

BOLI Employer Services

As an Oregon employer, it may seem overwhelming to try to wade through the many employment laws and regulations that apply to your business. Employees' wages must be paid correctly, questions about accommodation issues and protected leaves must be answered, and sometimes questions or situations come out of left field.

All Oregon employers, private and public, have a resource available to help with these issues. The Technical Assistance for Employers Program of the Bureau of Labor and Industries exists to help employers with these situations by providing a variety of free and fee-based services.

Training throughout Oregon is available on a variety of topics including Wage and Hour Laws, Leave Laws in Oregon, Avoiding Workplace Harassment, and Effective Supervisory Practices. An employer may also contract directly with Technical Assistance for on-site training which can be a cost effective way to provide training to all employees. For example, defending a claim of unlawful harassment could cost upwards of \$10,000. An employer could train all its employees to understand and recognize workplace harassment for a fraction of that amount.

Technical Assistance writes and sells handbooks on a range of employers' issues. Handbooks on Civil Rights Laws, Policy Writing Guidelines, and Documentation, Discipline and Discharge are available. A 2009 edition of Wage and Hour Laws will be available in mid-February, and an updated version of Family Leave Laws is planned for release in March 2009. Employers purchasing these handbooks have a ready resource at their fingertips. Since the handbooks are reviewed by the BOLI divisions responsible for writing the rules and enforcing compliance, employers may be sure the information is accurate and reflects the most common questions and situations regarding wage and hour and civil rights laws in Oregon.

In addition to the handbooks, Technical Assistance sells an "8-in-1" poster incorporating all of the commonly required postings in Oregon in English and Spanish. Laminated posters specific to agricultural employers are also available. Poster companies routinely sell their versions of the required postings for over \$75. At \$7.50 plus shipping, BOLI's poster is a bargain. However, an even better bargain may be found on the BOLI website where the individual posters may be downloaded at no charge.

Employers with questions about employment law may find answers on the BOLI website. Click on FAQs/Fact Sheets to find information on over 60 topics ranging from break requirements to religious accommodation. As new rules are enacted or new information becomes available, Technical Assistance staff update the information.

Employers who have specific questions may contact the Technical Assistance for Employers phone information service. Staff is available Monday through Friday, 8:00am to noon, to respond to employer questions. Due to limited staffing and a large number of phone calls received, the turnaround time may be up to three business days. However, in most cases, the calls are returned within 24 hours and often during the same day. Technical Assistance staff can not provide legal advice but can answer questions about wage and hour issues, civil rights, family leave, and many other topics. Since BOLI is a state agency, staff is also knowledgeable about issues specific to governmental entities.

One other valuable educational opportunity is available to employers—Technical Assistance will host its 25th Annual Employment Law Conference on December 8-9, 2009. This annual event has proven to be a valuable resource for many employers with some of Oregon’s top employment law attorneys and BOLI experts conducting seminars on the most current topics and most updated information. An attendee from the 2008 conference said, “This was an excellent training resource and will save my company at least \$10,000 in the next month alone.”

Technical Assistance has received many questions about why a government agency charges a fee for publications and seminars. The program is not funded with tax dollars, and the unit is supported with the proceeds of sales and seminar fees. The employer assistance line and website information are services provided at no charge to employers.

The mission of the Bureau of Labor and Industries is to protect employment rights, advance employment opportunities, and protect access to housing and public accommodations free from discrimination. Oregonians who feel they have been discriminated against or who have not received their proper wages can call BOLI or visit our website for information and for help filing a complaint. The Bureau also helps build a skilled workforce through its apprenticeship and training programs and provides education to the state’s employers through its technical assistance services.

For information about Technical Assistance to Employers services, visit the website at www.oregon.gov/BOLI/TA or call 971-673-0824.