

Accommodation Ideas for Persons with Bipolar Disorder

From the Job Accommodation Network*

Overview

When considering accommodations for persons with psychiatric disabilities it is important to remember that this process must be conducted on a case by case basis with input from the person with the disability. The person's abilities and limitations should be considered and problematic tasks must be identified. Keep in mind that functional limitations caused by psychiatric disabilities vary among individuals and depend upon the condition and limitations the person is experiencing. Even persons with the different limitations and be affected to varying degree.

Due to the characteristics of Bipolar Disorder, the following might be areas of weakness for the person with the disability. We have come up with some ideas for accommodation that might help this individual. As always, this should be considered on a case-by-case basis; what might work for one individual, might not work for another. Individuals will also vary on the number and types of accommodations needed. Most people with a bipolar disorder will only need a few of the many possible accommodations listed.

ACCOMMODATION IDEAS

Maintaining Stamina during the Workday:

- Flexible scheduling
- Allow longer or more frequent work breaks
- Provide additional time to learn new responsibilities
- Provide self-paced work load
- Provide backup coverage for when the employee needs to take breaks
- Allow for time off for counseling
- Allow for use of supportive employment and job coaches
- Allow employee to work from home during part of the day
- Provide for job sharing opportunities
- Part time work schedules

Maintaining Concentration:

- Reduce distractions in the work area
- Provide space enclosures or private office
- Allow for use of white noise or environmental sound machines
- Increase natural lighting or provide full spectrum lighting
- Allow the employee to work from home and provide necessary equipment
- Plan for uninterrupted work time
- Allow for frequent breaks
- Divide large assignments into smaller tasks and steps
- Restructure job to include only essential functions

Difficulty Staying Organized and Meeting Deadlines:

- 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
- Use electronic organizers

- Divide large assignments into smaller tasks and steps

Working Effectively with Supervisors:

- Provide positive praise and reinforcement
- Provide written job instructions
- Write clear expectations of responsibilities and the consequences of not meeting them
- 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

Difficulty Handling Stress and Emotions:

- 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
- Utilize peer supports

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 psychiatric disability
- Maintain open channels of communications between the employee and the new and old supervisor in order to ensure an effective transition
- Provide weekly or monthly meetings with the employee to discuss workplace issues and production levels.

RESOURCES REGARDING BIPOLAR AND EMPLOYMENT

Job Accommodation Network

A Service of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities

West Virginia University, 918 Chestnut Ridge Road, Suite 1, P.O. Box 6080

Morgantown, WV 26506-6080

800-526-7234 (Voice & TT/TDD)

800-ADA-WORK (Voice & TT/TDD)

304-293-7186 (Local Line)

800-526-2262 (From Canada)

800-DIAL-JAN (Computer Bulletin Board)

<http://www.jan.wvu.edu>

President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities

1331 F Street, N.W. Ste. 300, Washington, D.C. 20004-1107

202-376-6200 (Voice)

202-376-6205 (TDD)

<http://www.pcepd.gov>

American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law
One Regency Drive, P.O. Box 30, Bloomfield, CT 06002
860-242-5450
800-331-1389
860-286-0787 (Fax)
<http://www.emory.edu/AAPL/>

American Psychiatric Association
Box SP98, 1400 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005
202-682-6000
202-682-6850
<http://www.psych.org>

American Psychological Association
750 First St., N.E., Washington, DC 20002-4242
202-336-5500
<http://www.apa.org/about/contact.html#Mailing>

Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Boston University
930 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston Massachusetts 02215
617-353-3549 Voice
617-353-7700 FAX
<http://www.bu.edu/sarpsych/>

Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
1101 Fifteenth Street NW, Suite 1212, Washington, DC 20005
Telephone: 202-467-5730 (Voice)
202-467-4232 (TT/TDD)
202-223-0409 (Fax)
<http://www.bazelon.org>

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)
200 North Glebe Road, Suite 1015, Arlington, VA 22203-3754
800-950-NAMI or
703-524-7600
703-516-7227 (TDD)
<http://www.nami.org>

National Depressive/Manic Depressive Association
730 North Franklin, Suite 510, Chicago, IL 60610
312-642-0049
800-82-NDMDA
<http://www.ndmda.org>

National Self-Help Clearinghouse
25 West 43rd Street, Room 620, New York, NY 10036
212-354-8525
<http://www.selfhelpweb.org>

Stanley Foundation Bipolar Network
800-518-7326 (Voice)
301-571-0768 (Fax)
Internet: <http://www.bipolarnetwork.org/>

Washington Business Group on Health's Employers' Resource Center on the ADA and Workers with Psychiatric Disabilities
777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20002
202-408-9320
202-408-9333 (TT/TDD)
<http://www.wbgh.com>

Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic Library of the Health Sciences Library System, University of Pittsburgh
3811 O'Hara St., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15213-2593
412-624-2378
Internet: <http://www.wpic.library.pitt.edu>

Government Agencies:

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
For information and publications:
800-669-EEOC (voice)
800-800-3302 (TDD)
For local agency referral and addresses:
800-669-4000
800-669-6820 (TDD)
<http://www.eeoc.gov>

EEOC Headquarters
U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
1801 L Street, N.W., Washington, DC, 20507
202-663-4900
202-663-4494 (TDD)
National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitative Research (NIDRR)
U.S. Department of Education,
Mary E. Switzer Building 600 Independence Ave. SW, Room 3060 MES, Washington, D.C.
20202-2572
202-401-2000 Information Resource Center
202-205-8134 (voice)
202-205-9136 (TDD)
800-USA-LEARN
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/NIDRR/>

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)
Information Resources and Inquiries Branch, 6001 Executive Blvd., Room 8184, MSC 9663,
Bethesda, MD 20892-9663
301-443-4513
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

Office of Civil Rights (OCR)
U.S. Department of Education, OCR
Mary E. Switzer Bldg., 330 C. Street, S.W., Suite 5000,
Washington, DC 20202-1100
202-205-5413
1-800-421-3481
202-205-5166 (TDD)
Internet: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OCR>

Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE)
U.S. Department of Education

4090 MES, 330 C Street, SW, Washington, DC 20202
202-205-5451 (Voice)
<http://www.ed.gov>

U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC, 20202
1-800-USA-LEARN
1-800-437-0833 (TTY)

Small Business Administration (SBA)
Office of Advocacy/Office of Economic Research
409 Third Street SW, Suite 7600, Washington, D.C. 20416
800-8-ASK-SBA
202-205-6533 (voice only)
202-205-7333 TDD
<http://www.sbaonline.sba.gov>

SBA OnLine (electronic bulletin board):(800) 697-4636 (limited access) or (900) 463-4636 (full access) SBA's gopher: <gopher://gopher.sbaonline.sba.gov>; Telnet: <telnet://sbaonline.sba.gov> ; File transfer protocol: <ftp://ftp.sbaonline.sba.gov>

Social Security Administration (SSA)
6401 Security Blvd., Room 4-C-5 Annex, Baltimore, MD 21235.
800-772-1213.
800-325-0778 (TDD)
<http://www.ssa.gov>

Note:

Information on this page is courtesy of the Job Accommodation Network (JAN). For more information on JAN, see:

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Internet: <http://www.jan.wvu.edu>*

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