

News Flash

Expanded Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities

On July 26, 2006, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) published new rules that provide expanded opportunities for people with disabilities to obtain employment with Federal agencies effective August 25, 2006. As a result, Employment Networks (ENs) and State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies now have another tool they can use to assist Social Security Administration beneficiaries with disabilities to obtain jobs with Federal agencies.

There are various benefits to working for the Federal government. A Federal career can provide:

- Any individual the opportunity for advancement and individual growth;
- A unique opportunity to people with disabilities to successfully perform the essential duties of a position;
- People with disabilities a flexible work schedule, alternative work sites, interpreters, readers and other personal assistance and accommodations; and
- A salary, health benefits and a number of other employer provided benefits.

Employment Networks and Vocational Rehabilitation representatives can get more information about the Schedule A hiring authority and OPM's recent changes at the website: <http://www.opm.gov/disability>. OPM also has posted a list of Q&As at: http://www.opm.gov/disability/appointment_disabilities.asp



Q & A

Schedule A

The new rules make it easier for people with disabilities to use a special hiring authority, called Schedule A, to get a job with the Federal government without having to compete with other job applicants. The following questions and answers further explain these changes:

Q *Why did OPM change the Schedule A hiring rules?*

A. OPM changed its rules to improve the Federal government’s ability to hire people with disabilities. The changes are designed to remove barriers and increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities. In particular, the changes expand the sources from which Federal agencies may accept proof of disability and certification of job readiness for an applicant seeking employment under the Schedule A hiring authority.

Q *Are all individuals with disabilities covered by these new rules?*

A. No. The new rules apply only to persons with mental retardation, severe physical disabilities, or psychiatric disabilities.

Q *Why is the term “mental retardation” used in the new regulation instead of cognitive disability, developmental disability, or intellectual disability?*

A. OPM used this term in the new regulation because it is the official terminology used in the authorizing Executive Order 12125, dated March 15, 1979.

Q *Does an applicant seeking employment under the Schedule A hiring authority need to provide proof of mental retardation, severe physical disability or a psychiatric disability?*

A. Yes. A job applicant must provide proof of mental retardation, a severe physical disability or a psychiatric disability.

Q *Under the new rules, who may provide proof of disability and certification of job readiness for an individual seeking employment under the Schedule A hiring authority and how does this help ENs, VR agencies and ticket holders?*

A. A Federal agency may accept proof of an applicant’s disability and certification of job readiness from a licensed physician, other medical practitioner, a licensed VR specialist, any Federal agency, State agency, or an agency of the District of Columbia or a U.S. territory that issues or provides disability benefits. This means that a State VR agency counselor or a private VR counselor employed by an EN can provide the proofs and certifications a ticket holder needs to apply for Federal jobs under the Schedule A hiring authority. This simplifies the placement process. Alternatively, a State VR agency or EN staff can assist clients to obtain the needed documentation from their treating physician or other medical practitioner who has knowledge of the individual’s medical conditions and/or job readiness.



The following are examples of documents agencies may accept as proof of mental retardation, a severe physical disability or a psychiatric disability:

- Statements or letters on a physician's/medical professional's stationery letterhead.
- Statements, records or letters from a Federal government agency that issues or provides disability benefits.
- Statements, records or letters from a State VR agency counselor.
- Certification from a private VR or other counselor that issues or provides disability benefits.

Q *Since Social Security provides disability benefits, what document(s) will the agency provide as proof of a disability for a recipient of Title II and/or Title XVI disability benefits?*

A. A beneficiary may request a Benefit Verification Letter as proof of a disability from his/her servicing Field Office.

Q *What other documentation must an applicant provide when applying for Federal employment under the Schedule A hiring authority?*

A. An applicant also should provide certification of job readiness. This is certification that the individual is likely to succeed in the performance of the duties of the position for which he or she is applying.

Q *Since Social Security is a Federal agency that provides disability benefits, will the agency issue documents attesting to work readiness?*

A. No. Social Security cannot make work readiness determinations. If the applicant is working with an EN or State VR Agency, the EN or State VR Agency may be able to provide proof of work readiness.

Q *What if an EN or VR is unable to certify that a particular client is likely to succeed in the performance of the duties of the position for which he or she is applying?*

A. In cases where certification has not been provided, the hiring agency may give the individual a temporary appointment under this authority to determine the individual's job readiness.

Q *How can ENs and VR assist a client to apply for a Federal job under the Schedule A hiring authority?*

A. ENs and VR may assist ticket holders in reviewing vacancy announcements posted at OPM's website at: www.usajobs.opm.gov. Ticket holders should submit resumes for positions that are of interest to them, or they may contact the Special Placement Coordinator in the agency for which they wish to work. (Special Placement Coordinators are involved with the hiring, placement, and advancement of individuals with disabilities at their agency. A list of these coordinators can be found at http://apps.opm.gov/sppc_directory/).

To fill a vacancy using the Schedule A hiring authority, agencies also may accept resumes without posting job notices. Applicants should indicate the regulatory citation for the Schedule A hiring authority, that is "5 CFR 213.3102(u)," on their resumes for both application methods.

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