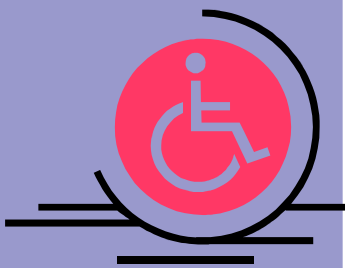


*Legal****AMeriCanS with Disabilities***

“Though the justice department recognizes MCS as a disability for purposes of accommodation, there are no formal guidelines yet.”



Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) is an invisible disability. According to a presentation at the Association of Postdoctoral and Psychology Internship Centers Membership Conference, which was held April 12 – 14, 2007, an invisible disability is not readily apparent to others and, therefore, a person with MCS faces social and attitudinal, as well as chemical, barriers with the risk of misunderstandings of sincere communications, misinterpretations of behaviors, and reactions of doubt, blame, and trivialization regarding one’s symptoms.

The term disability means having a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities and having record of such an impairment, or being regarded as having an impairment. The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. MCS is recognized as a disability by the Justice Department because toxic chemicals are a barrier to access. Elimination and/or reduction of offending chemicals is wholly consistent with reasonable accommodation as it is rarely burdensome to an employer, school, or public place.

Though the justice department recognizes MCS as a disability for purposes of accommodation, there are no formal guidelines yet. This is in large due to the fact that MCS varies greatly from person to person.

Various governments, institutions, and organizations have created their own formal policies for accommodation. Two themes abound throughout these policies, medical necessity and the fact that “the only demonstrated effective approach to help is to eliminate and/or reduce the chemicals in the general environment of individuals afflicted” with MCS.

Stegman suggests several strategies for accommodation:

- I. Establish and maintain a positive atmosphere of open communication among all parties.
- II. Establish and maintain a positive atmosphere of education regarding the MCS syndrome.
- III. Make use of existing policies, regulations, laws, and precedents.
- IV. Establish and maintain a positive atmosphere of problem solving within the context of overall air quality.
- V. Incorporate a formal policy into the overall operation of the organization.

-LS

Reference

Stegman, RL. *Multiple Chemical Sensitivity: Features and Accommodation*. Presented at the Association of Postdoctoral and Psychology Internship Centers Membership Conference, April 12 – 14, 2007, San Diego, California.