall company morale		61%
Increased overall company productivity		57%
Improved interactions with customers		45%
Increased workplace safety		43%
Increased overall company attendance		37%
Increased profitability		33%
Increased customer base		18%

Finding #5: Employers find JAN helpful during the accommodation process.

Ninety-nine percent of employers found that JAN understood their needs. In addition, 91% of employers stated that the information JAN sent them met their needs. Overall 98% of employers stated they would use JAN again.

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