



# U.S. Department of Labor Compliance Assistance

Our Commitment to America's Employers and Workers

## Frequently Asked Questions About the Compliance Assistance Initiative

### ★ What is the Compliance Assistance Initiative?

The Compliance Assistance Initiative is a U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) effort to help America's employers and workers understand how to comply with the federal employment laws it administers. As part of this initiative, Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao created the Office of Compliance Assistance Policy (OCA). This office raises awareness of the laws and regulations DOL enforces and guides people to the information and assistance they need to comply with them. The office is also working with other DOL agencies to better coordinate and leverage their various outreach efforts to better serve the regulated community.

### ★ Why did the Department of Labor launch the effort?

DOL administers more than 180 laws, and it recognizes that many of America's business owners and employees face difficulties comprehending them. In response, DOL launched the Compliance Assistance Initiative to help employers and employees better understand how to comply with federal employment laws and regulations. The goal of this effort is to protect the wages, health benefits, retirement security, safety and health of America's workforce by preventing employment law violations. DOL seeks to meet this goal by providing the business community with easy-to-access compliance assistance tools and resources.

### ★ What specific compliance assistance tools are available?

- ★ The Department's **Toll-Free Help Line (1-866-4-USA-DOL)** provides timely and accurate responses to customer inquiries, and fulfills print and publication requests. It offers live operator assistance in English and Spanish with additional service in more than 140 languages.
- ★ The most widely used compliance assistance tool is **DOL's Web site**. In particular, the public can access a wide range of information on DOL's rules and regulations at any time by visiting **[www.dol.gov/compliance](http://www.dol.gov/compliance)**. This Web site is a gateway to DOL agencies' compliance assistance information.
- ★ DOL also offers a number of innovative e-tools, including the **elaws Advisors** (Employment Laws Assistance for Workers and Small Businesses). The **elaws Advisors** simulate the interaction an individual might have with a DOL regulatory expert by generating answers based on the user's responses to a set of questions. At **[www.dol.gov/elaws](http://www.dol.gov/elaws)**, one can find more than 20 Advisors on various topics including the Family and Medical Leave Act, child labor rules and regulations under the Fair Labor Standards Act, reemployment rights for National Guard and Reservists on active duty, retirement savings, and various safety and health standards.
- ★ The **Employment Law Guide**, which describes DOL's major statutes and regulations in plain language, targets those employers needing introductory information to develop wage, benefit, safety and health, and nondiscrimination policies. It is available in print and online, in both English and Spanish. Call **1-866-4-USA-DOL** to request a free copy, or download a **Guide** by visiting **[www.dol.gov/asp/programs/guide.htm](http://www.dol.gov/asp/programs/guide.htm)**.

  
Compliance  
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## ★ Who benefits from the Compliance Assistance Initiative?

DOL's efforts serve both employers and employees. For example, an employer can call DOL's Toll-Free Help Line or visit the **elaws Advisors** Web site to learn whether the time her employees spend in training is considered hours worked. Likewise, an employee can determine whether he can take leave to care for an ill family member under the Family and Medical Leave Act.

## ★ How does the Compliance Assistance Initiative affect enforcement of DOL's laws and regulations?

These compliance assistance efforts do not replace, or in any way detract from, strong enforcement of DOL's laws and regulations. Rather, compliance assistance complements enforcement by allowing DOL to dedicate its enforcement resources on the relatively small percentage of employers who ignore their responsibilities.

## ★ What exactly are elaws Advisors? Are they live human beings?

No. The **elaws Advisors** are e-tools that simulate an interaction with an employment law expert. Users simply visit [www.dol.gov/elaws](http://www.dol.gov/elaws) to locate an Advisor that will address their questions. The system generates appropriate answers based on the user's responses to a set of questions. In essence, each Advisor is a topic-specific tutorial that clarifies complex issues about one's workplace and employment situation.

## ★ If a business owner calls the Toll-Free Help Line or accesses DOL's Compliance Assistance Web site, will he or she become a target for investigation by DOL?

Absolutely not. The information provided by an individual will be kept confidential within the bounds of the law. For the limited purpose of responding to the inquiry it may be necessary to obtain some identifying information. However, DOL agency staff handling and responding to compliance assistance inquiries are required to maintain the confidentiality of any caller's identifying information. Compliance assistance inquiries shall not trigger an inspection, audit, investigation, etc. However, such inquiries will not protect a party from an inspection, audit, investigation, etc. that is the result of ordinary agency operations.

## ★ How can employers and employees stay abreast of any new employment law resources or developments in DOL's compliance assistance efforts?

To stay up-to-date on new tools and resources from the Department, we encourage you to subscribe to our e-mail update service on the Compliance Assistance home page ([www.dol.gov/compliance](http://www.dol.gov/compliance)). By accessing the link on this page and voluntarily subscribing, you will receive periodic e-mail updates from DOL whenever there is compliance assistance news such as a major change to federal labor law requirements or when DOL creates a new tool.

## ★ Are DOL spokespeople available to discuss the new compliance assistance efforts? To whom should media direct their inquiries?

DOL's Office of Compliance Assistance Policy is happy to discuss this important workforce initiative. For more information, or to request an interview, please contact:

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