

# ACQUIRED INJURIES AND REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

**Orthopedic and Neurological** injuries among military personnel may include, but are not limited to spinal cord injuries, bone fractures, back injuries, and loss of limb. The functional limitations experienced by those living with orthopedic injuries are likely to change over time and, therefore, may require a series of accommodations. It is important for the Veteran employee and supervisor to commit to an accommodation follow-up plan.

**Sensory impairments** such as those related to vision and hearing, are often associated with military experience. Sensory impairments may present as, but will not be limited to functional limitations related to vision impairments, blindness, hearing loss, or deafness. Accommodations for sensory impairments will vary, but may focus on access to technology, documentation, and the need for support services.

**Severe burns** may not be an injury where one might expect accommodations would be necessary, but functional limitations associated with fine or gross motor skills, sensitivity to temperature (both heat and cold), prolonged exposure to sunlight, handling stress and emotions, and issues related to sleep disorders are not atypical for those with burn injuries.

## THE REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS PROCESS: BE A PROACTIVE AND INFORMED EMPLOYER

Establish and make known a process for requesting accommodations, at every point in the employment process—from application to onboarding to retention and promotion. It is good management practice to inform all new hires, regardless of disability or perceived need, of the process for requesting accommodations at every point in the employment process.

Create a process for requesting job accommodations that lets all current and prospective employees know your company is committed to equal access and opportunity. Ensuring this information is made available in multiple formats is a great step toward creating a more inclusive and universally accessible workplace.

Understand that one of the biggest challenges faced by those experiencing the impact of a non-apparent disability is whether or not to disclose this information to a prospective or current employer. Many Veterans believe disclosing such information will have negative consequences on their careers.

In today's society, people are working longer, and an aging workforce is more likely to acquire a disability and need accommodations to continue to be productive. Now more than ever, employers are making known the process for requesting and accessing workplace accommodations. By being upfront and transparent with this process, you will surely alleviate stress—and create a more productive workforce.

## JOB ACCOMMODATION NETWORK (JAN)

The Job Accommodation Network, a Department of Labor program, offers free, confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues for all individuals with disabilities, including wounded, ill, and injured Veterans. JAN consultants offer one-on-one guidance on accommodations, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) issues, and other areas to both private and federal employers. Learn more about JAN online at <http://askjan.org>.

## ARMY WARRIOR TRANSITION COMMAND (WTC) AND ARMY WOUNDED WARRIOR PROGRAM (AW2)

WTC and the AW2 can also help educate your human resources personnel, supervisors/managers, and other employees on the trends of common injury types. Both can also connect you with resources for reasonable accommodation and facilitate a conversation with supervisors and the Veterans on the accommodations that may be most effective for the individual.

CONTACT THE ARMY WARRIOR TRANSITION COMMAND (WTC) AT

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## QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING THE REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS PROCESS

1. What limitation is the Veteran experiencing?
2. How do these limitations impact the Veteran and his/her 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 potential resources being used to determine possible accommodations?
5. Has the Veteran been consulted regarding possible accommodations?
6. Once accommodations are in place, would it be useful to meet with the Veteran to evaluate the effectiveness of the accommodations and to determine whether additional accommodations are needed?
7. Do supervisory personnel and employees need disability-related education and training?