



Civil Rights Department

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Civil Rights Department Releases New Guidance on Disability Protections at Work

Each year, the department investigates thousands of disability discrimination complaints in the workplace

SACRAMENTO – As part of the state’s proactive work to tackle discrimination in all its forms, the California Civil Rights Department (CRD) today [shared new guidance](#) on protections in the workplace for workers with disabilities. Since 2020, CRD has investigated thousands of disability discrimination complaints in the workplace and secured over 1,200 settlements to enforce the rights of employees with disabilities.

“There are millions of workers across the country who currently have a disability,” **said CRD Director Kevin Kish**. “And nearly all of us will either have a disability or know someone who becomes disabled at some point in their career. Accommodations in the workplace are about helping everyone succeed. Employees get to keep working and employers get to rely on qualified workers to do the job. I encourage everyone to check out our new guidance to understand their rights and responsibilities under the law.”

Keeping People with Disabilities on the Job

California law protects people with disabilities from discrimination at work. These protections include the right to request a reasonable accommodation, which is a change to workplace practices or policies to make it possible for a person with disabilities to continue to do their job. Under California law, a disability is a condition that limits a person’s ability to do major life activities, such as walking, concentrating, or communicating. Employees can request a reasonable accommodation at work at any time and may do so even if their disability can be treated with medication, only happens sometimes, or is temporary. Reasonable accommodations may be unique and creative to respond to a person’s specific disability-related needs. Regardless of whether an accommodation request can be granted, employers must engage in good faith and in a way that does not delay the accommodation process.

The state has a wide range of tools to ensure the rights of Californians with disabilities at work are protected. For instance, earlier this year, the department [secured a \\$300,000 settlement with UC San Francisco](#) to resolve allegations that the university failed to take reasonable steps to address an employee's accommodation request. The department also [secured a nearly \\$100,000 settlement](#) after an employee at Spencer's Gifts was allegedly suspended from work and unlawfully told they could not return unless they were able to provide medical documentation explaining their obvious need for a wheelchair. Last year, CRD [reached a settlement with Whole Foods](#) after a woman was allegedly fired in retaliation for requesting accommodations related to her pregnancy, such as reduced time standing or avoiding extreme heat from ovens or cooktops. In 2024, the department [reached a \\$14.4 million settlement with Microsoft](#) to resolve allegations that workers who used disability or pregnancy leave were compensated less after taking legally protected time off.

What Can Accommodations Look Like?

Accommodations in the workplace can take many forms. Examples include:

- Allowing service animals, like guide dogs, at work to help an employee navigate an office.
- Restructuring job tasks, such as limiting the weight of objects an employee must lift.
- Changing work schedules to accommodate regular medical appointments.
- Allowing an employee to work from home.
- Providing additional training to help give an employee more time to learn how to do a task.

Knowing Your Rights Helps Protect Your Rights

A key part of CRD's mission to enforce the state's robust civil rights laws and reduce discrimination is ensuring Californians have accurate and timely information about their rights and responsibilities. CRD does this through a range of proactive outreach efforts, including [conducting trainings and presentations](#), [publishing and disseminating guides and factsheets](#), and working directly with community partners to identify and respond to civil rights challenges faced by Californians across the state. Many of CRD's webinars and trainings [can also be watched at any time](#) on the department's YouTube channel.

If you or someone you know has experienced employment discrimination, CRD may be able to assist you through its [complaint process](#). The department also [provides general information and factsheets online](#) about civil rights protections for members of the public.

You can learn more about reasonable accommodations in the workplace by [reading CRD's new factsheet](#). The department is also [hosting a webinar open to the public](#) today at 11 AM PT on advanced reasonable accommodations.

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The California Civil Rights Department (CRD) is the state agency charged with enforcing California's civil rights laws. CRD's mission is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state-funded programs and activities, and from hate violence and human trafficking. For more information, visit calcivilrights.ca.gov.

