



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
Department Of Human Resource Management

EMILY S. ELLIOTT
DIRECTOR

James Monroe Building
101 N. 14th Street, 12th Floor
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Tel: (804) 225-2131
(TTY) 711

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The Honorable Ralph S. Northam, Governor of Virginia
The Honorable S. Chris Jones, Chairman, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Emmett W. Hanger, Jr., Co-Chairman, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr., Co-Chairman, Senate Finance Committee

Subject: Progress Report on Employment Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities

Pursuant to Section 2.2-203.2:3 of the Code of Virginia, the attached report provides information on the progress of state agencies to meet the employment goals of the Commonwealth to promote and increase the employment of individuals with disabilities at all levels and occupations by five percent by fiscal year 2023.

Please contact me if there are any questions.

Sincerely,

Emily S. Elliott
Director

Executive Summary

In 2017, the Code of Virginia was amended to establish a goal to increase by five percent, the level of employment of individuals with disabilities over the next five years. This new talent acquisition initiative builds upon the prior accomplishments of workgroups convened under Executive Order 46 (2015) and Executive Directive 8 (2007).

One of the new requirements for all Executive Branch agencies is the establishment of a formal Employment Plan that outlines the organization's individual strategies for helping the Commonwealth achieve its goal.

The Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) designed an Agency Employment Opportunity Plan template to collect required information and enable agencies the flexibility to present successful practices that can drive the future direction of the overall strategy. The first plans were due to DHRM on 12/31/2017.

Ninety-four percent of Executive Branch agencies are in compliance with the mandate. These agencies submitted a Statement of Commitment signed by their Agency Head or College or University President, and an Employment Opportunity Plan outlining their recruitment and retention efforts. Based on current data, Individuals with Disabilities represent approximately 1% of Executive Branch employees. However, many agencies have employees who have not disclosed their disabilities. By fostering a culture of inclusion, agencies will build the necessary trust for employees to provide this data and agencies will be able to see an increased representation.

Approach:

- DHRM designed an Agency Employment Opportunity Plan template (Attached) to collect required information and enable agencies the flexibility to present successful practices that can drive the future direction of the overall strategy. DHRM provided guidance and communications to agencies when drafting their plans.
- Agencies, colleges, and universities designated a senior-level member of their team to serve as the point of contact for increasing the level of employment of individuals with disabilities.
- An inter-agency strategic advisory workgroup was formed to guide the fulfillment of this mandate.
- The Disability coding structure in the Personnel Management Information System (PMIS) for employees who voluntarily disclose their disability status is being used to capture needed data to establish the benchmark and track progress toward employment goals.
- Agencies were asked to examine their internal policies and practices relating to the employment of individuals with disabilities, including a review of recruitment efforts, interview criteria, testing procedures, and resources to accommodate applicants and workers with disabilities in order to identify opportunities for improvement.

- Agency leads initiated internal discussions regarding strategies for expanding and increasing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Findings:

- Recruiting/Talent Managers are leading efforts for most agencies, with 94% of Executive Branch agencies in compliance with the mandate to have a formal plan to increase representation. In many agencies, recruitment and retention efforts for individuals with disabilities are being combined with those for veterans.
- As an unfunded mandate, many agencies are limited in resources for aggressive recruitment.
 - This is especially impacting smaller agencies, which are limited in opportunities to increase employee representation through recruitment.
 - Many agencies are seeking ways to add diversity or accommodation expertise within their organizations. This expertise is critical to support agency specific accommodation and return to work programs and policies.
 - Agencies are heavily dependent on the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) as this resource. However, DARS does not have the bandwidth to absorb consulting responsibilities for all Commonwealth agencies without potentially impacting their direct support of the community.
- Agencies are challenged with metrics. Historically, agencies were advised not to ask about disability information in order to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Amendment Act (ADAAA). Disability information is only captured through self-disclosure or observable data. This further brings into question the reliability of the data that current exists within the state's Personnel Management Information System (PMIS).
- There is a need to shift the Commonwealth's culture from a focus on compliance with the Act to a proactive approach to inclusion. Current employees may not be willing to self-identify in the current environment.

Agency Best Practices:

- Training hiring managers and/or employees on diversity and accommodation process.
- Posting employment opportunities on online disability-affiliated job boards.
- Leveraging DARS and local agencies to assist jobseekers with disabilities.
- Including an invitation to individuals with disabilities to apply as part of the standard equal employment opportunity statements in recruitment materials.
- Indicating through recruitment materials the willingness to provide accommodations during the hiring and interviewing processes.
- Using the Job Accommodations Network as a resource.
- Providing support to current employees through Return to Work programs.

Statewide demographic snapshot:

	12/31/2017	6/30/2018
Number of Employees with Disabilities	321	574
Executive Branch Agency Headcount	63086	63086
Percentage of Employees with Disabilities	0.51%	0.91%

The Work Group:

Executive Order 46 (2015) established a Work Group of both public and private employers to support recruitment and retention efforts for individuals with disabilities. The Work Group met in December 2017, led by DARS Commissioner, Jim Rothrock. DARS provided oversight and strategic direction for the team. However, due to resource constraints, DARS has advised of the need to reconsider their role with the group. Future meetings are pending this decision.

2018 – 2023 Strategies:

- In July 2019 and future years, DHRM will provide reporting on progress and results achieved towards meeting the established employment goals.
- Planning is underway to update the disability reporting procedure to create a more effective approach to capturing this information, as well as, ensuring accurate data in PMIS.
- DHRM will create a webpage in the coming months to provide additional tools and resources to support agencies with their Employment Opportunities Plans.
- DHRM continues to work with DARS and the strategic workgroup to identify strategies, resources and tools in support of this employment objective.
- DHRM will benchmark federal and U.S. best practices to incorporate into the strategy for the Commonwealth.

Plan Template Attachment

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES PLAN – PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

§ 2.2-203.2:3. POLICY OF THE COMMONWEALTH REGARDING THE EMPLOYMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES; RESPONSIBILITIES OF STATE AGENCIES; REPORT:

It shall be the policy of the Commonwealth to promote and increase the employment of individuals with disabilities directly employed at all levels and occupations by state agencies, institutions, boards, and authorities of the Commonwealth.

To assist in achieving this policy, it shall be the goal of the Commonwealth to increase by five percent the level of employment of individuals with disabilities by the state by fiscal year 2023. The Secretary shall coordinate and lead efforts to achieve the goals of the Commonwealth established by this section.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

(Name of Agency, College, or University) is committed to the Commonwealth’s policy and its efforts to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Agency Head Signature

Human Resource Director

Employment Lead, Individuals with Disabilities

ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN

Please attach your organization’s Employment Opportunities Plan for Individuals with Disabilities and submit it to [Natalie Brannon](#) by December 31, 2017. Your baseline plan should, at a minimum, concisely describe the following:

- The steps your organization will take to expand existing efforts for the recruitment, accommodation, retention, and advancement of individuals with disabilities. (Examples: Agency Marketing; Career Fairs; Networking; Education of Hiring Managers; Mentorship Training; Job Accommodation Awareness Training; Partnering with the Division of Rehabilitative Services within the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services.)
- What if any modifications to agency employment policies may be needed to support the Commonwealth’s hiring goal.
- How you will increase efforts to accommodate individuals with disabilities by increasing the retention and return to work of these employees.
- Other action-oriented programs or practices already in place.