



Alternative Hiring Process Frequently Asked Questions for Agency HR and Hiring Managers

Q1: What is the Alternative Hiring Process (AHP)?

A: The Commonwealth of Virginia is committed to inclusive hiring. The Alternative Hiring Process was established as part of a comprehensive strategy to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Q2: How do applicants participate in the AHP?

A: An AHP applicant with a disability as defined in [Code of Virginia 51.5-40.1](#) and who has an approved AHP Letter (formerly COD) provided by the Department for Aging & Rehabilitative Services (DARS) or the Department for the Blind & Vision Impaired (DBVI) can participate in the Alternative Hiring Process. The AHP Letter will be uploaded to their applications.

Note: Certificates of Disability provided by DARS or DBVI dated April 1, 2022, through February 29, 2024, will still be accepted as applicable for the AHP. Therefore, those applicants need not request an AHP Letter. The name change to AHP Letter became effective March 1, 2024.

Q3: What types of positions can be offered through the AHP?

A: Executive Branch agencies may leverage the Alternative Hiring Process to fill wage and classified vacancies. Agencies in other branches of state government are encouraged to participate in AHP.

Q4: Are certain positions designated for applicants with disabilities participating in AHP?

A: No, agencies do not need to limit job announcements for the Alternative Hiring Process to specific positions. Agencies are encouraged to incorporate the Alternative Hiring Process as a standard part of the hiring process for any vacancy. Applicants will designate their interest for consideration through the Alternative Hiring Process by providing their AHP Letter on their application.

Q5: Do we need to offer the Alternative Hiring Process to all applicants?

A: DHRM strongly encourages all agencies to post vacancies with language that reflects the Commonwealth's focus on inclusive hiring. As noted in **2.2-203.2:3** [Code of Virginia](#), it is the policy of the Commonwealth to promote and increase the employment of individuals with disabilities (IWD's) at all levels and occupations by state agencies, institutions, boards, and authorities of the Commonwealth.

Q6: Does the AHP applicant receive priority consideration during the screening process?

A: Agency HR/Hiring managers may provide priority consideration in the screening process for AHP applicants that meet minimum qualifications.

Q7: Do I need to consider employees in layoff status or veterans before providing priority consideration to an applicant with an AHP Authorization for a classified position?

A: The Alternative Hiring Process does not supersede the placement rights of employees in layoff status or preferential consideration for veterans.

Q8: Are applicants approved for the Alternative Hiring Process guaranteed interviews?

A: No, applicants are screened by Agency HR or Hiring Managers to identify applicants who meet the minimum qualifications for the position. Interviews are offered to the best qualified candidates. Therefore, interviews are not guaranteed for all AHP participants.

Q9: Does the AHP applicant need to meet any of the additional considerations to be screened as qualified for an interview?

A: Candidates lacking additional considerations will not be excluded during the screening process.

Q10: How long can an applicant use an approved AHP Letter?

A: Applicants requesting consideration through AHP should present an AHP Letter dated within 5 years of the application date. Please contact the Department for Aging & Rehabilitative Services (DARS) or the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) to discuss any concerns or questions regarding the effective date of an AHP Letter (formerly COD) presented for consideration.

Q11: Can the AHP Letter be used multiple times?

A: The AHP Letter can be used anytime the applicant uses the AHP.

Q12: If an agency recruits a wage position non-competitively, does the applicant still need to provide an AHP Letter?

A: Yes, applicants need to include the AHP Letter with their application, which will provide them priority consideration for the position. The AHP Letter will need to be retained with the applicant's records.

Q13: Does an applicant need to provide a AHP Letter a second time, if they apply for a classified or other salaried position after being employed in a wage role?

A: Yes, the applicant needs to include the AHP Letter with their application and/or resume to receive priority consideration for the position.

Q14: Are current or former state employees eligible for participation through AHP?

A: Yes, current and former state employees are allowed to participate in the AHP as long as they provide their AHP Letter.

Q15: Who determines if the employee performs the essential functions of the position during the 6-month provisional period?

A: Consistent with current practice, the direct supervisor or manager will assess the employee's performance of the essential functions of the posted position. Managers should partner with their Agency HR to ensure appropriate accommodations are in place, as needed to ensure new employees are set up for success.

Q16: Who should the supervisor contact if an employee needs an accommodation to perform their job functions?

A: Supervisors need to contact their Agency HR or designated point of contact for accommodations. For more information, please refer to the [ADA Policy Guides](#).

Q17: What kind of job assistance or accommodations can the agency and/or the employee get on the job site?

A: If needed and approved by DARS and your agency, some services can include task analysis, job coaching or assessments to help employees adjust to the workplace, and to learn and perform their work duties.

DARS can also offer disability awareness and diversity training to educate your managers and staff on disability etiquette.

Q18: How should an absence be handled if an employee needs to take time off during the 6-month provisional period due to their disability? Are they allowed to return to complete the 6-month period?

A: Supervisors should collaborate with Agency HR to appropriately address any needed absences.

Q19: Will agencies be required to track applicants through the Alternative Hiring Process?

A: Yes, as per [Code of Virginia, § 2.2-203.2:3](#) state agencies need to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities and provide a yearly plan on how that will be achieved. Per [Code of Virginia § 2.2-1213](#), at a minimum, agencies need to track the following information on individuals with disabilities who:

- sought state employment through the alternative hiring process,
- are currently employed through the alternative hiring process; and
- had their employment in a position filled through the noncompetitive process.

For further questions about AHP Letter, assessments and DARS services, contact Sandy Phipps, DHRM/DARS Liaison at 804-688-5841, or Sandra.Phipps@dars.virginia.gov

To request an AHP Letter, use this portal: [AHP Letter](#)