

# JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

## Accommodation and Compliance Series

# Accommodation and Compliance Series: Ehlers- Danlos Syndrome

Job Accommodation Network  
PO Box 6080  
Morgantown, WV 26506-6080  
(800)526-7234 (V)  
(877)781-9403 (TTY)  
[jan@askjan.org](mailto:jan@askjan.org)  
[AskJAN.org](http://AskJAN.org)



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## Preface

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## **JAN'S Accommodation and Compliance Series**

### **Introduction**

JAN's Accommodation and Compliance Series is designed to help employers determine effective accommodations and comply with Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Each publication in the series addresses a specific medical condition and provides information about the condition, ADA information, accommodation ideas, and resources for additional information.

The Accommodation and Compliance Series is a starting point in the accommodation process and may not address every situation. Accommodations should be made on a case by case basis, considering each employee's individual limitations and accommodation needs. Employers are encouraged to contact JAN to discuss specific situations in more detail.

For information on assistive technology and other accommodation ideas, visit JAN's Searchable Online Accommodation Resource (SOAR) at <http://askjan.org/soar>.

### **Information about Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome**

Ehlers-Danlos syndrome is a rare genetic disorder that affects connective tissues and results in flexible joints, elastic skin, and fragile tissues. There are several variations of the syndrome with each affecting a different gene and producing different signs and symptoms. Joint hypermobility is the dominant clinical manifestation. Some types of EDS are characterized by weaknesses in the walls of the hollow organs of the gastrointestinal tract, in the esophagus, the cardiovascular system, uterus, bladder, blood vessels, and the arteries. Ehlers-Danlos syndrome can alter the body's response to injury. Complications such as joint dislocations, early-onset arthritis, and damaged skin can result. Although there is no cure for Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, injuries can be treated and preventative measure can be taken to mitigate chances of injury. Ehlers-Danlos syndrome is a lifelong condition and for those working, accommodations may be needed.

### **Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome and the Americans with Disabilities Act**

The ADA does not contain a list of medical conditions that constitute disabilities. Instead, the ADA has a general definition of disability that each person must meet. A person has a disability if he/she has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having an impairment. For more information about how to determine whether a person has a disability under the ADA, see [How to Determine Whether a Person Has a Disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act \(ADAAA\)](#).

## **Accommodating Employees with Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome**

People with Ehlers-Danlos syndrome may develop some of the limitations discussed below, but seldom develop all of them. Also, the degree of limitation will vary among individuals. Be aware that not all people with Ehlers-Danlos syndrome will need accommodations to perform their jobs and many others may only need a few accommodations. The following is only a sample of the possibilities available. Numerous other accommodation solutions may exist.

### **Questions to Consider:**

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?

### **Products**

There are numerous products that can be used to accommodate people with limitations. JAN's Searchable Online Accommodation Resource at <http://askjan.org/soar> is designed to let users explore various accommodation options. Many product vendor lists are accessible through this system; however, JAN provides these lists and many more that are not available on the Web site upon request. Contact JAN directly if you have specific accommodation situations, are looking for products, need vendor information, or are seeking a referral.

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