

## Types of Workplace Accommodations

The following are examples of types of accommodations that would apply to someone with a psychiatric disability. Each actual situation must be considered on an individual basis to determine the best accommodation that does not pose undue hardship.

- **Restructuring jobs**
  - reassign fill in reception duties to another typist
- **Adjusting work schedules**
  - time off for therapy appointments,
  - later starting time because of morning drowsiness due to medications
- **Flexible leave**
  - use of sick leave for mental health reasons,
  - extended leave without pay due to hospitalization
- **Specialized equipment & assistive devices**
  - use of e-mail to deliver daily instructions
- **Modifying work sites**
  - install wall partitions around workstation to minimize distractions
- **Providing special transportation**
  - assigned parking space closer to building to manage panic condition
- **Providing human assistance**
  - instead of readers & interpreters, provide job coach or mentor

Research studies on the most frequently used accommodations for people with psychiatric disabilities include the following:

- **Job coach assistance in hiring**
  - arranging the interview,
  - help in completing job applications,
  - help in interview
- **Job coach support on the job**
  - being on site to provide support or training in job tasks
- **Flexible scheduling**
  - changes in the start or end of the workday hours,
  - part time hours,
  - more frequent breaks,
  - sick leave for mental health reasons
- **Changes in supervision**
  - providing extra supervision hours,
  - involving a job coach in supervision meetings,
  - modifying the way feedback and instructions are given

The information contained in these pages is for educational purposes only, and is not legal advice. Individuals should contact the appropriate legal resources for specific legal advice regarding their particular situations. © [Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation](#), Trustees of [Boston University](#)

- **Changes in training**
  - allowing extra time to learn job tasks,
  - assistance in orientation
- **Modified job duties**
  - exchanging or deleting minor job duties

## Case illustrations of workplace accommodations:

- An editor for a major publishing company who has a diagnosis of a Personality Disorder has difficulty concentrating on her proofreading tasks due to her symptoms. She works in an open area with others.

*The employer allows her to wear headphones playing soft music to minimize her symptoms, helping her to concentrate. The headphones prevent other employees from hearing the music.*

The same editor began to enter the hospital numerous times after being hired into a permanent position. This affected her ability to complete book projects with specific timelines.

*The publishing company transferred her to doing contract editorial work which could be more short-term and time-limited, and reassigned work to other contract workers if a hospitalization reoccurred. She was allowed a graduated return to work after hospitalizations. She was also able to modify her work schedule on a weekly basis to attend therapy appointments during work hours, working extra hours on other days or evenings.*

- A computer programmer with severe anxiety, panic attacks and depression forced her to take a medical leave of absence as her symptoms increased. She was extremely anxious about returning to work because she might have difficulty remembering the commands and concentrating in a busy work area. A visit to her worksite revealed that her office was located in the center of a space with cubicles, next to a noisy printer shared by others, and surrounded by private offices with doors that the Executives occupied. Exploration of the reasons for her anxiety revealed that many people walked by her office and stopped to talk to her on the way to the printer or to assign her tasks, which interrupted her train of thought, as well as made her anxious because she did not feel comfortable talking to people. Her cubicle wall next to her desk was only three feet high, allowing visual contact with anyone that walked by.

*Several accommodations were suggested. A full height wall next to her desk minimized visual distractions and casual conversation. Written instructions or use of e-mail was recommended for assigning her new tasks. A template that fit over her keyboard with commonly used commands helped her remember commands. A graduated return to work helped to build her stamina and confidence.*