



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
Department Of Human Resource Management

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September 1, 2021

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam, Governor of Virginia
The Honorable Luke E. Torian, Chairman, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Janet D. Howell, Senate Finance and Appropriations 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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Emily S. Elliott".

Emily S. Elliott
Director

Enclosures

cc: Secretary Grindly Johnson

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.

One of the requirements for all Executive Branch agencies is the annual submission 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 enables agencies to align practices with overall diversity and workforce planning initiatives.

Sixty-five percent of Executive Branch agencies are in compliance with the mandate, which is a significant reduction from last year when the compliance rate was 85 percent. These agencies submitted a Statement of Commitment signed by their Agency Head or College or University President, and an updated Employment Opportunity Plan outlining their recruitment and retention efforts. DHRM has followed up with the remaining agencies to ensure completion of pending plans.

Agencies have made progress in their recruitment and retention efforts. Representation of Individuals with Disabilities has increased from less than 1% to approximately 3% of Executive Branch employees. This improvement, in part, can be attributed to the implementation of the Voluntary Disability Self-Identification form in May 2020 to improve data collection. However, a continued challenge is that employees are reluctant to voluntarily disclose their disabilities which skews the data available to DHRM. The mandate to establish an Alternative Hiring Process, once implemented, will provide another resource to enable agencies to fully achieve the goal.

Approach:

- The DHRM Agency Employment Opportunity Plan template (Attachment A) was used to collect required information and enable agencies the ability to align practices with overall diversity and workforce planning initiatives. DHRM provided guidance and communications to agencies when drafting their plans.
- DHRM continues to provide tools and resources on its webpage to support agencies with their Employment Opportunities Plans, including links to Virginia Ability, a non-profit organization that educates businesses on workplace disability inclusion, and the Employer Assistance Resource Network (EARN) on Disability Inclusion.
- DHRM partnered with the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) on an awareness campaign for National Disability Employment Awareness Month. This included a communication plan and outreach to Agency Heads of Executive Branch agencies and Agency HR Directors and HR staff. The social media campaign highlighted tools related to disability etiquette, hiring and retaining employees with disabilities, making workplaces accessible and job accommodations.

- DHRM met with advocates of the disability community to identify additional efforts and needs to increase the employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Advocates of the disability community volunteered to complete an assessment of the state's Recruitment Management System (RMS) to determine ease of use and assist in the identification of any system barriers for those with disabilities. The feedback received was relatively positive regarding use of the RMS system and recommendations for improvement were provided to vendor.
- DHRM continues to partner with the Department of Veteran Services (DVS) to focus on initiatives related to individuals who are both veterans and veterans who have disabilities. An action plan was developed and is being implemented. The plan includes video interviewing tools and the establishment of a job training program for this targeted group.
- Agencies were asked to continue 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.
- DHRM incorporated reporting for Individuals with Disabilities in Agency Workforce Plan Reporting tools. Agency Workforce Plans are part of the annual strategic planning process, which outlines succession plans for key personnel, executive positions, and employees nearing retirement. The updated EOP template data was included in the 2021 report.

Findings:

- Recruiting/Talent Managers are leading efforts for most agencies, with 65% of Executive Branch agencies in compliance with the mandate to have a formal plan to increase representation. The rate of compliance is a significant reduction from prior years. In many agencies, recruitment and retention efforts for individuals with disabilities are being combined with those for veterans.
- Without the necessary resources, many agencies are limited in opportunities for aggressive recruitment. This challenge is exacerbated by budget constraints.
 - This is especially impacting smaller agencies, which are limited in opportunities to increase employee representation through recruitment.
 - Agencies are heavily dependent on the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) as the resource for accommodation expertise for their organizations. 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 continue to be challenged with metrics. To strengthen data collection efforts, DHRM implemented the Voluntary Disability Self-Identification form in May 2020, and advised agencies to distribute the form to all current employees and include in agency onboarding. The Self-Identification

form provides an avenue for employees to anonymously share their disability data and will support our ability to measure progress toward the employment goal. (Attachment B)

- Although there has been progress to shift the Commonwealth's culture from a focus on compliance with the Act to a proactive approach to inclusion, work is still needed. DHRM has advised agencies to incorporate their EOP efforts as a component of their One Virginia Plan to provide a more comprehensive focus on inclusion.

Agency Best Practices:

Agencies best practices were focused in three primary areas: Recruiting, Accommodations and Retention.

Recruiting

- Agencies continue to reach out to community organizations such as nonprofit organizations, vocational rehabilitation facilities, employment networks, American Job Centers and Centers for Independent Living to actively recruit people with disabilities.
- Agencies also continue to partner with the Department of Rehabilitative Services and the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) workforce specialists to encourage applications from individuals with disabilities.
- In order to ensure that executive search partners were well versed in the benefits of joining Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), and the University's commitment to diversity and affirmative action, VCU Human Resources established an internal Executive Search Team which has successfully helped run close to 40 searches. This effort included executive search guidelines and toolkits with a focus on increasing the diversity of their applicant pools.
- Many agencies are providing training to their selection committees on diversity hiring, reviewing their job descriptions and updating the recruitment guides to ensure there are no barriers that may exclude individuals with disabilities from applying.
- Currently, the Department of Medical Assistant Services (DMAS) works directly with DBVI through a blind employee who has used DBVI's services to test and evaluate assistive technology provided by DMAS. DBVI is committed to providing services to assist Virginia's citizens who are blind, deafblind or vision impaired in achieving their maximum level of employment. DBVI's primary focus is to assist visually impaired Virginians in achieving quality employment outcomes and a partnership with DBVI will strengthen DMAS's opportunities to promote and increase the employment of individuals with disabilities.
- In partnership with DVS, DHRM is working to cultivate the partnership with the Department of Defense Hire Now Vets Fellowship Program. The program provides targeted opportunities for disabled veterans and will potentially create a recruitment pipeline for positions in the information technology, skilled trades, and public safety specialty areas.
- Language has been updated on job announcements to highlight the Commonwealth's focus on the employment of individuals with disabilities.
- Agencies have been providing all applicants the opportunity to interview virtually vs in-person. This change in the interview process removes a potential obstacle to accessibility in recruitment.

Accommodations

- Agencies use the interactive process, employee input, and research options in order to provide reasonable accommodations to employees. As a consideration, job coaches have been provided for new hires or for current employees when job duties have changed.
- Universities continue to partner with the facilities department regarding doors, walkways, and signage to improve accessibility to campuses.
- Agencies are providing awareness training for supervisors to ensure they are aware of the communication plan, opportunities and accommodation resources to enhance the support of employees.
- Higher Education Institutions continue the collaboration with the Office of Educational Accessibility and the Employees with Disabilities Association resource group to promote the effective use of online tools and resources for employees with identified impairments that may need accommodations.
- Encourage agencies to include the agency accommodation process in New Employee Orientation and provide orientation materials in accessible formats when needed. In addition to orientation, agencies have the accommodation process posted on their agency intranet site.

Retention

- An agency meets with managers and supervisors of current and past employees with disabilities to identify any barriers to retention and develop strategies to remove those barriers.
- DHRM advised agencies to consult with the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) for accommodation recommendations.
- Agencies improve to return to work opportunities following medically related absences through use of flexible scheduling and other accommodations.
- Develop and implement a succession development program, with a focus on mission-critical positions where continuity of operations and tenure of staff is important.

Statewide demographic snapshot:

	12/31/2017	6/30/2018	6/30/2019	6/30/2020	6/30/2021
Number of Employees with Disabilities	321	574	379	366	1260
Executive Branch Agency Headcount	63086	63086	58681	58313	44269***
Percentage of Employees with Disabilities (Self-Reported)	0.51%	0.91%*	0.61%**	0.63%	2.84%

* Increase resulting from better reporting from agencies

**Results impacted by retirements and transition of classified employees to university staff.

***Headcount of reporting agencies

2021 – 2023 Strategies:

- Establish a full time position, in partnership with DARS, to focus solely on the employment of individuals with disabilities by state agencies. The position will assist with the design of the alternative hiring process, provide training and technical assistance to agency HR, identify jobs in state agencies for recruitment to people with disabilities, and collaborate with counselors in DARS Vocational Rehabilitation offices to identify qualified applicants for state jobs.
- Develop and implement comprehensive strategy, including alternative hiring process, communication, education and awareness, compliance, and retention of individual with disabilities.
- Continue to work with the disability community and small representative work groups to expand our disability network and solicit recommendations for actionable items that will further promote and result in the hiring of individuals with disabilities.
- In September 2021 and future years, DHRM will provide reporting on progress and results achieved towards meeting the established employment goals.
- The self-service capability in the Cardinal Human Capital Management System will allow employees to more accurately reflect their status. As the Cardinal system implementation moves forward to be released to all agencies in April 2022, this resource will allow us to leverage reporting tools and capabilities such as employee self-service disability data and classified statewide reporting that meet the Commonwealth requirements.
- Encourage Agency HR staff involved in recruitment and selection processes to complete the Employing Abilities@Work Certification and Veterans at Work Certification offered through the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), the largest human resource association in the profession.
 - The Employing Abilities@Work certification is an introduction to the benefits and implementation of disability and inclusion in the workplace. The program highlights four key areas: Best Practices in Recruitment and Hiring, Building a Culture that Supports Disclosure and Self-Identification, Understanding the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Breaking Down Stereotypes; Building a Culture of Inclusion.
 - The Veterans at Work certification was developed for HR professionals, hiring managers, and front-line supervisors to learn the value and skill veterans bring to the civilian workplace and to focus on best practices to attract, hire, and retain veterans.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
MANAGEMENT

2021 Employee
Opportunities Plan



Agency Number: 129

August 29, 2021

SUMMARY OF EFFORTS TO INCREASE EMPLOYMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

FISCAL YEAR WORKFORCE BREAKDOWN AND METRICS - EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

0
TOTAL EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

#DIV/0!

Percent of Workforce are Employees with Disabilities

0
Employees with Disabilities in a Leader or Supervisory Position

#DIV/0!

Percent of Workforce are Employees with Disabilities in a Leader or Supervisory Position

0
Employees with Disabilities are in Executive Positions

#DIV/0!

Percent of Workforce are Employees with Disabilities in Executive Positions

0
Employees with Disabilities are Veterans

#DIV/0!

Percent of Workforce are Employees with Disabilities who are Veterans

PERCENT OF WORKFORCE WHO ARE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

3% or Less

3.1% to 4.9%

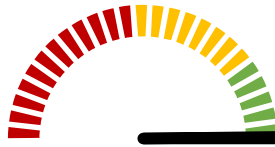
5% or Greater

FY 2019



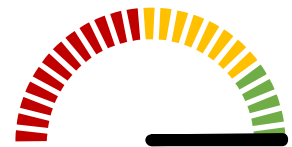
#VALUE!

FY 2020



#VALUE!

FY 2021



#DIV/0!

THREE YEAR WORKFORCE TRENDS

AGENCY EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES WORKFORCE MOVEMENT

1	
0.9	
0.8	
0.7	
0.6	
0.5	
0.4	
0.3	
0.2	
0.1	
0	

AGENCY ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN TO IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

BRIEF REVIEW AND PROGRESS UPDATES OF PRIOR ACTIONS

ORGANIZATION PLAN ACTION ITEMS

Accommodations

0

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Department of Human Resources Management is committed to the Commonwealth's policy and its efforts to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Agency Head Signature

Human Resources Director

Employment Lead, Individuals with Disabilities



Confidential

Voluntary Self-Identification of Disability

Purpose:

In accordance with § 2.2-203.2:3, the (insert Agency Name) is committed to hiring, promoting and ensuring equal opportunity to qualified people with disabilities. To improve our efforts and better assist our employees with disabilities, we are requesting that you voluntarily provide information regarding a physical or mental disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)¹

All Personal Health Information is confidential and is retained in the Commonwealth’s secured Human Resources Information System as well as, in your official personnel record with limited disclosure to authorized individuals in Human Resources. As Personal Health Information is subject to change, employees may be asked to update this information periodically or as needed.

Disability as Defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act:

- (1) A person who has a physical or mental impairment² that substantially limits one or more major life activities³
(2) A person with a record of a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; and
(3) A person who is regarded as having a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Requests for Reasonable Accommodation

Please inform (insert designated Agency Point of Contact) if you require reasonable accommodation to perform essential job functions. Agency management, including Human Resources will engage in an interactive process with you and your treating medical practitioner as needed to determine what or if reasonable accommodations can be provided.

Voluntary Disclosure: Please check one of the selections below and sign where indicated, and return to Human Resources

- Yes, I have a disability
No, I do not have a disability
I choose not to respond

Signature line box

Employee Signature

Date

1 For more information on the Americans with Disabilities Act, visit https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/disability/ada

2 Impairment may include deafness, blindness, intellectual disability, mobility impairments, cancer, diabetes, epilepsy, major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic disorder, HIV infection, multiple sclerosis, etc.

3 Major Life Activities may include caring for oneself, seeing, hearing, walking/standing, lifting, breathing, speaking, learning, concentrating/thinking, and operation of major bodily functions to include the respiratory, immune, neurological, circulatory, cardiovascular, digestive, bowel, bladder, endocrine, hemic, lymphatic, musculoskeletal, etc.