



National Network

Information, Guidance, and Training on the
Americans with Disabilities Act

Call us toll-free
1-800-949-4232 V/TTY
Find your regional center at
www.adata.org

Ten Tips for Families: Supporting a Veteran with a Disability Returning to Work

Introduction

A veteran with a disability has a lot to offer in the civilian workplace: skills, discipline, teamwork, resilience and courage. Your family member's talents, skills, passions and aspirations matter now as much as they ever did.

1. Work as part of the healing process.

Work isn't just about money. It's also about getting back to civilian life, meeting people, and applying the skills and experiences learned in the military. Returning to work can be part of the healing process.

2. Working and benefits

Veterans with disabilities have rights, services and resources to support them in the transition to the civilian workforce. Laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Uniformed Services Employment & Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), and state laws protect the rights of veterans with disabilities who wish to return to work. Also, there are a variety of resources for family members supporting a veteran with a disability returning to civilian work life. Learn about the benefits your family member is eligible for from the Veterans Administration (<http://benefits.va.gov/benefits/>), the Social Security Administration (<https://yourtickettowork.com/web/ttw/home>), and Military.com (<http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/veteran-disability-compensation.html>).

3. Can work leave be used to care for a family member with a service-related disability?

Yes. Under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), family members of veterans with service-related disabilities can take leave from work to care for a family member with a service-related disability. New FMLA provisions expand the law to include work leave related to deployment and service-related disabilities. The Department of Labor has enhanced the leave available to veterans and military caregivers (<http://www.dol.gov/WHD/fmla/2013rule/>).

Visit adata.org or call 1-800-949-4232 V/TTY to contact your regional ADA Center.

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4. Telling others about a disability when applying for a job: It's a legally protected choice.

People with disabilities do not have to tell a potential employer about a disability when applying for a job. This is the case even if they think they might need an accommodation once on the job. This is true for any kind of disability, including conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, or traumatic brain injury (TBI). Veterans who decide they don't want to tell about their disability when they apply for a job are not "lying." They are exercising a legally protected choice. For more information, go to: (<http://makingworkhappen.com/Veterans/Vets/toolkit.cfm?Tool=2>)

5. Telling about a disability: Making a decision that's right for your family member.

Before applying for a job, help your family member decide about telling a potential employer about a disability. Some choose not to tell about their disability. They might think the disability doesn't impact the job. They might worry that they won't be considered fairly for the job or that a potential employer will not understand. Others might decide they do want to tell a potential employer about their disability. They might want to discuss their needs on the job or simply want to avoid surprises after they get hired. Help your family member think through a decision that's right for him or her. For more information, go to Job Accommodation Network's "Disclosure" information at <http://www.askjan.org/topics/discl.htm>. You can also visit the ADA National Network's Making Work Happen Toolkit to think through what disclosure decision is right for you (<http://makingworkhappen.com/Veterans/Vets/toolkit.cfm?Tool=3>).

6. Reasonable accommodations in the workplace.

People with disabilities have a right to a reasonable accommodation when applying for a job and when working. An accommodation is any change in the work environment or in how things are usually done that enables a worker with a disability to complete his or her job tasks. Needing an accommodation does not mean your family member cannot do the job. It's just a different way to get the job done. Examples of accommodations include changing a work space so that it is wheelchair accessible or changing the work schedule. Visit the ADA National Network's Making Work Happen Toolkit to help you think about what accommodation might work for your family member (<http://makingworkhappen.com/Veterans/Vets/toolkit.cfm?Tool=6>).

7. Does our family have to pay for this accommodation?

No. The employer pays for accommodations that are needed in the workplace. However, there are financial incentives and supports in place to help employers pay for accommodations (<http://askjan.org/media/tax.html>). Before approaching an employer to discuss accommodations, it might be helpful to learn more about this. For more information, call the ADA National Network at 1-800-949-4232.

8. Think through the accommodations your family member might need.

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When it comes to accommodations, no one size fits all. Even veterans with the same condition might need different types of accommodations depending on their job, their situation, and the duration of their disability. Help your family member think about how his or her condition could impact job tasks. Find out different accommodations at The Job Accommodations Network's "Accommodation Information by Disability: A to Z" at <http://www.askjan.org/media/atoz.htm>.

9. Getting an accommodation on the job is not a weakness or "special favor."

Needing an accommodation does not mean a person is unqualified for the job. The ADA prohibits an employer from punishing or firing you because you've asked for an accommodation. If your family member is working with a disability, he or she should consider asking for an accommodation before the disability impacts job performance. An accommodation is not a special favor or a sign of weakness; it is a legally protected right. For more information, go to the Job Accommodation Network's "Employees' Practical Guide to Negotiating and Requesting Reasonable Accommodations Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)" at <http://www.askjan.org/Eguide/IIRequest.htm>

10. Myths about workers with disabilities — don't buy into them!

Studies show that employees with disabilities perform as well on the job as any other employee. They may just do things a little differently. For more information, see the U.S. Department of Labor's "Myths and Facts about Workers with Disabilities" at www.doleta.gov/disability/htmldocs/myths.cfm

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