

Job Accommodations for People with Brain Injuries

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Job Accommodation Network - Fact Sheet Series



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The brain can incur several different types of injuries depending on the type, amount, and position of force impacting the head. The impact may affect one functional area of the brain, several areas, or all areas of the brain. These factors determine what types of accommodations are effective.

The following is a quick overview of some of the job accommodations that might be useful for employees with brain injury. For a more in depth discussion, access JAN's publications at <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/media/atoz.htm>. To discuss an accommodation situation with a consultant, contact JAN directly.

Concentration:

- Reduce distractions in the work area
- Provide space enclosures or a private office
- Allow for use of white noise or environmental sound machines
- Allow the employee to play soothing music using a cassette player and headset
- Increase natural lighting or provide full spectrum lighting
- Reduce clutter
- in the employee's work environment
- Plan for uninterrupted work time
- Divide large assignments into smaller tasks and steps
- Restructure job to include only essential functions

Organization:

- Make daily TO-DO lists and check items off as they are completed
- Use several calendars to mark meetings and deadlines

- Remind employee of important deadlines via memos or e-mail or weekly supervision
- Use a watch or pager with timer capability
- Use electronic organizers
- Divide large assignments into smaller tasks and steps
- Assign a mentor to assist employee with determining goals and provide daily guidance
- Schedule weekly meetings with supervisor, manager, or mentor to determine if goals are being met

Problem

- Provide picture diagrams of problem solving techniques, e.g., flow charts
- Restructure the job to include only essential functions
- Assign a supervisor, manager, or mentor to be available when the employee has questions

Memory:

- Allow the employee to tape record meetings
- Provide type written minutes of each meeting
- Use notebooks, calendars, or sticky notes to record information for easy retrieval
- Provide written as well as verbal instructions
- Allow additional training time
- Provide written checklists
- Provide environmental cues to assist in memory for locations of items, such as labels, color coding, or bulletin boards
- Post instructions over all frequently used equipment

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

Vision Impairment:

- Provide written information in large print
- Change fluorescent lights to high intensity, white lights
- Increase natural lighting
- Provide a glare guard for computer monitors
- Consult a vision specialist particularly

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

Work Effectively with Supervisors:

- Provide positive praise and reinforcement
- Provide written job instructions
- Write clear expectations of responsibilities and the consequences
- 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
- Provide written work agreements
- Develop a procedure to evaluate the effectiveness of the accommodation

Stress:

- 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
- Provide sensitivity training to coworkers
- Allow the employee to take a break to use stress management techniques to deal with frustration

Attendance Issues:

- Provide flexible leave for health problems
- Provide a self-paced work load and flexible hours
- Allow employee to work from home
- Provide part-time work schedule

Issues of Change:

- Recognize that a change in the office environment or of supervisors may be difficult for a person with a brain injury
- Maintain open channels of communication between the employee and the new and old supervisor to ensure an effective transition
- Provide weekly or monthly meetings with the employee to discuss workplace issues and production levels

Resources Specifically for People with Brain Injuries

Brain Injury Association of America

1608 Spring Hill Road

Suite 110

Vienna, VA 22182

Direct: (703)761-0750

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

National Brain Injury Information Center

Brain Injury Information Only

Toll Free: (800)444-6443

National Resource Center for Traumatic Brain Injury

P.O. Box 980542

Richmond, VA 23298-0542

Direct: (804)828-9055

<http://www.neuro.pmr.vcu.edu/>

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