Accommodating Students with Anxiety Disorders

Everyone feels tense, “hyper,” or stressed sometimes, but usually the feelings go away once some time passes or the event or situation that caused the anxiety goes away. When a student has an anxiety disorder, she/he may feel very nervous about just getting through the day and are afraid that everything is going to go wrong.

There are at least three different kinds of anxiety disorders:

- **Panic disorders** involve a sudden attack of terror that the person cannot stop, usually with fast heart beats, dizziness, shortness of breath, and very scary feelings.
- **Social phobias** are more of an on-going fear of one or more situations in which a person feels like they are being judged by others.
- **Generalized anxiety disorders** involve worrying all the time about almost everything in life, along with other physical and behavioral problems (e.g., headaches, upset stomach, or trouble sleeping).

Different people have different symptoms, or the same person may have a different set of symptoms at different times of their life or during different activities. Some common anxiety symptoms include:

- Worry too much about everyday things or can’t stop worrying
- Easily scared, not able to relax
- Have a hard time concentrating
- Trouble falling/staying asleep
- Feeling tired all of the time
- Having headaches, muscle aches, stomach aches, unexpected pains
- Sweat a lot, often feeling out of breath or lightheaded

Anxiety can also accompany many other disabilities such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder, learning disabilities, emotional disabilities, and post-traumatic stress disorder.
Accommodating Anxiety (cont’d)

Functional Limitations and Accommodations

Some of the more common functional limitations of anxiety disorders include:

- Difficulty concentrating/inattention, difficulty making decisions, difficulty learning
- Irritability and low frustration tolerance
- Behavioral outbursts and/or panic attacks
- Avoidance

Potential Job Corps accommodations that support students with anxiety disorders in a variety of center settings include:

- Providing structure, predictability, and a calm work/learning environment
- Allowing student to take “stress breaks”
- Breaking down assignments or projects into shorter increments/sections
- Providing extended time on assignments and/or tests
- Providing positive behavior supports

Developing Comprehensive Accommodation Plans

When the Reasonable Accommodation Committee (RAC) meets, it should consider accommodations for all functional limitations and how those functional limitations will affect accommodation needs in all areas of the program. Are your center’s accommodation plans meeting the individual needs of students with disabilities in all areas of the program? Let’s check! Print out your center’s accommodation plan report from CIS3G and review the students’ accommodation plans.

- Do plans contain accommodations other than testing accommodations and academic accommodations?
- Are there any accommodations that promote independence?
- Are there any accommodations for behavior supports?
- Are there any accommodations for assistive technology?

Considerations When Developing a Plan

Applicant Maria has a Chronic Care Management Plan for anxiety. The functional limitations she experiences include panic attacks in large groups and difficulties with concentration.
Developing Comprehensive Accommodation Plans (cont’d)

- What accommodations might be considered for Maria?
- How might Maria’s functional limitations affect her in the classroom, trade, behavior, participating in assemblies or other group activities on center, etc.?
- What accommodations might promote Maria’s independence and employability?
- What assistive technology (AT) might be considered for Maria?

Below is a sample accommodation plan for Maria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Specific Accommodation</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td>04-Time out/breaks</td>
<td>Allow the student a pass to step out of class for 5 minutes to utilize coping skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td>05-Positive behavior supports</td>
<td>Praise and positive feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistive Technology</td>
<td>13-Adaptive equipment</td>
<td>Allow use of a stress ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>04-Modified schedule</td>
<td>Student may be excused from assemblies, assemblies will be taped and watched later or viewed through skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>01-Pass</td>
<td>Staff should provide a pass to the student’s counselor upon request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>02- Preferential seating</td>
<td>Student should sit near door or in a location that will not distract other students if she needs to step out for a timeout/break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABE Testing</td>
<td>01-Extended time-1.5 times</td>
<td>Provide extended time for timed tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Testing</td>
<td>01-Extended time-1.5 times</td>
<td>Provide extended time for timed tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional/Assignments</td>
<td>10-Extended time for assignment completion</td>
<td>Provide copies of notes and study guides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional/Assignments</td>
<td>09-Copies of notes</td>
<td>Provide copies of notes and study guides</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regional Disability Coordinators

- **Boston and Philadelphia:** Kristen Philbrook (kristen.philbrook@humanitas.com)
- **Atlanta and Chicago:** Sharon Hong (sharon.hong@humanitas.com)
- **Dallas:** Laura Kuhn (laura.kuhn@humanitas.com)
- **San Francisco:** Stephanie Karras (stephanie.karras@humanitas.com)
National Disability Employment Awareness Month

October was National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). Some of the NDEAM activities held by Job Corps centers are summarized below.

- **Westover**: The center held a Disability/Healthy Living Fair. Staff and students had the opportunity to interact with disability partners including Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Springfield Technical Community College Disability Services, Stavros Center for Independent Living, the Institute of Abilities, and Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation.

- **Gadsden**: The center had a disability-themed movie night, they showed “What is Eating Gilbert Grape?”

- **Jacobs Creek**: The center participated in the Mountain Home VA Healthcare System Employment Awareness Month celebration held at the VA Hospital in Johnson City, TN. During this joint partner activity, information was provided to raise awareness about disability employment issues, and how Job Corps welcomes the talents of all people, including people with disabilities.

- **Miami**: The center provided opportunities for staff and students to experience what it might be like to have a disability by participating in a basketball game using a wheelchair. After watching a documentary on the team, students had the opportunity to interact with the coach and players.

- **Anaconda**: The center hosted a guest speaker, Rhonda Cochrane, the President of the Montana Association for the Blind. She talked with students and staff about being in the workforce as a person with a disability using a service dog. Participants had the opportunity to meet the “off duty” service dog, Shadow.

- **Boxelder**: The center featured a guest speaker and former Job Corps student, Bob Mills, who spoke about his life as a person with a disability along with the importance of education. Bob dropped out of Job Corps, went into the electrical field (without completing his education), and was electrocuted resulting in the loss of an arm and leg. He discussed the importance of safety and education, as well as how best to approach people that may need extra help due to a disability.

- **Clearfield**: Staff and students coordinated with the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind to present a simulation on what it was like to be both hearing and visually impaired. Each participant wore eye coverings, ear plugs, and ear muffs to cancel out all sight and sound, then completed certain activities with help from a guide. This activity was followed by a question and answer period.

- **David L. Carrasco**: The center sponsored a Health and Disability Fair featuring agencies and vendors from the local community.

- **Kicking Horse**: The center featured a guest speaker, Mike Beers, a comedian with physical disabilities, who spoke about bullying in general, as well as what it is like to be bullied as a person with a disability.

- **Little Rock**: The center featured a guest speaker comedian with Cerebral Palsy who talked about overcoming the obstacles he had to face growing up. Afterwards the students were given an opportunity to “meet and greet” with the speaker and discuss how to stay focused on their goals in life.

- **Atterbury**: The center provided a disability awareness presentation in the dorms. CNA students provided an experiential activity, “Obstacles to Basic Day-to-Day Living Functions,” and had other students try to complete certain daily tasks while in a sling or using crutches.

- **Cleveland**: The center held a Disability Awareness poster contest featuring a different disability each week. Posters were displayed throughout the center.
Dayton: The center’s Student Government Association (SGA) conducted a “Who’s Who Trivia of Celebrities with Disabilities” for each class, and a guest speaker from Goodwill Industries Career and Social Services presented on the important role disability plays in workforce diversity and the challenges individuals with disabilities face in the workplace.

Fred G. Acosta: The center took approximately twenty-five students to the University of Arizona to observe the adaptive rugby team (Wheelchair Cats) practice. Students will also be volunteering for the University of Arizona’s “Wheelchair Clash” Tournament in December.

Treasure Island: The center’s Disability Coordinator hosted a tabling event with a community partner, Bridges. Students with disabilities were provided with important information about securing stable employment, and all interested students were put on a list where Bridges will be contacting them for job training, job placement, and retention.

Pictures From 2016 NDEAM Events
Disability Resources

Job Accommodation Network (JAN) and Anxiety Support

Job Accommodation Network (JAN) has specific resources designed to address anxiety-related disorders. The Accommodation Ideas for Anxiety Disorders page provides effective workplace accommodation practices for a variety of anxiety-related disorders.

Calm Clinic

Calm Clinic, is a web-based resource collection that provides anxiety-related articles, blogs, research, definitions, interventions, accommodations, and more. This resource is published and edited by two individuals who have had success in overcoming the symptoms, fallout, and stigma that come with anxiety-related disorders. The “What to Do” page contains ideas for students with anxiety and instructors that work with them.

Spotlight on AT: Anxiety

AT for people who have mental health disabilities can help them cope with daily challenges such as organizing, remembering key information, or calming themselves. There are app search engines (Tools for Life-App Finder and Bridging Apps) that address all types of disabilities and functional limitations. Below are examples of apps that support functional limitations associated with anxiety.

SAM

SAM was developed by a university team of psychologists, computer scientists, and student users and offers a range of self-help methods for people who are serious about learning to manage their anxiety. Established methods of self-help have been combined with high standards of usability to provide an engaging, flexible, and practical resource.

Relax and Rest Meditations

Slowing down can seem impossible, especially for people who regularly operate under the pressure of anxiety. The Relax and Rest Meditations app has brief meditations — meaning lack of time is no excuse. Whenever a person has a few minutes to spare, she/he can slow down and relax with a five, thirteen, or twenty-four-minute guided meditations.

Upcoming Webinars

- Disability Coordinator Orientation
- ADHD 200

Please check the Event Registration page on the Job Corps Community Web site for dates/times

E-mail your comments or suggestions to:
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