

Job Accommodations: Questions from the Webinar that were not answered or partially answered

1. Are there HR credits for this webinar? Answer: No. The audience was composed of people from various sector of the community – employers, CEO's, supervisors, and rehabilitation personnel as well. We have not typically provided this accreditation but thank you for bringing to our attention.

2. Use of companion/service animals in the workplace – do they have to perform a task? It is not the same and “bring me my bag” type of task. The task may be to keep the person calm and prevent anxiety. The employer to a great degree gets to decide if a service animal is acceptable for the person in mental health recovery. If the person with a disability (any) has legitimate need for service animal on the job, it is not considered a pet. It is much like wearing braces or using a braille writer.

This is a helpful link:

Accommodation and Compliance Series: [Service Animals in the Workplace](#)

<http://askjan.org/media/servanim.html>

3. Someone who is obviously having mental health struggles in the workplace- what do you do if they don't acknowledge the problem? Deal with the employee on the work expectations and how their behavior has changed in relation to work expectations. If they divulge that they are experiencing crisis or stressful problems, try to offer support through the company e.g. EAP or offer information on resources for mental health services (if the person does not know where to turn and is open.) Avoid asking about the nature of the stressors unless it is specifically work related e.g. coworkers being uncooperative, cruel or bullying. Put some things in writing if that helps e.g. if person is coming in odd

hours, have them write up their schedule and post it where you can see it. If there are behaviors that are not usually acceptable in the work place, they need to be addressed in the same way and any other employee – following your own disciplinary action procedures.

The employer wants to be careful that they do not assume that a mental impairment/disability is present, so until they know for sure, they can ask the employee how they can assist them in doing the job. They can request medical documentation that states the employee is fit to do her job if there is evidence that she are unable to for performance or conduct reasons. And yes, the employer can always follow the disciplinary policies. Documentation of the situation is very important. The following link can help with that situation as well:

The ADA: Applying Performance and Conduct Standards to Employees with Disabilities at <http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/performance-conduct.html>

4. How do I recruit people to work as job coaches?

You can give the option of online or paper application to be inclusive; Use the career centers, the usual social media, Craig's list, your website; contact the agencies that are temp help recruiters to see if they can find someone even though not temp; contact the agencies that serve people with barriers to employment such as disabled, people receiving EADC benefits, long term unemployed etc. Put ads in college placement offices. Offer internships, informational interviews. Contact SSA's Employment Networks in your area. Use your own network and that of your coworkers to disseminate the ad for you. It's the same approach as doing job development only in reverse, you are the employer!

5. Does mental health impairment have to be mentally diagnosed in order for a person to qualify for accommodations, i.e., if they display obvious symptoms with no formal diagnosis, would they qualify? Informally the employer can

address the issues in their own way. Formally, there must be documentation of a disability by a qualified practitioner. Employers usually like that to be from an M.D. The documentation needs to state: that a disability has been diagnosed (and this has to be for real) and what limitations are imposed by the disability in the workplace.

According to the EEOC, the employer is entitled to the diagnosis. JAN advises callers that if they do not want to give out that information, they can start with something a little vaguer – such as mental health impairment as opposed to bipolar disorder. But they may end up having to disclose the diagnosis in order to continue the accommodation process. The appropriate medical professional for mental health impairments may be a psychiatrist or psychologist.