# Accommodation Solutions for Fine Motor Limitations

## [Introduction]

**TRACIE DeFREITAS:**

Hello, everyone. Thanks for joining us for this JAN Accommodation and Compliance Series webcast, "Accommodation Solutions for Fine Motor Limitations," presented by JAN Motor Team consultants Matthew McCord and Julie Davis. Matthew and Julie, thanks for offering this JAN training today. We're looking forward to learning from you. My name is Tracie DeFreitas. I'm the Director of Training, Services, and Outreach for JAN. Today I'll be your moderator.

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And, finally, at the end of the webcast, we like to know your feedback, so please do complete the evaluation. If you're seeking a CEU, the approval code will be provided after that webcast evaluation is completed.

Now let's get started with today's training. Julie, you're going to take the lead today.

## [What are fine motor limitations?]

**JULIE DAVIS:**

Thanks, Tracie. Today we will discuss what a fine motor limitation is and discuss some common fine motor limitations. After we discuss what a fine motor limitation is, we'll discuss some accommodations that may be helpful and discuss some real-life scenarios that we have addressed at JAN with employees and employers.

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Fine motor limitations are one of the most common limitations in the workplace. People with fine motor limitations have difficulty with manual dexterity due to underlying issues with nerves and muscles of the arms, hands, and fingers as well as joints, tendons, and ligaments. The repetition of small, rapid movements, working in a static and/or awkward posture for long periods of time, insufficient recovery time with too few rest breaks, improper workstation setup, forceful movements, excessive grasping, and poor work techniques may contribute to injury. Approximately 98.7 of civilian workers utilize fine motor skills in their work. About 56% of occupational injuries are cumulative trauma- or fine motor-related.

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Now let's go over some common disorders that may cause fine motor limitations.

Bursitis is a painful condition where the small, fluid-filled sac (bursa) become inflamed. The most common areas affected are the shoulders, elbows, and hips. In the shoulder it causes pain when reaching above the head, and in the elbow pain is more pronounced when the elbow is bent, which could affect fine motor skills like typing and grasping.

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a condition that occurs due to pressure on the medial nerve that runs from the forearm to the wrist. It causes weakness in the hands, difficulty in holding items, tingling of the arm, and shock-like feelings that move into the fingers.

Cubital tunnel syndrome occurs when the ulnar nerve has increased pressure from the bone or connected tissue resulting in shooting pain and numbness along the forearm and the fourth and fifth fingers. Intense physical activity could increase pressure on the nerve.

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DeQuervain's results in swelling in the tendons that run along the side of the thumb side of the wrist, which cause tenderness on that side of the wrist, makes turning the wrist, gripping or grasping, and lifting with the thumbs up difficult, prevalent in those with rheumatoid arthritis.

Impingement [syndrome], also known as rotator cuff syndrome, is a condition causing the tendons of the shoulders being pinched between the upper arm and the tip of the shoulder, causing shoulder pain. The upper tip of the shoulder rubs against the rotator cuff, making it difficult to reach overhead, and can affect everyday activities like putting on clothing.

Radial tunnel syndrome results from too much pressure on the radial nerve. It causes pain and tenderness on the outside of the elbow, radiating down the forearm to the hand. Fractures, trauma to the nerve tissue, and repetitive movement can result in radial tunnel syndrome.

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Tendonitis occurs when there is inflammation of tendons at the point where a muscle attaches to the bone. It causes pain and pressure on the outside of the joints. Weakness and decreased range of motion can also be experienced. Tendonitis is common in the shoulders, elbows, and wrists, which can result in fine motor limitations.

Trigger finger usually results in locking or catching of the bones in the fingers. Symptoms are pain or stiffness in the fingers and thumbs caused by swelling or inflammation. It may be caused by a hand injury or a strain, and it's commonly found in those with arthritis.

Lastly we'll talk about thoracic outlet syndrome, and that's where the nerves or blood vessels between the collarbone and first rib are compressed, resulting in shoulder and neck pain and numbness in the fingers. Hands and fingers may be sensitive to cold, you may have swelling and color change of the hands and fingers, and numbness in the arms, hands, and fingers may be symptoms.

These are some common fine motor limitations, but keep in mind other disabilities such as arthritis and Parkinson's can exhibit fine motor limitations.

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So what are some of the limitations in the workplace that individuals with fine motor limitations experience? They have pain and aching in the shoulders, arms, hands, or fingers, swelling or tenderness in the hands or fingers, weakness of the hands and arms when performing work-related tasks such as typing, mousing, grasping, handling, and sensing, numbness or tingling in the arms, hands, or fingers, loss of joint movement particularly in the hands and fingers, decreased coordination when performing common workplace tasks. Fine motor limitations can make it difficult for individuals to complete essential job duties, and accommodations may be needed to complete those essential job duties, which we will be discussing today.

Now I'll turn things over to Matt so he can discuss some accommodations that may be helpful.

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## [Accommodation Ideas]

### [Keyboarding]

**MATTHEW MCCORD:**

Thanks, Julie. One of the most common accommodation needs that we hear about regarding fine motor limitations would have to be keyboarding-related tasks, so we'll start there.

First, there is a plethora of different types of keyboards available on the market. Many such options can be found on our vendor listing for alternative keyboards. If the existing keyboard that is being used seems like it's working okay, but few tweaks here and there are needed to make it work well, then something on that listing will likely be what is needed. However, sometimes a more drastic change is needed. For example, if someone needs to avoid using one of their hands entirely, then a miniature keyboard might be a good fit for them. These have the benefit of keeping the same layout that we're used to using from standard QWERTY keyboards while also being smaller so it's easier to use one-handed. If the individual with the disability is willing to learn a whole new keyboard layout though, specifically designed one-handed keyboards might be a more ergonomic option for them if they need to use it long-term.

If the individual with the disability cannot or needs to avoid using both of their hands entirely, then a typing aid alongside keyguards to go over the existing keyboard can be helpful there. Typing aids are small wands that the individual either straps onto their palms or uses their mouth to peck at the keys on the keyboard. The keyguards help to minimize errors that arise from using typing aids, as it makes it harder to press down multiple keys at once.

And, finally, speech recognition software is a great go-to option for all forms of keyboarding needs. Using our voice to dictate has been a thing long before computers and typewriters have existed, and this style of software makes it so the person doing the dictation is just part of the machine itself instead of a separate person.

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Now let's move on to an illustrative example. Here we have an individual with carpal tunnel syndrome who was looking for new keyboard as they needed to avoid specific repetitive movements with their right wrist.

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After gathering information on the specific movements that needed to be avoided by the individual, the JAN consultant was able to recommend a vertical keyboard. This allowed the individual to reduce the triggering repetitive movements by using entirely different movements to operate the commonly used keys on their keyboard.

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### [Mousing]

If keyboarding is likely the most common fine motor accommodation need we hear about, then mousing is a close second place. And just like with keyboards, there are wide array of mousing options out there. Our alternative mice listing is a good place to poke around and see what different styles are out there. Vertical mice, trackball mice, and many other options can be found on that listing.

For more specific options, a common issue that we hear about regarding mousing needs would be a hand or arm tremor making using the mouse difficult. Thankfully, there are options to help with this. Our listing on tremor-limiting mice has options that reduce the impact of tremors that will have on using the mouse, either via specific hardware change in how the mouse is physically used or via software options that tell the computer to ignore movements that are often representative of tremors.

Finally, sometimes traditional mousing options need to be avoided entirely as well. For needs that require this, alternative input devices would be your next step, be that foot-controlled pedal and trackball mice, a head movement-controlled camera mouse, or an eye movement-controlled camera mouse. These all can be viable options to replace a typical hand-controlled mousing device.

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For our next example, we have an individual with fibromyalgia who needed some accommodation options as the current mouse they have at work was causing them extreme pain. The individual mentioned that it was the clicking motion the mouse required that specifically caused their pain and also that this pain did not arise when they would write with an ordinary pen and paper.

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With that information in hand, the JAN consultant was able to offer a pen mouse as option for this person. We have few of these on our alternative mice listing. Essentially they are a joystick that is held just as you would hold a pen with buttons near the grip. Moving the joystick moves the mouse on the screen, and the buttons near the grip area act as your left and right mouse buttons.

Now, I'll turn things back over to Julie so she can discuss some accommodations for handwriting tasks for you.

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### [Writing]

**JULIE DAVIS:**

A lot of individuals with fine motor limitations have difficulty writing, so we're going to go over some accommodations that you may want to consider.

Grip aids could be an accommodation to consider, and this would allow you to build up the grip area of the writing utensil to allow for more comfortable grip.

Weighted writing implements such as pens and pencils help reduce tremors, stabilize and control writing balance weight in the hands, and are oversized, which may help with writing.

Writing aids are products designed to help individuals with limited hand strength perform writing tasks. Writing aids are specifically designed pens, pencils, and other products that aid individuals who find it difficult to write neatly. Items include ergonomic pens and pencils, grips, and wooden or plastic slopes. Writing aids can transfer the fine motor pinch grip usually used to write to gross motor arm movements. A low-tech solution is to push a pencil through a Styrofoam ball and use gross motor movements to write. Individuals with fine motor limitations to the upper extremities or individuals with other impairments, such as arthritis or quadriplegia, benefit from these aids.

Next we have writing guides, which are rigid pieces of plastic with a template cut out in order to assist individuals in tasks such as writing checks or signing important documents.

There are various handwriting and notetaking apps in Google Play and the iTunes app store that you may want to take a look at, and they may be helpful. And some of those apps would be Dragon Anywhere: Dictate Now, Seeing AI. Those are just some examples.

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Let's discuss a handwriting scenario. An employee was expected to take handwritten notes during meetings and was having difficulty keeping up with the task.

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So JAN recommended a voice recorder for taking notes so the employee could listen and type notes later by speech recognition software and/or alternative input devices. This allowed the employee to be able to complete the job duty of taking the notes.

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### [Gripping and Grasping]

Next we're going to talk about some gripping and grasping accommodations. Gripping and grasping can be issues in several jobs for individuals with fine motor limitations. JAN offers several accommodations in our A to Z Limitations page that are job-specific. Today I'm just going to mention some accommodations solutions that could be helpful at most settings.

Anti-tremor gloves are gloves designed to assist with fine motor tasks for individuals who experience tremors while anti-vibration gloves dampen vibrations at a wide range of frequencies. Individuals affected by hand vibrations use anti-vibration gloves with materials that lessen the effect of vibrations for power tools, hammers, and other pneumatic devices.

Individuals with neck, back, shoulder, and upper extremity impairments can benefit from the use of headsets because they often eliminate the need to hold telephone receivers in awkward positions. Various options are available — over-the-head, around-the-ear, and wireless are just a few. Equipment that can be integrated with headsets or telephones, cellular phones, and speech recognition software.

Motorized carts could be of assistance for individuals with shoulder and upper extremity impairments who may have difficulty grasping and carrying things. Individuals with certain limitations may find it difficult to grasp items from hard-to-reach places such as a shelf or the floor.

Reachers can extend to various lengths and can grasp items for those with limited reach or strength.

When gripping and grasping affects the essential job duties of driving, steering grips may be helpful. Steering grips would assist the individual with fine motor limitations in gripping and turning the steering wheels.

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Some fine motor accommodations can be simple as using some items that you may already have on hand. DIY items can be effective and inexpensive accommodations for individuals with gripping and grasping limitations.

Some examples would be you could use air-molding clay as a gripper on a writing utensil that is molded to an individual's specific grip. Using a pool noodle to cover a cane, walker, handle, or a handrail so that an individual with limitations in gripping has a larger area to grasp. Using a sponge to create a larger grip for writing, eating utensils, and/or tools. Using medical bandages to thicken tool grips, cups and jars, steering wheels, et cetera. Using rubber bands stacked on top of one another to form a grip for tools, writing utensils, et cetera.

Listed at the bottom of this slide is an article that is on our website that gives some more DIY options that could be helpful for gripping and grasping.

Next slide, please.

Let's discuss a scenario for gripping and grasping. An employee works as an interviewer for a human resources department and has limitations in taking notes during interviews because of her rheumatoid arthritis. The employee explained her limitations with writing to her employer and then offered an interactive process to determine effective solutions.

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During the interactive process, the employee opted to try molding clay as a gripper on the pen so she can create a mold to match her specific grip. Also the employee requested 10-minute breaks in between interviews to allow a rest period for her hands. The employer agreed and implemented the accommodations. It is important to remember that sometimes employees have the best solutions for their needs. I'm going to turn things back over to Matt now for some more accommodation solutions.

### [Lifting and Carrying]

**MATTHEW McCORD:**

Thanks, Julie. Lifting and carrying limitations are often needs that we hear about for more gross motor conditions, like back issues for example. But primarily fine motor needs can certainly cause lifting and carrying issues as well. Because lifting and carrying limitations are often accommodated with similar accommodations, we thought it would be best to discuss them as one topic here today.

To begin, likely my go-to accommodation option for lifting or carrying limitations would be a compact material handling device. A simple way of thinking of these products is that they are similar to moving dollies, but they have added functionality. One of those added features is that the small platform the box or other items are cradled on by the device can be moved up and down the height of the dolly. Some do this via hydraulic foot pumps, others via electronic motors.

Stair-climbing hand trucks are similar to compact material handling devices except they have more stabilizing features to make using them on stairs much easier without the items falling off.

Various forms of carts are also very helpful for these needs. Standout options here would be good old motorized carts, as they will require far less physical effort to use than your manual options. Spring-loaded carts are often an option that's forgotten about here, but these carts have spring-loaded platforms inside of them that will rise up as weight is removed from the platform. This makes it so that these items will require less bending and less lifting to remove items from the cart.

Finally, ball transfer tables are not just for manufacturing plants. These options make sliding products along a set path much easier. Think of a non-motorized conveyor belt where you push the boxes on platforms of small, smooth balls. This allows for easy transfer of the items along that set path, eliminating the need to lift and carry them back and forth.

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Now that we've reviewed some of the more generalized accommodation options that can be helpful across several industries, let's showcase some more specialized options. Though these may only find use in a few industries, their usefulness within their realm is worthy of mention here today.

First up, let's discuss our listing for hands-free resuscitation devices. These can be very helpful in the healthcare industry, as the need to be able to perform CPR on a patient is a rather ubiquitous requirement for many positions in the healthcare field. These devices, once strapped on to a patient, will perform the CPR chest compressions in place of the healthcare worker, which can be a big barrier for individuals with fine motor limitations from things like wrist or hand injuries.

Moving on to the realm of construction, we have manhole cover lifts and compact mobile cranes. Two products being made for the same general purpose, with one being specific for moving manhole covers and then the other for moving a wider array of items. Manhole cover lifts can do their work with a hydraulic foot pump to lift the manhole cover or electronic motors, depending upon the style that you use. Compact mobile cranes are just like the cranes you're used to seeing that they use to build big skyscrapers in the big city, but they're smaller. They can be used for a variety of tasks ranging from lifting and holding car engines in place so maintenance can be done on that particular car to helping transport construction supplies up several flights of steps.

Finally, for our emergency responders, we have evacuation devices. If an individual with a disability cannot safely escape a building on their own, these devices can be used to help them out of the building. These could be an evacuation chair that an individual will use if they're a wheelchair user and can be transported onto this other chair, since they're designed to be taken down the steps much easier than a typical wheelchair would be, or an evacuation mattress to help pull an unconscious person out of the building or specialized aprons with large pouches for transporting multiple infants out of the building at once.

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For our next example, we have an employer contacting JAN regarding a candidate for a truck driving position. The candidate had limited use of one of their arms, and the employer suspected that using the existing moving dolly may be challenging for them.

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As the employer was mostly concerned about the weight of the existing dolly they had on the truck, the JAN consultant suggested a lightweight model that was made out of aluminum. The specific model suggested weighed about 10 pounds, whereas the existing model that was used on the truck weighed around 30 pounds.

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### [Fatigue]

Fatigue is a common limitation that can arise from multiple different types of medical needs, and just like with lifting and carrying, fine motor conditions are no different.

A good go-to option for reducing fatigue would be providing additional supports. This can mean different things depending upon the job, but a common issue that seems to cause a lot of fatigue in our callers would be remaining in static positions for prolonged periods of time. Additional supports to help with these prolonged postures could involve things like anti-fatigue matting. These are often large foam mats that people stand on to help provide support. Along that same vein, there are wearable varieties of this matting that can be strapped on to their shoes. Those are often helpful for prolonged standing, but you can find smaller anti-fatigue matting options and things like wrist rests or forearm supports as well.

Next I want to highlight stand-lean stools, because I felt like they're emblematic of a key method that fatigue can be accommodated. There are many situations where traditional chairs or stools would be very helpful for people. However, not every workstation is designed to facilitate sitting. Stand-lean stools are products designed for an individual to lean against them while standing instead of sitting on them. These products are a good reminder that our tried-and-true go-to options may not fit every situation, but that doesn't mean that other options are not available that can help.

For fatigue, sometimes the best solution is not a product at all. Adjusting the schedule can be a powerful way to combat fatigue. With this, we can have more rest breaks into the work day or allow the individual to work when the fatigue is less noticeable instead of on a strict specific schedule that might not align with their energy levels.

Working from home or teleworking can be helpful for similar reasons. Commuting to and from work is draining both mentally and physically, so cutting out that commute can be a great help to reduce fatigue for people all on its own, and that's only one way that telework can be helpful for people with fatigue.

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For this example, we have an individual who was working in a battery manufacturing plant who contacted JAN looking for some accommodation ideas to help them manage their fatigue. Their work involved a large amount of fine motor work when assembling the batteries, but their fatigue was preventing them from completing the tasks.

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This individual's fatigue first arose due to two back-to-back exposures to COVID-19. They developed long COVID now, and ever since their stamina has not improved much at all. The individual has been on leave since they were first exposed to COVID the first time, and this was over a year ago. As the individual has been on leave for so long, and their stamina levels has not improved in that time, the JAN consultant suggested that the individual request a reassignment to another position within the company. Manufacturing positions can be particularly physically demanding jobs, and sometimes the most effective accommodation is transferring that individual into a different role entirely.

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### [Ergonomics]

Workstation ergonomics is arguably the thing most of you thought about when you first read the title of this webcast, so we would be remiss to not discuss some options for that specifically too. After all, some options can be very helpful but don't align well with the specific common need like keyboarding or mousing does.

To go along with your alternative keyboarding and mousing accommodation options, you might find it helpful to get an articulated keyboarding tray. This will allow you to adjust the height and angle of where they're stored and used. Small adjustments like that can make a big difference in preventing pain from repeated use over long periods of time.

If your position requires you to do data entry work, for example, using a book holder to keep those documents in place instead of holding them yourself can be very helpful. These can come as stands the documents are fastened into or in more mobile varieties to help hold open a book with one hand, for example.

There are various forms of alternative telephones and telephone handset holders that you can use. For instance, there are phones with larger buttons or displays you can utilize or even hands-free telephone options as well. Accommodating needing to hold the telephone handset can be as simple as adding a shoulder support onto the handset, but there are also stands with articulating necks that can hold the handset in place without needing to hold it yourself at all.

Finally, there are many products out there that are commonly used with our hands that don't really require us to use our hands to use them anymore. Touchless faucets are good example of this and can be very helpful for workers in the healthcare and food service industries.

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For our next example, we have an employee with a pinched nerve in their left shoulder. They reported that the issue arises when they need to hold their phone handset by tilting their neck sideways to press it between their head and their shoulder. They had to do this often, as they needed to answer the phone and utilize the computer simultaneously. They have tried a telephone headset before to combat this, but it did not seem to work well for them, so they were looking for other options. Next slide, please. As the headset option was not helpful, the JAN consultant suggested a telephone handset with a shoulder rest attached. This way the individual can use the phone in the same way that they're used to using it, but the shoulder rest would allow them to not have to flex their neck or shoulder to hold the phone in place. Now I'll turn things back over to Julie again, so she can review some general accommodation options for pain with you all. Next slide, please.

### [Pain]

**JULIE DAVIS:**

Thanks, Matt. Pain can be a common limitation with fine motor impairments, particularly tasks that require repetitive fine motor movements such as grasping, typing, and twisting with the hands.

So some accommodations that you may want to explore to reduce the pain would be a modified break schedule that would allow the individual to take breaks as needed to alleviate the pain. And that could be you could take a 15-minute break and break it down into three 5-minute breaks or a 30-minute break and break it down into three 10-minute breaks. I mean, there's various options that may work for the employee.

A flexible schedule may be needed if the pain is less certain times of the day. Is the pain worse in the morning when they get up? Or does the pain get worse at the end of the day? Just making those schedule changes may be helpful.

A workspace heater or heated gloves or clothing may be needed for cold temperatures that would aggravate the joints and increase the pain that the individual is having.

Telework could also be an option to consider, because it would allow the employee to have more flexibility with their temperature issues and their workstation setup.

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In this example, JAN spoke with an employee with tendonitis who was experiencing pain when completing typing tasks and was seeking accommodations to reduce the pain they were experiencing.

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In this situation, JAN suggested speech recognition software and alternative input devices to reduce the pain and enable the employee to complete essential job functions. This was a win-win for the employer and the employee.

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### [Handling and Fingering]

We've already discussed some accommodations for keyboarding and mousing. Let's discuss some other handling and fingering accommodations that may be helpful. Handling and fingering typically refers to the inability to manipulate items with the hands or the fingers. Accommodations can come in a variety of solutions for specific limitations.

The most common thing that employees have issues with could be just opening a simple door to an office or restroom or just getting in the building. Doorknobs could be — they're difficult to turn. So some of the things you could look at was doorknob grips and handle extenders, because those are low-cost alternatives rather than installing automatic door openers.

For some jobs like corrections, key turning could be problematic for someone with fine motor limitations, so you may want to consider replacing those with smart locks or keyless entries.

Hands-free or foot-pull openers may be an option for doors where the individual would not have to use their hands but their foot or arm.

Automatic door openers for opening doors, many have emergency features and operate on microwave and infrared sensors. Another option may be to have a coworker to assist with opening doors for the employee.

Lastly, we'll talk about forearm supports, and those would provide upper body support, particularly support of the forearms. Forearm supports are products that typically attach to a workstation, and they're adjustable. There are several different types that adjust to a variety of heights and positions. Forearm supports are used to alleviate pressure on a worker's neck, back, arms, and wrists.

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In this example, JAN spoke with an employer who was looking for accommodations for a pharmacist who was having difficulty handling and cutting pills for prescriptions, because they didn't have the hand strength to cut the pills. The employer needed a solution that would be quicker than using an ordinary pill cutter and reduce or eliminate the number of pills the pharmacist was dropping.

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JAN spoke with the employer — sorry. The solution the JAN consultant recommended was a multiple pill splitter with wells. This would enable the pharmacist to place the pills in the cutter without dropping them and to cut several pills at once without slowing down productivity.

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### [Feeling and Sensing]

Individuals with fine motor may have some feeling and sensing limitations. Feeling and sensing could refer to numbness, tingling, and/or weakness in the hands or fingers. Let's discuss some accommodations.

You may want to consider periodic rest breaks that would allow the individual to move about, stretch, adjust their seating position, or modify how a task is completed. Breaks can be short in duration depending on the individual's needs. Time used for breaks can be taken away from already-approved breaks, lunch, or they can make up the time if there's no impact on productivity.

Ergonomic products that are heated are helpful in situations where an individual is sensitive to cold temperatures. These are typically used in an office setting and include heated keyboards, mice, mouse pads, keyboard pads, and wrist rests.

Next you may want to consider modifying job tasks that require finger dexterity. Consider job restructuring by removing the fine motor tasks if they are not essential job functions.

Lastly, you may want to allow the individual to switch between fine motor tasks to other types of tasks. For example, someone who works in a mail room and sorts and delivers mail, you may want to consider letting them switch between sorting and walking to deliver the mail when they experience flareups.

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In this scenario an employee who works in a call center had to do data entry, which was causing lack of feeling and sensing in the fingers. The employee was having difficulty meeting productivity standards.

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As a solution, JAN suggested that the employee request periodic rest breaks when lack of feeling was an issue along with the use of alternative input devices and speech recognition software. This allowed the employee to meet productivity standards and to be able to complete the essential job duties of entering data.

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This concludes the content of our presentation today. I will turn things back over to Tracie for any questions you may have.

## [Q&A]

**TRACIE DeFREITAS:**

Thank you so much, Julie and Matt. Lots of great information there. We do have some questions, but to everyone who is listening today, now is a good time if you would like to know more about fine motor limitations and accommodations. Send those questions in.

Let's take a look at what we have here. Here's one.

So you mentioned extra breaks as an accommodation. If we provide an individual with more breaks, do we have to pay them for that time?

**JULIE DAVIS:**

I can answer this question.

No, you wouldn't have to pay them for the extra time. You only have to pay them for the time they work. So you wouldn't need to pay them if they took breaks beyond what all other employees have as benefit of employment. Does that answer your question?

**TRACIE DeFREITAS:**

Yes, that's it. So essentially, if it's extra time beyond what they would ordinarily receive, then that wouldn't necessarily be paid time, but you might still need to provide some flexibility in terms of allowing additional breaks throughout the day then.

**TRACIE DeFREITAS:**

Okay. Let's see what else here?

Regarding automatic door openers, would we need to outfit every door in our work site with them to accommodate an employee? We're concerned about the cost that would require to be put in place. So if you had to put in other door openers. Any thoughts around that topic?

**MATTHEW MCCORD:**

I can answer this one.

So the ultimate thing that you need to focus on here is that the individual needs to be able to access the required parts of the workplace to do their job functions. So if you're looking at automatic door openers, which doors does the individual need to use to get to things they need to do their job? Like their workstation, does their job require them to use specific equipment outside of their office space? You want to make certain those doors are accessible to them too. But if we're talking about every door, most likely not, because naturally, an office worker probably doesn't need to access the janitorial closet, because they're not a janitor. Things like that would be the way you'd want to review it.

Also keep in mind that there are variety of ways that you can make a worksite accessible other than providing automatic door openers. You know, we can switch out the handles like we talked about today. So that way maybe the person can open the door without using their hands. That might be effective if the individual is able to use those specific options. That might be a cheaper alternative. So you can review alternatives as well instead of defaulting to an automatic door opener for every situation.

**TRACIE DeFREITAS:**

Okay, very helpful. Here's another one. And this is a good question.

If you try an accommodation like an ergonomic keyboard, for example, how long do you wait to see if this worked or not?

**MATTHEW MCCORD:**

That's an interesting one. So that's something where we would encourage you to maintain open lines of communication with the individual. One of the things that we talk about during our sample interactive process is monitoring an accommodation. It's one of the steps that we suggest. So whenever you're monitoring the effectiveness of an accommodation, you can do things like setting up a trial period where you're going to put something into place for a time, see how it's working, and then revisit it after that trial period is over.

You could do something like that here where you have that specific timeframe set up in advance so that way everyone knows when it will be revisited. But you can also just allow open communication, so that way if the individual is noticing a problem, they can come to you and say, "Hey, this is not working great for me, and here's why." And then you can revisit it because of that. So there's multiple ways that you can do it.

Just keep in mind that there isn't a set number of days or weeks that's outlined in the law. It's more of a case-by-case determination, which is why we suggest kind of having ways that the communication can remain open if there's a problem.

**TRACIE DeFREITAS:**

That's a really good point, too, Matt. We often forget that monitoring stage in the accommodation process too. It's not just, "We're going to provide this to somebody and walk away." You oftentimes need to really just take a look, make sure things are working, see that it's effective, and keeping those communication lines open is critically important to making sure you're providing an effective accommodation.

Okay.

Do we have to allow an employee to learn how to use speech recognition on company time?

**MATTHEW MCCORD:**

I can take this one too. So that's something where we would definitely encourage you to do that. Keep in mind that an accommodation like speech recognition software is a tool to enable someone to do work-related tasks. And just like any other work-related task, you would allow that individual training to figure out how to do it; right? So the same sort of logic would apply here. You would want to set aside time so that way the individual could train themselves on how to utilize this new piece of equipment that they need to utilize to do their job. How much time do you need to set aside for that? That's obviously going to vary from person to person. So we can't really give you a specific timeframe, but, again, that trial period idea could be very helpful here. You can see how well the individual is doing with their new accommodation after that trial period and assess if they need more training time or if you think they're good to go and fly free.

**TRACIE DeFREITAS:**

Very good. Let's see here. Some really good questions coming in. A lot of accommodation-type questions here. So here's one.

You mentioned carts that adjust to weight to move items around for accommodations. Could that work for food trays? Think of a school cafeteria-type pan that might weigh up to 30-40 pounds.

**MATTHEW MCCORD:**

Absolutely that can work for that. The specific models that I had in mind whenever I was building the presentation, you'll oftentimes see them in hotels. The housekeeping staff will use them to transport the fresh linens up to the rooms and everything like that. But they can definitely be used to transport other things other than your towels and stuff like that. Trays could definitely work well for that. So, yeah, it can be used for a lot of different things. Those spring-loaded carts, like I said, are often not something that people think about, and they can be very helpful. So yeah, give it a try. See what works for you.

**TRACIE DeFREITAS:**

Okay. Along those lines, I'm going to combine two different types of questions here.

**MATTHEW MCCORD:**

Okay.

**TRACIE DeFREITAS:**

So if an employee indicates they need a piece of equipment, let's say it's ergonomic equipment, a mouse or keyboard, and they're really not sure what's going to work. Maybe they've never tried a piece of equipment like that before. Any suggestions for how to address that type of situation where somebody hasn't worked with a piece of equipment, maybe they want to try it out. You may not just have had any opportunity to ever do that before. Any thoughts around that concept?

**MATTHEW MCCORD:**

Sure. Well the first thing that I would encourage is this might be a good situation to reach out to your state's assistive technology project. The reason why is that they have an entire library of various different kinds of assistive devices that you can go in and try out, loan out to see how it works in a specific environment. And they can oftentimes provide demos for you so that way if you don't know how to use it, they can probably give you the lowdown on how to do that.

If, however, that's not a real good fit for you, this might be a situation where it might be helpful to bring in an ergonomic specialist, like someone who provides an ergonomic assessment, as an option. After all, they specialize in figuring out ways for people to do work in a more ergonomic way, so they would naturally know the best way for you to use a specific device.

Beyond that, again that trial period idea can be very helpful too. If worse comes to worse, we can always just try it out, see how it works. If it's not working out well, then we can revisit it. So those would be the kind of things I would keep in mind. Giving them time is probably going to be the best option, but bringing in help too is never a bad idea.

**TRACIE DeFREITAS:**

Very good. I'm glad you mentioned those AT projects, because a lot of people aren't familiar with them, so we definitely want to mention those as a resource.

**MATTHEW MCCORD:**

They're amazing, yes.

**TRACIE DeFREITAS:**

Ok. Let's see here.

You mentioned commuting issues earlier. We have an employee who has requested to continue teleworking as an accommodation due to difficulty driving to work as result of shoulder, wrist, and back limitations. Is this a request we need to consider?

**MATTHEW MCCORD:**

Yes, that is a request that you would want to consider. Keep in mind, telework has been a hot topic issue ever since COVID happened. It's been something that's on everyone's mind whenever it comes to ADA accommodations. But keep in mind that telework has been an accommodation that employers have had to consider all along. Long before COVID was a thing, I believe it was first introduced in guidance documents from the EEOC as a form of accommodation back in 2002. So it's definitely something that you would need to consider for a variety of needs. And in that situation, it sounds like teleworking makes good sense for that person.

Commutes can be a really big barrier for some people, so if we can cut out that commute and still allow them to work whenever a commute is the problem, that's a win-win. Especially if the job is already compatible with telework, and it wouldn't be that big of a deal to make that change.

**TRACIE DeFREITAS:**

Okay. Yeah. So we haven't really covered this topic.

If an employee is requesting accommodation without documentation, what's an employer's obligation in that type of situation?

**MATTHEW MCCORD:**

I would say the first thing that you want to keep in mind is that, yes, in most situations, employers are allowed to gather medical documentation and stuff like that. But prior to that, you do want to make certain that this need isn't obvious. So what I mean by that is, say, someone who is using a walker is requesting an automatic door opener as accommodation, because they're having trouble opening a door to get into the work site. The reason why they medically need that door opener is likely going to be obvious. Because the walker is in the way. They can't stand up without the walker's help, and they can't reach for the door and open it while holding on to the walker; right? So that would be an obvious request.

If the need is obvious, then you might not even need to gather medical documentation there at all. If you don't, then you shouldn't. But if it's not obvious, it's a hidden disability or the needs just don't really track with what you're seeing, then that makes sense for you to gather some things in that situation. But, of course, you don't want to assume that you need that medical documentation in every situation, because oftentimes you don't.

**TRACIE DeFREITAS:**

That's some really good advice there, Matt.

I'm going to go back to the accommodation side of things now. Let's see.

Do you have any suggestions for someone who has several amputated fingers who's having trouble picking up small items?

**MATTHEW MCCORD:**

That can be a tricky situation. I know we have a listing for accommodations for vacuum pickup tools. Those could be helpful. There's also the potentiality of using DIY options here. One thing that always pops into my head would be using sticky putty. If we're talking about picking up things like pens, pencils, and other things like that, we can just have a little blob of sticky putty on their hands, their fingers, and they can just kind of press that sticky putty down on to that thing and pick it up that way. That could be an effective option there. But, yeah, I believe the vacuum pickup tools would be a good option. That's probably the more fresh-off-the-market, just "buy a solution and be done with it" sort of way. I think the DIY options might be a cheaper option there too.

**TRACIE DeFREITAS:**

Okay. Good practical ideas. I'm really putting you to work with these questions, huh?

**MATTHEW MCCORD:**

That's okay.

**TRACIE DeFREITAS:**

We do have some more. Let's see here.

Do we have to provide accommodations for a typing test for someone with fine motor limitations?

**MATTHEW MCCORD:**

Yes. One way to think about that is like oftentimes our typing tests would be something that's, you know, required for the job, like it would be a qualification standard, if you will, of the position. They have to be able to meet a certain threshold in order to be qualified for the job. So one thing to keep in mind there is that for our qualification standards, you generally do not have to waive them if they're representative of what the work has done, what is required of the worker in the actual job. You might not have to just waive that, but you would need to consider accommodations that might enable them to meet those qualification standards. So if we're talking about a typing test, that can be some of the various forms of accommodations we talked about today. Keyboarding-, mousing-related things that might speed up their ability to do that data entry or whatever it is that would meet the requirements of that typing test.

**TRACIE DeFREITAS:**

Okay. Very good. Let's see here.

So let's say if an employee has a temporary injury causing fine motor limitations, how do you suggest we handle a situation where it's something that doesn't appear to be permanent long-term, but it is affecting the person's ability to do their job. Any practical guidance related to that?

**MATTHEW MCCORD:**

Sure. So one way that I think is best to kind of keep this in your head is that, under the ADA, whenever we're talking about whether or not someone is eligible for accommodations, the duration of the needs are just one of the factors that you want to keep in mind when you're determining eligibility. It really shouldn't be seen as a "They need to have limitations "that last for this long or more in order for them to be eligible." So if this is a short-term need, then the way that I would encourage you to think about that is, "Okay, then it sounds like we just need to provide an accommodation in that short amount of time." You know, a short-term need, so a short-term accommodation. What you can provide is obviously going to depend upon the situation. But short-term needs are just as eligible for accommodations under the ADA as long-term needs. If they meet the definition of disability, then you want to accommodate if it's necessary.

**TRACIE DeFREITAS:**

Okay, yeah. Let's see here.

So do JAN consultants provide links to products when they suggest accommodation solutions?

**MATTHEW MCCORD:**

I certainly do quite often, yes. We have a lot of vendor listings as you've seen today. If you download the slides that we have, all of those things that were on those various slides that were blue, those are all links. So those are all links to vendor listings that we provide. And if we don't happen to have a specific vendor listing for specific thing, we'll usually go hunting for something on Amazon or other websites. So that way you can get a visual idea of what we're talking about. And we'll send you the links to that too. So, yeah, we definitely send out a lot of links.

**TRACIE DeFREITAS:**

Okay. I think we have time for just maybe one or two more.

Let's see here, so what consideration is given to the learning curve in the use of speech recognition software? So new product that's been given to somebody, never used it before, trying to figure out how it's used with their different programs. Do you have that time that it takes to kind of learn it? What are your thoughts around that type of situation?

**MATTHEW MCCORD:**

Well, I mean, like I said before, the amount of time that you want to give someone whenever we're trying to figure out how to utilize that new piece of technology is going to vary from person to person. So, yeah, that's why we want to take things like the learning curve into account for some people, because some people will pick it up like that [snaps fingers], and other people, it will be a struggle. So that's why having that trial period dynamic is probably a good idea here.

You set an amount of time that you think, "Okay, they'll probably be able to do it." Like your typical employee will probably be able to pick it up in this amount of time. So you give them that to start. And then if they need more, you can extend it and extend it. It really just depends upon the person. If you think about someone who has fine motor limitations and also things like a learning disability or some other cognitive impairment, that person is probably going to take longer than someone without that cognitive impairment. And we want to make certain you are accommodating them for that need as well.

**TRACIE DeFREITAS:**

Okay. We really put you to the test with all of those questions. Those are great questions. A broad range of issues, I think.

## [Closing]

I think with that, we will go ahead and close out the webcast with a few final housekeeping items here. So let's see here.

Of course, everyone who joined us today, thank you for attending this "Accommodation Solutions for Fine Motor Limitations." We do hope you enjoyed it.

Matt and Julie, you are a wealth of knowledge. They are good example of our consultant teams who are really familiar with the type of equipment and products that could be available to people. So we encourage you to tap into them for more accommodation information if you need it.

So don't forget to register for the next JAN webcast, "What to Do When Performance and Conduct Factor Into the Accommodation Equation." That will be Thursday, June 8 at 2:00 p.m. Eastern Time. You can go to the JAN training page at AskJAN.org to register.

If you're seeking a Continuing Education Unit for this training today, we do offer 1 credit through HRCI. And of course to receive that credit, you will want to complete the evaluation.

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Lastly, thank you to Alternative Communication Services for providing sign language interpreting and captioning services for this webcast today.

We do hope that the information provided today is useful to everyone. With that, enjoy the rest of your day, everyone. And this concludes today's webcast.