



Workplace Accommodations That Help YOPD Employees: Practical Supports That Protect Health, Performance & Independence

Young Onset Parkinson's (YOPD) often appears in the middle of a person's working life—during years of peak productivity, leadership, and career growth. Many individuals with YOPD want to continue working as long as they are able—for financial security, identity, purpose, and connection.

“Workplace accommodations are not special treatment. They are tools that allow capable professionals to continue contributing safely and effectively.”

Why Accommodations Matter in Young Onset Parkinson's

Parkinson's symptoms can fluctuate throughout the workday and over time.

Common work-related challenges include:

- Medication “on/off” cycles during the day
- Fatigue that worsens as the day progresses
- Slowed movement and fine-motor difficulty
- Speech or voice changes
- Tremor affecting typing or meetings
- Cognitive fatigue under stress
- Fear of misjudgment or misunderstanding

Without accommodations, these challenges can lead to burnout, safety risks, and premature job loss. **With accommodations, capacity is preserved and dignity is protected.**

Your Legal Protection to Request Accommodations

Employees with YOPD are protected by law.

Key protections include:

- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**
- **Wisconsin Fair Employment Act (WFEA)**
- Right to confidentiality
- Right to request *reasonable* accommodations
- Protection from retaliation

You are not required to disclose details of your diagnosis—only functional needs related to your job.

Common Workplace Accommodations That Help YOPD Employees

1. Schedule & Time-Based Accommodations

- Flexible start and end times
- Shifts aligned with medication “on” periods
- Additional short rest breaks
- Part-time schedules
- Compressed workweeks
- Remote or hybrid work options
- Protected time for medical appointments

Aligning work with energy and medication timing can dramatically improve reliability and safety.

2. Physical Environment & Ergonomic Supports

- Adjustable sit-to-stand desks
- Ergonomic chairs
- Voice-to-text software

- Adaptive keyboards and mice
- Anti-fatigue floor mats
- Proximity parking
- Temperature control

Small physical adjustments can reduce strain, conserve energy, and improve endurance.

3. Task & Workload Modifications

- Reassign non-essential manual tasks
- Break large projects into smaller steps
- Adjust speed-based performance measures
- Allow extra time for written work
- Limit multitasking for cognitively demanding tasks

Task design matters. Modifying *how* work is done can preserve quality without sacrificing productivity.

4. Communication & Cognitive Supports

- Written instructions or summaries
- Agendas provided before meetings
- Meeting notes or recordings
- Extra time to respond during discussions
- Noise-reducing headphones

Reducing cognitive load helps protect focus and accuracy—especially under stress.

5. Safety-Centered Accommodations

- Modified lifting requirements
- Adaptive safety equipment

- Temporary reassignment during “off” periods

Safety accommodations protect both the employee and the workplace.

How to Request Workplace Accommodations

A thoughtful approach improves outcomes.

Helpful steps include:

- Identify work barriers and symptom timing
- Obtain a concise *functional limitations* letter from your provider
- Initiate the request through Human Resources
- Focus on function rather than diagnosis
- Re-evaluate accommodations as symptoms change

“Accommodation is not resignation. It is adaptation.”

Common Fears About Asking for Accommodations

Many employees worry about:

- Being seen as unable to work
- Being treated differently
- Asking for “too much”
- Accommodations signaling disability is near

These fears are common—but accommodations often **extend** careers rather than shorten them.

When Accommodations May No Longer Be Enough

There may come a time when additional support is needed.

Signs include:

- Ongoing safety risks

- Unmanageable fatigue
- Cognitive symptoms interfering with performance
- Work stress consistently worsening symptoms

Needing disability is not failure—it is protection.

A Message to Employers & Supervisors

Employees with YOPD are often highly skilled, experienced, and motivated. Proactive accommodations protect productivity, morale, and workplace safety.

A Message to Employees With YOPD

“You are not asking for special treatment.

You are advocating for your health, longevity at work, and your family’s stability.”

A Final Thought

With the right accommodations, meaningful work often continues for many years after diagnosis.

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