



TenStep Supplemental Paper

15 January 2004

Accommodating the Disabled

Most organizations are reluctant to hire people with disabilities for the simple reason that they think they will not be able to discipline them when necessary. The paradox with the legal system is that on one hand, they cannot be discriminated against and should be treated like every other employee, while on the other hand they simply are not like everyone else.

According to Alexander Hamilton Institute Inc., which publishes personnel guides for managers, organizations can break down the decision process regarding the recruitment of disabled employees into five general areas:

Accommodations. Employers must take care to meet the legal requirements of making reasonable allowances for either hiring or firing a qualified disabled employee. The accommodations often include modifying work schedules, installing new equipment and adjusting personal-leave policies. However, lowering standards, creating a new job or doing anything that would cause undue hardship to the company are not included.

Alternatives. A good business practice before firing a disabled employee would be considering whether the employee could do well in another position in the company.

Performance. Job descriptions should be clearly stated right from the beginning to avoid any dispute between the expectations and the performance. Performance evaluations should be regularly documented. Jobs should be evaluated from time to time to determine whether the essential element of the job is being performed.

Policy. Organizations should have uniform personnel policies for all employees, including disabled employees, and they should be followed strictly.

The Basics. When it comes to firing decisions, organizations should have as much information as possible to make fair and honest decisions. Informing the disabled employee about the termination decision must be done firmly but with care.

Organizations should remember that a disabled employee is subject to the same rewards and punishments as any other employee.