

We can help

The National MS Society offers information, educational publications and videos, local referrals, and more. For more information on MS and the Society's services, please contact us at 1-800-344-4867 or visit nationalMSSociety.org.

Additional resources for employers

- Job Accommodation Network (JAN), AskJAN.org, 1-800-526-7234 (voice), 1-877-781-9403 (TTY), jan@askjan.org
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network (EARN) on Disability Inclusion, AskEARN.org, askearn@cornell.edu
- U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), dol.gov/odep, 1-866-633-7365

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society is proud to be a source of information on multiple sclerosis related topics. The information provided is based on professional advice, published experience, and expert opinion, but does not constitute medical or legal advice. For specific medical advice, consult a qualified physician. For specific legal advice, consult a qualified attorney.

The National MS Society's mission is for people affected by MS to live their best lives as we stop MS in its tracks, restore what has been lost and end MS forever. To fulfill this mission, the Society funds cutting-edge research, drives change through advocacy, facilitates professional education, collaborates with MS organizations around the world, and provides programs and services designed to help people with MS and their families move their lives forward.



**National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society**

nationalMSSociety.org

1-800-344-4867

Information for Employers



**National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society**

**KAREN
DIAGNOSED IN 2007**



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DIAGNOSED IN 2011

One of your employees has multiple sclerosis (MS). You may be wondering what this means to you and your staff.

MS is an unpredictable neurological disease that interrupts the flow of information within the brain, and between the brain and the rest of the body.

- MS is most often diagnosed in adults 20–50 years of age—prime working years
- It is not contagious
- The symptoms of MS are unpredictable and vary from person to person
- Most people are able to manage their symptoms and remain productive

Managing MS symptoms

Symptoms can range from numbness and tingling to vision loss and paralysis. The severity and progression of MS symptoms for any one person cannot be predicted. Symptoms are often present for a period of time (relapse) and then go away (remission). There are many effective ways to manage symptoms, from medications to lifestyle modifications and rehabilitation.

Many strategies can help control MS

With the use of FDA-approved disease-modifying therapies for MS, and evidence-based wellness and lifestyle changes, the outlook for continued long-term productivity and quality of life for people with MS is greatly improved.

Workplace accommodations

Oftentimes, accommodations for MS are free or inexpensive. Rarely are they complex. As the “expert” on living with MS, your employee will research accommodation strategies to propose for your consideration. For example, you might be asked to provide a phone headset, schedule brief rest periods, offer a modified work schedule or install an electronic door opener. Requesting accommodations is supposed to be an interactive process between the employee and employer. Accommodations are negotiated on a case-by-case basis and may not impose an undue hardship on the employer.



RAY (RIGHT)
DIAGNOSED IN 2003

An agreed upon accommodation will enable you to benefit from the productivity of a valued employee.

- Because symptoms typically come and go, people with MS may not always use their accommodations.
- The types of accommodations needed may change over time.
- No two people with MS will necessarily need the same accommodations.
- Some people with MS will never need an accommodation.

Opportunities for training and promotion should be considered as they would have been prior to learning of your employee’s MS diagnosis.

Managing attitudes

Co-workers or supervisors may be fearful, overly helpful, or resentful of accommodations for a person’s MS. Sometimes, if symptoms are invisible or have remitted, others don’t believe the person has a real medical problem. MS-related fatigue is an example of this and oftentimes is misunderstood. MS fatigue is unique. People might think they know what it is like to be tired, but for a person with MS, that can’t be overcome just by “trying harder.” However, this symptom can be managed with accommodations such as a brief rest period or alternative/flexible work schedule.