

Addressing Discrimination – Basic Steps and a Damages Diary

If you have been the victim of discrimination or suspect you have been the victim of discrimination it is not uncommon to feel helpless. Indeed, these feelings of disempowerment and helplessness are often cultivated intentionally by offenders in order to decrease the chances of their victims taking action against them.

However, there are steps that you can take if you feel that you are the victim of discrimination. These steps will help you feel more empowered as well as greatly aid your case if you do decide to file a federal employment discrimination claim, bring in an employment lawyer or take any other kind of legal action.

The first step you should take is to **write everything down** that occurs to you relating to the discrimination. Keep a diary. Every incident of harassment, discrimination or unfair treatment should be documented. The easiest way to achieve this is in a notebook or in a single word processing document. Note the date and time of each incident along with a brief description of what occurred, your reaction, and any witnesses present. This log serves two purposes. First, it serves to aid your memory in prosecuting your claims under discrimination law by providing a written record for you to work off of as well as allowing you to more easily identify people who might be able to testify on your behalf. Second, it can aid greatly in recovering damages for all the harassment you endured by functioning as a record of your mental state throughout the incidents.

Another action that you should take, to the extent possible, is conduct all correspondence related to the discrimination in writing. Corresponding by e-mail is the ideal method for implementing this step. Use “read/return receipts” for emails. In this way you can avoid becoming embroiled in “he said/she said” debates, as you will have a hard record of most communications to show the exact contents of the exchanges between you and the people discriminating against you. If they take action against you, make sure to get a copy of it in writing, as well as copies of any complaints submitted against you. Always write responses to any discipline you are given so that your side of the story goes on the record as well.

Finally, do not be afraid to involve an employment discrimination lawyer in the proceedings. Contacting an employment lawyer early allows them to easily meet any filing deadlines that may exist for your particular complaints, and can help you deal with the situation before it becomes even more unbearable. Whether you are a private individual in need of help, a federal employee seeking a federal employment lawyer or federal employment attorney, they will appreciate your “damages diary.”