
Pregnant Workers Fairness Act

The Colorado's Pregnant Workers Fairness Act went into effect August 10, 2016, making it a discriminatory or unfair employment practice if an employer fails to provide reasonable accommodations to an applicant or employee who is pregnant, physically recovering from childbirth, or a related condition.

Requirements

Under the Act, if an applicant or employee who is pregnant or has a condition related to pregnancy or childbirth requests an accommodation, an employer must engage in the interactive process with the applicant or employee and provide a reasonable accommodation to perform the essential functions of the applicant or employee's job unless the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the employer's business.

The Act identifies reasonable accommodations as including, but not limited to: provision of more frequent or longer break periods; more frequent restroom, food, and water breaks; acquisition or modification of equipment or seating; limitations on lifting; temporary transfer to a less strenuous or hazardous position if available, with return to current position after pregnancy; job restructuring; light duty, if available; assistance with manual labor; or modified work schedule.

The Act prohibits requiring an applicant or employee to accept an accommodation that the applicant or employee has not requested or an accommodation that is unnecessary for the applicant or the employee to perform the essential functions of the job.

Scope of Accommodations Required

An accommodation may not be deemed reasonable if the employer has to hire new employees that the employer would not have otherwise hired, discharge an employee, transfer another employee with more seniority, promote another employee who is not quali-

fied to perform the new job, create a new position for the employee, or provide the employee paid leave beyond what is provided to similarly situated employees.

Under the Act, a reasonable accommodation must not pose an "undue hardship" on the employer. Undue hardship refers to an action requiring significant difficulty or expense to the employer. The following factors are considered in determining whether there is undue hardship to the employer: the nature and cost of accommodation; the overall financial resources of the employer's business; the accommodation's effect on expenses and resources or its effect upon the operations of the employer.

If the employer has provided a similar accommodation to other classes of employees, the Act provides that there is a rebuttable presumption that the accommodation does not impose an undue hardship.

Adverse Action Prohibited

The Act prohibits an employer from taking adverse action against an employee who requests or uses a reasonable accommodation and from denying employment opportunities to an applicant or employee based on the need to make a reasonable accommodation.

What This Means for Counties

Formal written notice of the Act (C.R.S. 24-34-402.3) must be posted in a conspicuous area of the workplace. Employers must also provide written notice to new employees at the start of employment. Check that your county is in compliance with this law. For more information, please contact CTSI at 303-861-0507. 