



Spring 2026

Prince William County Human Rights Office Newsletter

# FOCUS

## ON HUMAN RIGHTS

### Workplace Insights: Understanding ADA Accommodations

Creating an inclusive workplace means understanding our rights and responsibilities under the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**. Here is a quick guide to how accommodations, privacy, and fairness work.

#### 1. Reasonable Accommodations & The Interactive Process

An accommodation is a workplace adjustment that enables an employee with a disability (including conditions associated with pregnancy) to enjoy equal opportunities.

- **The Interactive Process:** This is an informal, collaborative conversation—usually initiated by the employee—to find a workable solution.
- **When can requests be denied?** Only if the accommodation eliminates an *essential function* of the job or causes *undue hardship* (significant difficulty or expense).

#### 2. Strict Medical Confidentiality

Privacy is protected by law at every stage of employment. All medical information must be kept **confidential and separate** from standard personnel files, with strictly limited access.

| Stage              | What is Allowed / Required                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Job Applicants     | Employers cannot ask about the existence, nature, or severity of a disability. They can ask if an applicant is able to perform specific job functions. |
| Conditioned Offers | A job offer can depend on a medical exam, but only if every single person entering a similar role is required to take the exact same exam.             |
| Current Employees  | Any required medical examinations must be strictly job-related and consistent with business necessity.                                                 |

#### 3. Protection Against Retaliation

Everyone has the right to speak up and request support safely. It is unlawful to take adverse action against an employee for engaging in a "protected activity," which includes:

- Requesting a reasonable accommodation.
- Opposing unlawful discrimination or participating in an EEO process.

**Bottom Line:** Retaliation is strictly prohibited across all statutes.

*Have questions or need to request an adjustment? Contact HR today for confidential guidance.*

If you feel you have been discriminated against you may contact [Prince William Human Rights](#) or [EEOC](#).

### In the News

#### Federal Government-

- [Medical Treatments for Mental Illness](#) - The order aims to accelerate research, approval, and access to psychedelic drugs like ibogaine to address serious mental illnesses and reduce suicide rates, especially among veterans.
- [DEI Discrimination by Federal Contractors](#) - The order aims to prohibit racially discriminatory DEI activities in federal contracting to promote merit-based, efficient, and cost-effective practices.

**State Government-** Gov. Abigail Spanberger signed, vetoed, or amended numerous bills from the [2026 Virginia General Assembly, focusing on issues like gun control, marijuana, labor, immigration, voting, gambling, and energy.](#)

#### Webinar: Empower your Voice: Advocating for your Disability Rights in the Workplace

On June 16th, the Office of Human Rights hosted a session on disability rights in the workplace. Community members gathered to share practical advocacy strategies, effective communication techniques, and insights into addressing discrimination for employees with disabilities and chronic illnesses.

#### Self-Advocacy with a Chronic Illness

Living with a chronic illness requires shifting your mindset from merely adapting to challenges to actively empowering yourself. True self-advocacy begins with understanding your personal rights and clearly identifying the support, tools, or boundaries you need to maintain your well-being.

**Know Your Rights:** Familiarize yourself with local guidelines and federal protections like the ADA, which ensure you can request "reasonable accommodations" without penalty.

**Focus on Solutions:** Frame your needs around productivity when speaking with supervisors. Instead of focusing on limitations, explain how adjustments (like flexible hours) allow you to deliver your best work.

**Document Everything:** Always follow up verbal agreements with a brief email summary to protect both yourself and your employer.

**Remember:** *Disclosing a health condition is a deeply personal choice. You only need to share what is necessary to secure the functional adjustments you need to succeed.*

#### Introducing Our New Language Access Plan for Greater Inclusion

We've launched a Language Access Plan, offering interpretation, translation services, and multilingual documents to promote accessibility and inclusion.

For more information on Anti-Discrimination laws and ordinances you may visit the **Prince William Human Rights** office at: [Human Rights - PWC Gov](#)

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