



U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Press Release

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EEOC Sues Alliance Ground International for Discrimination Against Deaf Applicants

Federal Agency Charges Cargo Handling Company Refused to Hire Deaf Job Applicants And Destroyed Job Application Records in Violation of Federal Law

CHICAGO - Alliance Ground International, LLC, a cargo logistics and handling company, violated federal anti-discrimination law by refusing to hire a qualified applicant for a mail handler position at its Chicago facility because he was deaf, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charged in a lawsuit filed today.

According to the lawsuit, a deaf applicant sought a position working in a warehouse through Skills for Chicagoland's Future, a job training and placement not-for-profit. The applicant was well qualified for this position, with prior warehouse experience and forklift driver certification. Nevertheless, Alliance Ground rejected the application based on the incorrect assumption that individuals who are deaf are incapable of working safely in a warehouse setting.

The lawsuit further alleges that Alliance Ground has a policy of denying employment to deaf individuals in any of its warehouses, and that it destroyed large

numbers of job applications in violation of federal record-keeping laws.

Such alleged conduct violates Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which requires employers to engage with applicants to identify and provide reasonable accommodations, and prohibits employers from discriminating against qualified applicants based on their disability.

The EEOC filed suit in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois (Civil Action No. 1:23-cv-14302), after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its conciliation process. The EEOC seeks compensatory and punitive damages for the applicants and injunctive relief designed to remedy and prevent future disability discrimination and unlawful record-keeping practices.

“Deaf individuals can and do achieve success in a wide range of workplace settings, including warehouses,” said Greg Gochanour, regional attorney for the EEOC’s Chicago District Office. “The ADA does not permit employers to make hiring decisions on the basis of outdated and incorrect assumptions about what disabled people can and cannot do. Each applicant must be considered on their own merits, with reasonable accommodation of any disability.”

Diane Smason, the acting district director in the EEOC’s Chicago office, added, “So many simple accommodations for individuals who are deaf can easily be **found online (<https://askjan.org/disabilities/Deafness.cfm#ideas>)**. This lawsuit puts employers on notice that the EEOC will not tolerate discrimination against deaf employees and job applicants. The EEOC will zealously enforce the rights secured by the ADA by all available means, up to and including litigation in federal court.”

For more information about disability discrimination against individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, January 2023 Guidance issued by the EEOC is available at **[Hearing Disabilities in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act | U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(eeoc.gov\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/hearing-disabilities-workplace-and-americans-disabilities-act)** (<https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/hearing-disabilities-workplace-and-americans-disabilities-act>).

For general information on disability discrimination, please visit **<https://www.eeoc.gov/disability-discrimination>** (<https://www.eeoc.gov/disability-discrimination>). An explanation of the ASL videophone contact number that individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing may use to contact the EEOC, is contained in the press release announcing its implementation in 2015: **EEOC**

Launches Direct Video Access to ASL Speakers for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing | U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-launches-direct-video-access-asl-speakers-deaf-and-hard-hearing>).

The EEOC's Chicago District Office is charged with enforcing federal employment discrimination laws in Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Iowa.

The EEOC advances opportunity in the workplace by enforcing federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. More information is available at www.eeoc.gov (<http://www.eeoc.gov/>). Stay connected with the latest EEOC news by subscribing to our **email updates** (<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEEOC/subscriber/new>).