

Office of the Statewide
EEO Coordinator
EEO Connection Newsletter

Issue 2
April 2025 – June 2025

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Statewide EEO Coordinator's Message

Welcome to the latest edition of the EEO Connection newsletter. I hope you're having a great start to Spring!

During the last several weeks, many changes have taken effect in the EEO industry, which has caused many professionals to express concerns about uncertainty. Nevertheless, I've learned that when faced with uncertainty, a valuable approach is to focus on what you know and can control. As a reminder, the State of Maryland's Equal Employment Opportunity Program's purpose is to ensure a merit-based system that provides equal employment opportunities based on merit and fitness. The OSEEOC remains mission-focused and committed to doing the work to administer and enforce State equal employment opportunity laws and policies, promote a work environment free of unlawful discrimination, harassment, and retaliation, and assist in building a well-diversified workforce for Maryland State government employees and applicants.

That said, turn to page 4 and read about the Maryland Department of Disabilities Statewide IT Accessibility Initiative. On pages 6-9, read about noteworthy rulings from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. On pages 13-14, read about the upcoming training opportunities. That's not all: turn the page to read more.

Nicole Webb, MBA, SHRM-CP
Statewide EEO Coordinator

Office of the Statewide EEO Coordinator

Mission

- Administer and enforce state equal employment opportunity laws and policies.
- Promote a work environment free of any unlawful discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.
- Assist in building a well-diversified workforce for Maryland State Government employees and job applicants.

Ask the OSEEOC Team

Q: When employees make verbal inquiries regarding filing an EEO Complaint, what should be the next steps for the EEO professionals?

OSEEOC Answer:

The agency's Fair Practices Officer or EEO Officer should educate the employee on their EEO rights within the Maryland State government and their ability to file a complaint with the two external regulatory agencies (i.e., Maryland Commission on Civil Rights and U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission). It's also a best practice to follow up with the employee in writing with the information shared verbally. For the employee's convenience, provide specific names, email addresses, telephone numbers, and appropriate website information.

Q: How often does the OSEEOC offer training for Fair Practices Officers, EEO Officers and ADA Coordinators?

OSEEOC Answer:

The OSEEOC offers quarterly training for EEO professionals state-wide. Training dates are included in the latest edition of the EEO Connection newsletter on the OSEEOC webpage.

Q: When my EEO unit is short-staffed, can a member of the OSEEOC team assist with completing the designated job duties?

OSEEOC Answer:

The agency's Fair Practices Officer should consult with the agency's leadership to identify appropriate staffing to fulfill the EEO unit's job duties and overall responsibilities. The OSEEOC team may provide consultations and guidance as needed.

EEO Spotlight

Maryland Department of Disabilities Statewide IT Accessibility Initiative

The Maryland Department of Disabilities' Statewide IT Accessibility Initiative is pleased to share a new resource with you: On-Demand Accessibility Training available in Workday Learning! These modules are intended to introduce state employees to digital accessibility and its importance in Maryland.

Currently there are four modules available. The first is provided by Microsoft and offers an overview of accessibility practices in the industry and in their products. The second is our in-house module explaining what digital accessibility means and its impact. The third module is an explanation of the laws and standards governing digital accessibility in the State of Maryland. The last option is the first micro-lesson: Accessible Word Documents. It requires completion of the Foundations and Laws & Standards modules. Each module is intended to be easy to digest and fit into your busy schedule. They also include an optional survey that asks a few questions about what further training you would find helpful. Please fill it out when you complete each module.

1. [Microsoft Digital Accessibility Training](#)
2. [Foundations of Digital Accessibility](#)
3. [Accessibility Laws and Standards in Maryland](#)
4. [Accessible Word Documents](#)

If you have any questions, please contact the Statewide IT Accessibility Initiative at mdod.nva@maryland.gov. We'll be expanding the catalog of modules over the coming months to include micro-lessons on accessibility in standard office programs such as Word and PowerPoint. Thank you and we hope this resource helps explain why digital accessibility is important to implement in government.

EEO Spotlight

Understanding Ergonomic Assessments

An ergonomic assessment is a tool used in the workplace to determine risk factors that could potentially lead to musculoskeletal disorders or injury. When conducting an ergonomic assessment proactively, it provides an opportunity for HR to take steps to help reduce injury and increase comfort for an employee in their workplace. This also tends to contribute to increased productivity amongst the workforce.

Through IWIF/SERMA the State Employee Risk Management Administration, state of Maryland agencies have access to no-cost ergonomic resources to support employee comfort, productivity, and MSD injury risk reduction. These resources include an Office Workspace Ergonomics webinar based training and a “Tips for setting up your office workspace” poster. For individuals seeking ADA accommodations, or other non-work related medical based requests, individual ergonomic assessments can be conducted by IWIF/SERMA’s Certified Ergonomic Assessment Specialist. Individual ergonomic assessments are virtual or in-person assessments of an individual’s workstation to determine improvements in postures and processes in completing job tasks, best set up in workstation and equipment, and/or need for specific equipment.

To participate in IWIF’s upcoming Office Workspace Ergonomics webinar through Microsoft Teams on January 23, 2025, here is the link to register:

<https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/f57446dc-6ffc-4509-b6e9-7c8f1e5c6cb3@0b4ebf25-eafb-4a1b-8375-f2665c65aa29>

To learn more about upcoming events, please contact **Brittany Keller-Hokuf**, Senior Risk Management Consultant, IWIF/SERMA at bkeller@ceiwc.com.

Noteworthy Ruling

Walmart to Pay \$415,112 in EEOC Sexual Harassment and Retaliation Suit

Wal-Mart Stores East, LP (Walmart) will pay \$415,112 to settle a sexual harassment and retaliation lawsuit brought by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

According to the EEOC's lawsuit, the former manager of a Walmart Supercenter in Lewisburg, West Virginia subjected female employees to egregious sexual harassment, including unwelcome and offensive sexual touching; requests for sexual acts in exchange for money or favorable treatment at work; requests that female workers expose their breasts; and making crude sexual innuendos.

The EEOC charged that Walmart received multiple complaints about the store manager's conduct and failed to take appropriate action to stop the harassment. After the store manager subjected a female employee to particularly egregious harassment, she reported the harassment to Walmart. The company then fired her in retaliation for her actions opposing the harassment and because she filed a charge of discrimination, the EEOC said.

Such alleged conduct violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits harassment and discrimination because of sex. Title VII also prohibits employers from firing employees in retaliation for opposing harassment or discrimination or for participating in the EEOC complaint and investigative process. The EEOC filed suit (U.S. EEOC, et al. v. Wal-Mart Stores East, LP, et al., Civil Action No. 5:23-cv-00623) in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through the conciliation process.

Click here to read more: <https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/walmart-pay-415112-eeoc-sexual-harassment-and-retaliation-suit>

Noteworthy Ruling

CPG Staffing and Executive Personnel Group Pay \$60,000 to Settle EEOC Disability Discrimination Lawsuit

ATLANTA – C.W. Inc. (doing business as CPG Staffing) and Executive Personnel Group, LLC, sister staffing companies that assign employees to construction industry clients, agreed to pay \$60,000 and furnish other relief to settle a U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) disability discrimination lawsuit.

The EEOC suit alleged that CPG Staffing and Executive Personnel rescinded a welding applicant's job offer after learning from a post-offer medical questionnaire that he had injured his knee on a job two years earlier. Before disclosing the prior injury, from which he had completely recovered, the applicant successfully passed a welding test. The welding test involved climbing ladders and crouching and crawling on beams. The applicant indicated he could perform the essential duties of the welder job, did not require a reasonable accommodation, and provided a letter from his physician clearing him to work. Yet, Executive Personnel's risk manager instructed CPG Staffing not to hire the applicant because of his prior injury. CPG Staffing, in turn, rescinded the applicant's job offer.

Such alleged conduct violated the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which prohibits disability discrimination. The EEOC filed suit (EEOC v. C.W., Inc. and Executive Personnel Group, LLC), Case No. 2:24-cv-00138-LGW-BWC) in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Georgia, Brunswick Division, after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its administrative conciliation process.

Click here to read more: <https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/cpg-staffing-and-executive-personnel-group-pay-60000-settle-eeoc-disability-discrimination>

Noteworthy Ruling

Washington Unified School District to Pay \$17,000 in EEOC Age Discrimination Charge

FRESNO, Calif. – The Washington Unified School District, located in Fresno, Calif., settled a federal charge of age discrimination filed with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) for \$17,000 and other injunctive relief.

An EEOC charge of discrimination was filed in April 2022, alleging that the employee was denied reasonable accommodation, subjected to different terms and conditions of employment, and finally discharged because of age and disability. The EEOC investigated the allegations and found reasonable cause to believe the Washington Unified School District had violated the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), when it denied equal terms and conditions of employment and discharged a math teacher due to the employee's age, 65.

Without admitting liability, the Washington Unified School District entered into a conciliation agreement with the EEOC. The school district agreed to pay \$17,000 to the impacted individual, provide a neutral letter of reference, and provide training to supervisors and managers on the ADEA and complaint handling. Additionally, the school district will post a notice to all employees about the resolution of this charge and their rights under federal anti-discrimination law. The EEOC will monitor compliance with this agreement.

“Employees should be provided equal opportunity in employment based on merit, not on their age,” said Armando Hernandez, director of the EEOC's Fresno local office. “We commend Washington Unified School District for resolving this charge and putting in place measures that will benefit employees throughout the school district.”

Click here to read more: <https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/washington-unified-school-district-pay-17000-eeoc-age-discrimination-charge>

Noteworthy Ruling

LeoPalace Resort to Pay Over \$1.4 Million in EEOC National Origin Discrimination Lawsuit

GUAM – LeoPalace Guam Corporation, doing business as LeoPalace Resort, a major hotel and resort on the U.S. territory of Guam, will pay \$1,412,500 and provide equitable relief to settle a national origin discrimination lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

According to the EEOC’s lawsuit, from as early as 2015, LeoPalace provided non-Japanese employees—including multiple former employees of American national origin—in Guam with less favorable wages, benefits, and terms and conditions of employment compared to employees from Japan who held equal or lesser positions.

Such alleged conduct violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination in employment because of national origin. The EEOC filed suit in the District Court for the Territory of Guam (Case No.: 1:25-cv-00004) after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its voluntary conciliation process.

In addition to the monetary relief, LeoPalace agreed to comprehensive injunctive relief remedies, including hiring an external equal employment opportunity monitor to oversee compliance, training and review of policies and procedures, as well as overseeing the reinstatement of former employees who are interested in going back to work for LeoPalace. The monitor will also conduct periodic audits and report to the EEOC. The consent decree settling the suit was entered by the Honorable Ramona V. Manglona of the U.S. District Court for the District of Guam on February 18, 2025, and will remain under the court’s jurisdiction for a term of three years.

Click here to read more: <https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/leopalace-resort-pay-over-14-million-eeoc-national-origin-discrimination-lawsuit>

Diversity Corner

What long COVID taught me about life (and data)



Photo credit: Ted.com

In this TED talk, Giorgia Lupi, an Information Designer, shares how she used data that shaped her life following a long COVID diagnosis. Giorgia tracked her symptoms regularly over four years, the data culminating in a visual "New York Times" narrative that resonated with many people suffering from chronic illness. In this video, you will also get a glimpse of how many individuals have been impacted by long COVID and the impact it has had on their lives. Giorgia is coauthor of *Dear Data: Observe, Collect, Draw* and the author of *This Is Me and Only Me*. She was named one of Fast Company's "100 Most Creative People in Business" in 2018 when she joined MIT Media Lab as a Director's Fellow.

Click to view the video:

https://www.ted.com/talks/giorgia_lupi_what_long_covid_taught_me_about_life_and_data?subtitle=en

Diversity Corner

3 ways to create a work culture that brings out the best in employees



Photo credit: Ted.com

In this TedTalk, Chris White, who leads the University of Michigan's Center for Positive Organizations, discusses how organizations can bring out the best in people. CBS, Fast Company, Forbes, Inc., and more have featured Chris' work. Chris is also co-author of "*Changing Your Company from the Inside Out*," which was published by the Harvard Business Review Press.

Click to view the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2y8SA6cLUys>

2025 Diversity Calendar

April 2025

Date	Holiday
April 23	Administrative Professionals Day
April 24	Holocaust Remembrance Day

May 2025

Date	Holiday
May 11	Mother's Day
May 17	Armed Forces Day
May 26	Memorial Day

June 2025

Date	Holiday
June 15	Father's Day
June 19	Juneteenth
June 20	Summer begins

Meetings and Trainings

April 2025

Statewide EEO Program Overview: Virtual Session

Date: April 16, 2025

Time: 10:00 am to 11:30 am

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/RsypxoWjanZrPtz6A>

MD Whistleblower Law Information Session: Virtual Session

Date: April 23, 2025

Time: 10:00 am to 11:30 am

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/NDhGfVEFYWobmoGRS9>

ADA Coordinators Meeting – Virtual Session

Date: April 30, 2025

Time: 10:00 am to 11:30 am

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/WDZ9vb9UJV2Q9aq17>

May 2025

The Fundamentals of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Americans with Disabilities Act Amendment Act, State Disability Laws and Policies, and the Reasonable Accommodations Process – Virtual Session

Date: May 14, 2025

Time: 10:00 am to 12:00 pm

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/WTwRhmrxpQf3KHUn6>

Reasonable Accommodation Requests and the Interactive Process—A Hands on Approach: In Person Session

Date: May 28, 2025

Time: 10:00 am to 12:30 pm

Location: TBA

Click her to register: <https://forms.gle/gm5RpjEJdq8qgPgt6>

Meetings and Trainings

June 2025

Sexual Harassment Prevention Training Train-the-Trainer - Virtual Session

Presented by: Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR)

Date: June 4, 2025, and June 5, 2025

Time: 9:00 am - 3:00 pm each day

Register here: <https://forms.gle/KJWKfALCJTzJQ7rj8>

Annual Statewide EEO Report: What you need to know! - Virtual Session

Date: June 11, 2025

Time: 10:00 am – 11:30 am

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/imHZscYf31T7cYiy7>

Statewide EEO Group Meeting - In person

Date: June 27, 2025

Time: 10:00 am – 12:30 pm

Location: TBD

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/xkZpRrmUVc6sSbJF7>

Annual Statewide EEO Report: What you need to know! - Virtual Session

REPEAT SESSION

Date: June 30, 2025

Time: 10:00 am – 11:30 am

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/fPyoA7gLghNfhD6g6>

Resources for EEO Professionals

Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)

dors.maryland.gov

US Department of Labor

www.dol.gov

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

www.dbm.maryland.gov/employees/Pages/EAP.aspx

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

www.eeoc.gov

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

askjan.org

Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR)

mccr.maryland.gov

Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)

www.shrm.org

Maryland Department of Disabilities

mdod.maryland.gov

Out & Equal Workplace Advocates

outandequal.org

Chimes

chimes.org

Maryland LGBT Chamber of Commerce

mdlgbt.org

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