



Inside the OUTcomes: A Rehabilitation Research Podcast

Episode 7: The Great Lakes ADA Center

On this episode of Inside the outcomes, we'll talk with Robin Jones. Robin is director of the Great Lakes ADA Center. I'd like to now welcome Robin Jones to the podcast.

Thank you glad to be here.

We're gonna get started with just a basic question, what is the Great Lakes ADA Center? And what kind of services does it provide?

So the ADA, Great Lakes ADA Center is one of 10. We're part of what is called the ADA National Network. We were established back in 1991, right after the passage of the ADA, with the goal of providing technical assistance, training, and information to entities that are both covered by the ADA as far as their responsibilities to comply, as well as individuals who have rights under the law, helping them understand what those rights are, and what resources are available to them.

So we do that in a variety of different ways. Probably the main way that people contact or connect with us is through our 800 number. So we have a phone number 800-949-4232, which people can call at any time Monday through Friday 8:30am to five o'clock pm Central Time, and ask us any question that they want. We get questions about, you know, how does the ADA apply to me? Very specific questions from an employer. Let's say they have an employee who is been out, maybe due to an injury and is coming back into the workplace. And the employer wants to know, what are my responsibilities, or they have a specific request because an employee has asked them for an accommodation, and the employer is not quite sure if it is reasonable or not. And they want to talk it th



So do you help individual people who have questions about accommodations and disclosure, call you up and ask you to walk them through what might occur, and how they should do it? And what the law says?

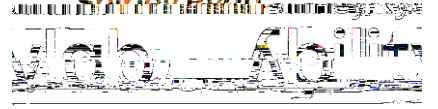
Yeah, well, we get oftentimes it's the person doesn't even know whether or not exactly they're covered. Right. So you know, it starts there, it starts like, you know, I have x is this a disability under the ADA? That is often where the conversation starts. They may have heard or heard or read something, but they're not quite sure. And because the ADA does not have a list of diagnoses itself. We know that the EEOC Department of Justice, Health and Human Services have put out statements related to recognizing long COVID as a disability under the ADA. But it still has to go through that same analysis. Yes, long COVID as a diagnosis may be a covered issue under the ADA, but each individual represents different limitations. And so it still is that individualized assessment as to whether that person who is experiencing long COVID meets that definition of disability under the ADA and then that next step is are they in trouble for reasonable accommodation because it's always sticky.

And it's it gets confusing for people to understand, they may be covered under the ADEA for nondiscrimination based on having a disability, but not everybody that has a disability always needs an accommodation to do their job. So, you know, you have to go through that analysis. Yes, I'm covered. And then second being, you know, what is the limitation? And how does that relate to my job duties and tasks, and what potential accommodations might I need? In order to do those tasks, we have to go through that analysis with people and help them go through that process, and then talk through what is their job and job duties. It's amazing how many people have not really sat down and thought about their job and their job duties, they just kind of do it, they have never broken it down. And so we help them do that. And then look at what might be the alternative ways that might be they might be able to do those job tasks or job duties? Or does it come down to the fact that they may not be able to do those specific job duties or dot job tasks anymore? And what does that mean?

So you know, what is reassignment as an example of a type of reasonable accommodation mean for them, or what kind of leave might be needed? Maybe they haven't worked long enough for FMLA. But leave is a form of accommodation under the ADA as well, aside from FMLA, leave a very different type of leave, but they may not understand and know that. And so we talk through and help them understand those things. Also, for many people, if their disability is new, they've never used their employer's process. And so they often aren't even aware of the fact that the employer may even have a process. And you know, who do I talk to? Do I talk to HR? Do I tell this to my supervisor? You know, what, if I'm in a union, do I go to the union, so helping them figure out that process as well.

So it sounds like you might work with a single person for several weeks to bring them through the process, even

Shirley Ryan





now become part of our day-to-day lives and our everyday business without necessarily looking and taking into



anniversary this year and is going to be moving forward into next year. Is this solidifying codifying the right to live in