



Press Release

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EEOC Sues Mead Johnson & Company for Disability Discrimination

Baby Formula Manufacturer Refused to Reasonably Accommodate 32-Year Employee, Federal Agency Charges

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – Mead Johnson & Company, a manufacturer of baby formula, violated federal law at its Zeeland, Michigan facility by failing to provide a reasonable accommodation to an employee with a disability, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charged in a lawsuit filed today.

According to the EEOC's lawsuit, a 32-year employee of Mead Johnson underwent major foot and ankle surgery in July 2020 that was complicated by a post-operative infection. She submitted a letter from her physician on Sept. 16, 2020, indicating that she needed a six-week work-hardening program in which her hours would gradually increase.

The employer denied this request but led the employee to believe that her job would be held for her during her approved, short-term disability leave until she was cleared to return to work without restrictions on Nov. 2, 2020. Then, without any advance notice, the company posted the employee's job as vacant, told her that her position was filled, and that she had 30 days to bid on and be selected for another job or she would be terminated. Eventually, the employee accepted a more

physically demanding and less desirable job in December of 2020, which led to her early retirement in May of 2022, the EEOC said.

Such alleged conduct violates the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which prohibits discrimination based on disability. The EEOC filed suit (Case No. 1:23-cv-00454) in U.S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan) after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its conciliation process. The EEOC is seeking back pay and compensatory and punitive damages, as well as injunctive relief to prevent future discrimination.

“Employers must understand their obligation under the ADA to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities,” said Miles Uhlar, trial attorney for the Detroit Field Office. “This employer easily could have accommodated this long-term employee in the job she wished to keep. By choosing not to do so, despite the availability of feasible accommodations, the company violated the ADA, and the EEOC’s job is to enforce it.”

For more information on disability discrimination, please visit

<https://www.eeoc.gov/disability-discrimination> (<https://www.eeoc.gov/disability-discrimination>).

The Detroit Field Office is part of the Indianapolis District Office, which oversees Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky and parts of Ohio.

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)** (**<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEEOC/subscriber/new>**).