

Supervising employees whose primary language is not English

The following are two questions about supervising employees whose primary language is not English:

Q: Can a supervisor require an employee to turn off the radio on a Spanish-language station?

A: Yes — so long as the no radio rule is implemented and enforced at the work location for everyone. In this particular instance, no one had used a radio in the past, and one particular individual was the first to use a radio at that work location, an equipment operations facility. At the same work site, the supervisor was permitted to have a radio on because his work site was considered a different working environment.

Q: Can a supervisor expect an employee to translate Spanish conversations with customers?

A: Yes, if the conversations are related to work, the information can be translated for the supervisor. The supervisor must trust the employee to translate only work-related communications so the supervisor can determine whether or not signs, directions, and other items need to be in Spanish to better communicate with customers. The supervisor should not expect the employee to translate trivial social communications because they are not considered work-related. If the supervisor cannot determine the difference, the supervisor should consider learning basic Spanish.

EEOC launches Spanish-language Youth@Work website

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) launched a Spanish-language version of its Youth@Work website, designed to help young Spanish-speaking workers prevent and respond to discrimination. Supervisors who have Spanish-speaking employees should review this material.

“Having quick and easy online access to EEOC resources in Spanish will better serve our youth and the public generally as our nation’s workplaces become increasingly diverse,” said EEOC Commission Chair Cari M. Dominguez.

The Youth@Work website was created for and by young people to explain the types of job discrimination that young workers may encounter and to suggest strategies they can use to prevent such discrimination. The Spanish website features the same elements as the English version.

The Youth@Work website is part of the EEOC’s Youth@Work initiative, a national education and outreach campaign to promote equal employment opportunity for America’s next generation of workers.

The Youth@Work websites are:
<http://youth.eeoc.gov/index.html> (English) and
<http://youth.eeoc.gov/es/> (Spanish).

In January 2005, the EEOC launched the Spanish-language version of its main website,
www.eeoc.gov/es.

For more information, visit the EEOC’s website at www.eeoc.gov or contact CTSI at 303-861-0507.

County Technical Services, Inc.

800 Grant St., Suite 400
Denver CO 80203

303.861.0507
FAX: 303.861.2832

Technical Updates are available online at: www.ctsi.org