

Frequently Asked Questions

Question #1

How Does Affirmative Action Differ From Equal Employment Opportunity?

Equal Employment Opportunity mandates non-discriminatory practices in hiring, firing, and all other aspects of employment, while affirmative action is a detailed, result-oriented set of procedures prepared and approved in accordance with Section 46a-68 of the Connecticut General Statutes. These procedures serve as a blueprint for a strategy to combat discrimination and achieve affirmative action. Also, affirmative action plans are submitted annually to the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities for review and approval.

Question #2

Does DMHAS Have An Affirmative Action Plan?

Yes. Prior to 10/1/07 DMHAS developed plans for each DMHAS facility reporting on their respective affirmative action programs. In early 2009, DMHAS filed its first consolidated plan for the agency, covering all facilities and the central office. The plan reports on hiring, training and promotional activity for the previous year, documents efforts made to include minorities and women at all levels, and sets hiring, promotional and program goals for the upcoming year. The plan is a very detailed, comprehensive report that demonstrates the agency's good faith efforts to hire, promote, and train minorities.

Question # 3

Is Cultural Diversity An Extension Of Affirmative Action?

No. The goal of affirmative action is to create a diverse workforce and provide upward mobility to women and minorities. The goal of cultural diversity is to create a process by which the Department can respond to the needs and differences of all individuals regardless of their race, gender, physical or mental status, sexual orientation, and ethnic or cultural background.

Question # 4

Who Is A Minority?

For affirmative action purposes, minorities have been defined by federal and state laws as Blacks, Hispanics, American Indians, and Asians.

Question # 5

Are Affirmative Action Goals Another Way Of Saying Quotas For Minorities?

Absolutely not. Only the courts can set hiring quotas. This is done only when an employer is found guilty of discrimination. Affirmative Action goals only ask that an employer make a good faith effort.

Question # 6

When All Is Said And Done, Doesn't Affirmative Action Really Mean Preferential Treatment For Women And Members Of Minority Groups?

No. What it means is that an organized effort is being made to ensure that minority

groups and women, along with others, are equitably represented in the workforce. Because of a history of under-representation, we are taking positive steps to carefully consider all qualified candidates for jobs with particular attention to placing qualified women and minority members in slots where they are typically under-represented. In practice, affirmative action should help anyone who has been subjected to discrimination.

Question # 7

What Is The American Disabilities Act?

A federal law that was enacted to provide far-reaching coverage and requirements to accommodate qualified disabled workers.

Question # 8

Who Is Covered By The ADA?

The protected group of disabled persons is broad and not easily identifiable. At least 900 disabilities reportedly are covered by the Act. With respect to an individual, the term "disability" means:

- A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of an individual;
- A record of such impairment; or
- Being regarded as having such an impairment.

Question # 9

Just What Is Sexual Harassment?

The Connecticut General Statutes, Sec. 46a-60(8), defines sexual harassment as: It shall be unfair employment practice for an employer, by himself or his agent to harass any employee, person seeking employment or member on the basis of sex. "Sexual Harassment" shall, for the purposes of this section, be defined as any unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors or any conduct of a sexual nature when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment. State law also requires that training and education be provided to all new supervisory employees within six (6) months of their assumption of a supervisory position.

Question # 10

What Can I Do If I Feel I've Been Discriminated Against On My Job?

Your first step should be to bring your complaint to the attention of your supervisor. The Equal Employment Opportunity Specialists are available to assist you with any concern that you may have concerning discrimination, career counseling, reasonable accommodation or other affirmative action issue.

Question # 11

Can I File a Complaint With Another Agency?

Yes, employees are also advised of their legal options to file complaints with the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities; and any other agencies - state, federal or local - that enforce laws concerning discrimination in employment.