



U.S. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION
Office of Federal Operations
P.O. Box 77960
Washington, DC 20013

[REDACTED]
Valentine P.,¹
Complainant,

v.

Louis DeJoy,
Postmaster General,
United States Postal Service
(Field Areas and Regions),
Agency.

Appeal No. 2025000616

Agency No. 4G-330-0418-24

DECISION

Complainant filed a timely appeal with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC or Commission) from the Agency's final decision dated October 30, 2024, dismissing a formal complaint of unlawful employment discrimination in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), as amended, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq. and Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended, 29 U.S.C. § 791 et seq. For the reasons set forth below, we AFFIRM the Agency's final decision dismissing Complainant's complaint.

ISSUE PRESENTED

Whether the Agency's final decision properly dismissed Complainant's formal complaint for failure to state a claim pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.107(a)(1).

¹ This case has been randomly assigned a pseudonym which will replace Complainant's name when the decision is published to non-parties and the Commission's website.

BACKGROUND

During the period at issue, Complainant worked as a Letter Carrier at the Palmetto Park Annex in Boca Raton, Florida.

On July 16, 2024, Complainant requested pre-complaint processing. Informal efforts at resolution were not successful.

On September 18, 2024, Complainant was sent a final interview letter.

On October 10, 2024, Complainant filed a formal complaint alleging that the Agency subjected him to discrimination based on disability when:

On July 12, 2024, a manager yelled at Complainant and berated him on the workroom floor and he felt humiliated.

On October 30, 2024, the Agency issued a final decision. The Agency dismissed the formal complaint, pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.107(a)(1), for failure to state a claim, finding that Complainant had not stated a claim of harassment.

The instant appeal followed.

CONTENTIONS ON APPEAL

On appeal, Complainant offers no new arguments. Complainant's appellate submissions consist primarily of screen shots of pre-complaint and complaint documents.

The Agency provides no response to Complainant's appeal.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

The Agency's decision to dismiss a complaint is subject to de novo review by the Commission, which requires the Commission to examine the record without regard to the factual and legal determinations of the previous decision maker and issue its decision based on the Commission's own assessment of the record and its interpretation of the law. 29 C.F.R. § 1614.405(a).

The Commission should construe the complaint in the light most favorable to the complainant and take the complaint's allegations as true. See Cobb v. Department of the Treasury, EEOC Request No. 05970077 (March 13, 1997). Thus, all reasonable inferences that may be drawn from the complaint's allegations must be made in favor of the complainant.

ANALYSIS

An agency shall accept a complaint from any aggrieved employee or applicant for employment who believes that he or she has been discriminated against by that agency because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age or disabling condition. 29 C.F.R. §§ 1614.103, .106(a).

The Commission's federal sector case precedent has long defined an "aggrieved employee" as one who suffers a present harm or loss with respect to a term, condition, or privilege of employment for which there is a remedy. Diaz v. Dep't of the Air Force, EEOC Request No. 05931049 (April 21, 1994). If the complainant cannot establish that they are aggrieved, the agency shall dismiss a complaint for failure to state a claim. 29 C.F.R. § 1614.107(a)(1).

We carefully considered Complainant's claim in the context of discriminatory hostile work environment. Here, Complainant has not alleged that management took any adverse action against him because of the July 12, 2024 incident. Therefore, Complainant has not alleged a harm or loss with respect to a term, condition, or privilege of employment such that he has stated a claim for discrimination based on disability.

To the extent that Complainant alleges that the event in the complaint states a claim of discriminatory harassment, we disagree. In Harris v. Forklift Systems, Inc., 510 U.S. 17, 21 (1993), the Supreme Court reaffirmed the holding of Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson, 477 U.S. 57, 67 (1986), that harassment is actionable if it is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the complainant's employment. Thus, not all claims of harassment are actionable. As noted by the Supreme Court in Faragher v. City of Boca Raton, 524 U.S. 775, 788 (1998): "offhand comments or isolated incidents (unless extremely serious) will not amount to discriminatory changes in the 'terms and conditions of employment'." In determining that a working environment is hostile, factors to consider are the frequency of the alleged discriminatory conduct, its severity, whether it is physically threatening or humiliating, and if it unreasonably interferes with an employee's work performance. See Harris, 510 U.S. at 21 (1993).

The Supreme Court has stated that: "conduct that is not severe or pervasive enough to create an objectively hostile work environment - an environment that a reasonable person would find hostile or abusive - is beyond Title VII's purview." Harris, 510 U.S. at 22 (1993). We acknowledge that Complainant was offended and dismayed by his manager's comments, however, the alleged incident was a single incident, isolated in nature, and appears to be of a type that typically arises out of ordinary workplace conflicts or communications. EEO laws are not a civility code. Rather, they forbid "only behavior so objectively offensive as to alter the conditions of the victim's employment." Oncale v. Sundowner Offshore Serv., Inc., 523 U.S. 75, 81 (1998).

In the instant case, Complainant alleged that a manager abused and intimidated him when he screamed at him in front of others on the workroom floor. While we understand how Complainant felt such action to be unprofessional, rude and humiliating, we have routinely rejected allegations describing one or a few isolated incidents of "verbal abuse" as insufficient to establish a harassment/hostile work environment. See Trey M. v. U.S. Postal Serv., EEOC Appeal No. 0120180310 (March 20, 2018) (finding allegations that a supervisor yelled across the workroom floor that complainant was a "troublemaker" and that things had run more smoothly while he was on leave were insufficient to state a harassment claim); see also Banks v. Dep't of Health and Human Serv., EEOC Request No. 05940481 (Feb. 16, 1995) (allegation that on one occasion, a supervisor threw a file on the complainant's desk and berated her in a loud voice in the presence of other employees was insufficient to state a harassment claim).

Even if proven to be true and viewed in a light most favorable to Complainant, the conduct at issue does not indicate that Complainant was subjected to harassment. The isolated action alleged which Complainant may have construed as abusive and offensive, without more, was simply insufficiently severe or pervasive to state a valid claim. This alleged incident occurred on a single day and appears to be an isolated event that did not lead to any loss of a condition or term of employment as a result of this incident. See Cobb, supra.

Therefore, Complainant's complaint of harassment fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.107(a)(1).

CONCLUSION

The Agency's final decision dismissing the formal complaint is AFFIRMED for the reasons discussed above.

STATEMENT OF RIGHTS - ON APPEAL

RECONSIDERATION (M0124.1)

The Commission may, in its discretion, reconsider this appellate decision if Complainant or the Agency submits a written request that contains arguments or evidence that tend to establish that:

1. The appellate decision involved a clearly erroneous interpretation of material fact or law; or
2. The appellate decision will have a substantial impact on the policies, practices, or operations of the agency.

Requests for reconsideration must be filed with EEOC's Office of Federal Operations (OFO) **within thirty (30) calendar days** of receipt of this decision. If the party requesting reconsideration elects to file a statement or brief in support of the request, **that statement or brief must be filed together with the request for reconsideration.** A party shall have **twenty (20) calendar days** from receipt of another party's request for reconsideration within which to submit a brief or statement in opposition. See 29 C.F.R. § 1614.405; Equal Employment Opportunity Management Directive for 29 C.F.R. Part 1614 (EEO MD-110), at Chap. 9 § VII.B (Aug. 5, 2015).

Complainant should submit their request for reconsideration, and any statement or brief in support of their request, via the EEOC Public Portal, which can be found at <https://publicportal.eeoc.gov/Portal/Login.aspx>

Alternatively, Complainant can submit their request and arguments to the Director, Office of Federal Operations, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, via regular mail addressed to P.O. Box 77960, Washington, DC 20013, or by certified mail addressed to 131 M Street, NE, Washington, DC 20507. In the absence of a legible postmark, a complainant's request to reconsider shall be deemed timely filed if OFO receives it by mail within five days of the expiration of the applicable filing period. See 29 C.F.R. § 1614.604.

An agency's request for reconsideration must be submitted in digital format via the EEOC's Federal Sector EEO Portal (FedSEP). See 29 C.F.R. § 1614.403(g). Either party's request and/or statement or brief in opposition must also include proof of service on the other party, unless Complainant files their request via the EEOC Public Portal, in which case no proof of service is required.

Failure to file within the 30-day time period will result in dismissal of the party's request for reconsideration as untimely, unless extenuating circumstances prevented the timely filing of the request. **Any supporting documentation must be submitted together with the request for reconsideration.** The Commission will consider requests for reconsideration filed after the deadline only in very limited circumstances. See 29 C.F.R. § 1614.604(f).

COMPLAINANT'S RIGHT TO FILE A CIVIL ACTION (S0124)

You have the right to file a civil action in an appropriate United States District Court **within ninety (90) calendar days** from the date that you receive this decision. If you file a civil action, you must name as the defendant in the complaint the person who is the official Agency head or department head, identifying that person by their full name and official title. Failure to do so may result in the dismissal of your case in court. "Agency" or "department" means the national organization, and not the local office, facility or department in which you work. If you file a request to reconsider and also file a civil action, **filing a civil action will terminate the administrative processing of your complaint.**

RIGHT TO REQUEST COUNSEL (Z0815)

If you want to file a civil action but cannot pay the fees, costs, or security to do so, you may request permission from the court to proceed with the civil action without paying these fees or costs. Similarly, if you cannot afford an attorney to represent you in the civil action, you may request the court to appoint an attorney for you. **You must submit the requests for waiver of court costs or appointment of an attorney directly to the court, not the Commission.** The court has the sole discretion to grant or deny these types of requests.

Such requests do not alter the time limits for filing a civil action (please read the paragraph titled Complainant's Right to File a Civil Action for the specific time limits).

FOR THE COMMISSION:



Carlton M. Hadden, Director
Office of Federal Operations

February 25, 2025

Date