

Interviewing potential Staff

Churches, like any other employers, are not allowed to discriminate and this applies generally to both lay and ordained positions. During job application interviews, care must be exercised in asking questions. In 1994, the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) issued guidelines for interviews. Below are some general rules as to questions that may be asked during interviews:

- Are you able to perform specific job-related functions?
- Can you meet the attendance requirements of the job?
- How many days of leave did you take last year?
- Do you use illegal drugs? Have you ever been convicted of illegal drug use, sale or possession?

According to the EEOC, here is a sample of questions that you may **NOT** ask during an interview:

- Do you have any type of disability or mental health issues?
- How many days were you sick last year?
- Have you ever filed a workers' compensation claim?
- Have you ever been addicted to drugs?
- Are you taking prescription drugs?

In addition to this list there are questions that have been found to be discriminatory by courts:

- Age, year of graduation, or dates of school attendance.
- Height or weight, color of eyes, hair, complexion.
- Does one own a car?

There are many, many more questions that you cannot ask. Use your best judgment or seek legal advice. If it seems it may be construed as discriminatory, it probably is.

Hiring

Employment begins with an "offer letter" or "contract," which specifies the terms of employment and any conditions. Many churches offer a position with just a handshake. Nevertheless, the prospective employee deserves to know the terms of employment to include such details as salary/wage, working hours, job description, reporting relationship and such details not otherwise contained in your employee manual.

Employment-at-Will

All employees are employees-at-will. Nothing in your manual should be construed as a guarantee that any employee's employment will continue for any specified period of time or end under certain conditions. Furthermore, you should state in your employee manual, that the Church may from time to time, in its sole discretion, amend, supplement, modify or eliminate one or more of the benefits, work rules or policies described without prior notice. Whenever changes are made, updates to the manual will be provided.

If you have any suggestions or questions for an upcoming article, please contact Tammie Wisniewski at tammie@psec.org or call the conference office at 484-949-8774 X304