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**Americans with
Disabilities Act**



STAYING INSPIRED AS DISABILITY COMPLIANCE COORDINATORS

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The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) promoted equal access for Americans of all abilities. While the landmark legislation's intent was noble and made the most significant strides to benefit those with disabilities the country had seen, it may be one of the most abused laws in employment. While there is little data to prove the abuse, those who work in disability compliance can attest to the frustration related to supporting employees who may not be as disabled as they claim to be.

Evaluating medical needs and exploring appropriate reasonable accommodations are not easy tasks. Add in that employment litigation involving disabilities ranks as the second most commonly cited claim in charges filed with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)¹ — ahead of those involving race, sex, and age — and it's easy to see why understaffed human resource (HR) groups feel like they are set up for failure in this area.



What can your organization do to combat this growing need and support HR teams? The answer is two-fold: Revamp your process and inspire HR employees. Good processes lead to sound decisions and ensure you perform the same steps for every person. Consider this four-step process:

1. Gather medical and job function data. Clear data makes decision-making easier. Always obtain clear work restrictions and functional limitations and durations when working with employees.
2. Engage, interact, and explore together. Work with all parties involved to research options.
3. Schedule and hold interactive process meetings. Make sure all of the right parties are involved in the discussion and in decision-making.
4. Do what you said you would do. After the meeting, implement and execute decisions.

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The Power of Inspiration

Many of us spend a great deal of time on process. We gather data, move the process forward in a timely way, communicate, and document. While those steps are important, inspiring integrated absence management professionals is paramount for everyone involved.

Inspiration moves people from an emotional state of indifference to one of embracing possibility, and it changes how they think about their abilities. Inspiration provides moments of clarity and awareness, and absence and disability compliance professionals charged with finding a “yes” if it exists perform better work when they are inspired.

For so long — and through the COVID-19 pandemic — professionals have been surviving, and it is time to figure out how to thrive. Start with focusing on yourself. Here are some suggestions:

- Set work boundaries by establishing times you start and finish working each day. Studies show working more hours does not equate to more productivity. The U.S. tops the chart in overtime hours but ranks 11th worldwide in productivity.²
- Get more sleep. Sleeping at least seven hours a night improves health and longevity, and it reduces stress levels.³
- Practice gratitude. It helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve health, deal more successfully with adversity, and build strong relationships.⁴

Next, focus on your workgroup:

- Give voice to discontent and to solutions. This means listening to the team. Try conducting a confidential survey.
- Identify team members who don't appear to be okay and offer solutions (e.g., encourage them to take vacations and help them create their own boundaries to prevent burnout).
- Bring in support like team-building experts or encourage team members to use employee assistance programs.
- Remind the team and yourself why you do this work. The workplace and the world are better places with disabled workers. Equity, diversity, and humanity make the workplace stronger, more creative, and more profitable.

Celebrate the successes you have had removing barriers for disabled applicants and employees so they have equal rights in employment. The work we do is so important. Don't let the difficult pieces outweigh the team's passion and energy, and the meaningful results of their efforts.