On March 28, 2019, Governor Roy Cooper signed an executive order to increase opportunities for fair wages, employment and careers for people with disabilities.

The order is called “Employment First for North Carolinians with Disabilities,” This order also directs state government to lead the way in recruiting and creating an inclusive job climate for people with disabilities.

“North Carolina can be its best when all people have the opportunity to achieve their potential and live lives of purpose, including North Carolinians with disabilities,” said Governor Cooper. “But far too often people with disabilities are left on the sidelines even though they would make great employees and make amazing contributions to society.”

More than 1.3 million North Carolinians have a disability, making up approximately 13 percent of the state’s population. Of those, more than 720,000 are of working age, but only 35 percent are employed, compared to 76 percent of North Carolinians without disabilities.

Increasing employment for people with disabilities increases independence and results in cost savings for behavioral health services, intellectual/developmental disability services and acute health care. It is also good for businesses and other employers, resulting in lower employee turnover, increased productivity and access to a broader pool of skilled workers.

The executive order directs the North Carolina Office of State Human Resources to collaborate with the NC Department of Health and Human Services to enhance recruitment and outreach efforts to potential workers with disabilities and to identify and attract qualified individuals with disabilities for state employment.

Source: DHHS. Author: Ryan Hill
ADA FACT

The question is, in employment situations do request for reasonable accommodation need to be in writing?

The answer is no. Requests for reasonable accommodation do not need to be in writing. Individuals may request accommodations in conversation or may use any other mode of communication. An employer may choose to write a memorandum or letter confirming the individual's request. Alternatively, an employer may ask the individual to fill out a form or submit the request in written form, but the employer cannot ignore the initial request.

Employers may not discriminate against you because of your disability if you can do your job “with accommodation.” An accommodation may be required to help employees with disabilities succeed in the workplace by making changes to the work environment or schedule, as long as it is not an "undue hardship" for the employer. For example, a person who is experiencing vision loss can request a larger monitor or a screen reader to help them access their computer screen. Changes like this are called “reasonable accommodations.”

If you start having problems doing your job because of health or physical problems, you may be eligible under the ADA for workplace accommodations.

THE ADA COORDINATOR

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires state and local entities with over 50 employees to designate an ADA Coordinator to oversee and coordinate ADA compliance. The U.S. Department also strongly recommends that smaller entities also designate an ADA Coordinator as they have the same compliance obligations as larger entities. Since the passage of the ADA in 1990 business, corporations, industries, non-profit agencies and private K-12 and post-secondary institutions have found having an ADA Coordinator to be essential to meeting ADA compliance obligations. The position of ADA Coordinator, once relatively obscure has now become common-place.

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