

As workplace age discrimination claims increase, so does research

Written by Australian Business

September 14, 2013 /**24-7PressRelease**/ -- With today's longer life expectancies and tough economy, many older Americans are working well into what were traditionally regarded as the retirement years. Unfortunately, according to the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission, [age discrimination](#) complaints have also been on the rise.

Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show that older workers who are laid off typically take two to six months longer to find a new job than younger workers. Furthermore, even when older applicants are eventually hired, they are often paid substantially less than their younger counterparts.

Although relatively common, age discrimination in the workplace is not always easy to identify -- making the problem more difficult to address. However, recent research in the area of age discrimination may help to change that. As public awareness of age discrimination increases, more studies are being done to help quantify the problem and shed light on its possible solutions.

Shedding new light on workplace age discrimination

In one such study, conducted at Princeton University, volunteers were shown a video of a man named Max and told that he would be their partner in a trivia contest. However, there were several different versions of the same video, with the part of Max was played by three different actors between the ages of 25 and 75.

According to a New York Times report on the study, all three actors followed the same script, and each volunteer saw only one version of the Max character. Half of the volunteers were shown a video in which Max described himself as someone who would share his wealth with relatives, while the other half saw an otherwise identical video in which Max said he did not feel obligated to share.

When the volunteers were asked to share their opinions of Max, the two younger actors received the same rating regardless of whether they planned to share with relatives. The older actor, however, received a strong negative response when he said he would not share his wealth. The researchers say these findings may suggest a bias against older individuals who are assertive about speaking their minds.

What is age discrimination?

In the workplace, age discrimination occurs when an employer makes employment-related decisions on the basis of age or treats employees differently because of their age. Examples of illegal age discrimination by an employer may include:- Firing, hiring or refusing to hire someone because of his or her age.- Treating employees differently on the basis of age for purposes of promotion, pay, advancement opportunities, benefits or training.- Stating a preference for applicants of a certain age in help wanted ads or employment applications.

Age discrimination laws in Michigan

Workers in Michigan are protected by state and federal laws against age discrimination in the workplace. Specifically, a federal law called the Age Discrimination in Employment Act bars most employers from discriminating against workers who are at least 40 years of age. This law applies to most companies with 20 or more employees.

At the state level, a Michigan law called the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act bars several types of discrimination by employers, including age-based discrimination. The Michigan statute is broader than the federal ADEA in that it applies to all employers, regardless of size. In addition, while the federal age discrimination law applies only to workers age 40 or older, the Michigan law protects workers of all ages.

An employment lawyer can help

For help exploring the legal options that are available if you or a loved one has experienced age discrimination in Michigan, contact an experienced employment lawyer near you.

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