



Guidance for Alternative Hiring Process (AHP)

The Commonwealth of Virginia is committed to equal employment opportunities for all, including persons with a disability as per [Code 2.2-203.2:3](#) . Effective July 1, 2021, the Code of Virginia 2.2-1213-[Alternative Hiring Process](#) mandates the establishment of an Alternative Hiring Process (AHP) for the employment of persons with a disability, which is noncompetitive in nature, and includes an option for state agencies to convert a position filled through the noncompetitive process into a position that is filled through a competitive process.

This guidance describes the key components of the AHP for persons with a disability, including eligibility, certification, self-disclosure of disability, selection for classified and wage positions, conversion, construction clauses, and reporting. The guidance also provides a glossary of key terms.

Eligibility	A person with a documented disability as outlined in 51.5-40.1 is eligible for participation in the AHP. Participants must be certified by a Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) Certified Rehabilitation Counselor.
Certification of Disability (COD Letter)	<p>An AHP applicant must be certified as an individual with a documented disability resulting in a barrier to employment as determined by a DARS Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. If approved, the DARS Rehabilitation Counselor will provide a Certificate of Disability (COD) to the individual who can then submit their COD during application.</p> <p>The individual does not have to be receiving services from DARS at the time in order to be certified as eligible. Certification for this program does not preclude individuals from applying competitively for other state jobs.</p> <p>COD information can be found at Certificate of Disability, or call DARS at 800-552-5019.</p>

<p>Documentation for COD Approval</p>	<p>Acceptable documentation that an AHP applicant can provide to a DARS Certified Rehabilitation Counselor for review may include, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation from a Medical and/or Mental Health Provider • Veterans Administration Medical/Mental Health Records • Social Security Administration Documentation • Departments of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services
<p>Job Posting</p>	<p>Vacancies may be posted as either wage or classified roles and must follow the general announcement provisions outlined in Policy 2.10 - Hiring.</p> <p>Agency HR/Hiring managers are encouraged to include language in the job announcement that reflects priority consideration to be given to applicants with disabilities. Postings will be tagged with the AHP designation in RMS search tools.</p> <p><u>Recommended language for Job Announcements:</u></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">In support of the Commonwealth’s commitment to inclusion, we are encouraging individuals with disabilities to apply through the Commonwealth Alternative Hiring Process.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">To be considered for this opportunity, applicants will need to provide their Certificate of Disability (COD) provided by a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor within the Department for Aging & Rehabilitative Services (DARS).</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Veterans are encouraged to answer Veteran status questions and submit their disability documentation, if applicable, to DARS to get their Certificate of Disability.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">If you need to get a Certificate of Disability, use this link: https://www.vadars.org/drs/cpid/PWContact.aspx, or call DARS at 800-552-5019.</p>
<p>Application Process</p>	<p>Applicants may apply for wage or classified positions through the Recruitment Management System (RMS). The applicant must designate certification for AHP and submit a copy of their Certification of Disability to their employment application.</p> <p>Applicants are screened by Agency HR/Hiring Managers to identify those who meet the qualifications for the position. Interviews considered under this program</p>

	<p>are offered to the best qualified candidates; therefore, interviews are not guaranteed for all AHP certified participants.</p>
<p>Wage Selection</p>	<p>AHP applicants may be considered for wage positions non-competitively. Agency HR/Hiring Managers will assess the applicant's knowledge, skills, and abilities to determine whether they are likely to succeed in the performance of the duties of the position for which they are being considered. Although agencies are not required to use a competitive process when filling wage positions, diversity and inclusion in all hiring decisions must be considered.</p> <p>Agencies are strongly encouraged to provide a provisional period of six months to observe the applicant on the job to confirm that the applicant is able or ready to perform the essential duties of the position with or without reasonable accommodation. At the end of the 6 month period, an interim wage-performance evaluation should be completed.</p> <p>Successful completion of the provisional period prepares the AHP employees for successful employment and enhances their qualifications and experience for future job opportunities.</p>
<p>Classified Selection</p>	<p>AHP applicants may be considered for classified positions through the competitive process. Agency HR/Hiring Managers may provide priority consideration in the screening process for COD certified applicants that meet minimum qualifications. Lack of preferred qualifications will not be used to exclude candidates in the screening process. This priority consideration does not supersede mandated layoff rights for placement or for preferential consideration for veterans. Selection through priority consideration can only be used for placement in the applicant's initial classified role with the Commonwealth.</p> <p>Agencies are strongly encouraged to provide a provisional period of six months to observe the applicant on the job to confirm that the applicant is able or ready to perform the essential duties of the position with or without reasonable accommodations. The provisional period is considered part of the 12-month probationary period. Although the provisional period will allow agencies to assess performance, the Standards of Conduct and non-performance measures are applicable during this period.</p>
<p>Transition from wage to classified</p>	<p>AHP applicants may be considered for wage positions non-competitively and may transition from provisional wage to classified status through the competitive process. Agency HR/Hiring Managers may provide priority consideration in the</p>

	<p>screening process for certified applicants that meet minimum qualifications. Lack of preferred qualifications will not be used to exclude candidates in the screening process.</p> <p>To ensure enhanced opportunity for wage AHP employees to acquire full time classified or salaried positions, agencies may elect to post a classified position internally to the agency. This provides an opportunity for wage AHP employees to submit their application for the internal consideration along with other candidates who are employed by the agency. Agency HR/Hiring Managers shall screen only for the minimum qualifications and select candidates to interview. Priority must be provided to candidates with layoff placement rights and preferential consideration provided to veterans.</p>
Offer of Employment	<p>Agencies must follow the requirements outlined in Policy 2.10 - Hiring and include information regarding the provisional and probationary periods as appropriate.</p>
General Provisions	<p>Nothing in this guidance should be construed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Require that a person with a disability use AHP instead of the competitive process. (2) Limit the authority of agencies to use the “open until filled” or “continuous recruitment process” and designate the posting specific for AHP. (3) Modify in any way the following policies applicable to persons with a disability employed using AHP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reasonable accommodation policy; ● Layoff Preferential Placement as defined in DHRM Policy 1.30, Layoff and the Workforce Transition Act; ● DHRM Policy 1.45, Probationary Period. (4) Modify in any way the obligation of agencies to provide data via the State’s automated information system for the prior fiscal year to generate a statistical analysis report of employed individuals with disabilities.
Reporting Status of AHP Participants	<p>The report to the Department that includes information applicable to the annual report required under subsection H of 2.2-203.2:3 must also include information on the status of AHP for persons with a disability, including the total number of persons with a disability who (1) sought state employment through AHP, (2) are</p>

	<p>currently employed through AHP, and (3) transitioned from a wage position through AHP to a classified position.</p> <p>Applicants who submitted COD's shall be considered as voluntarily self-disclosing that they have a disability for purposes of reporting.</p>
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Glossary

Person with a disability: A "person with a disability" is defined on 51.5-40.1 to mean any person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of his major life activities or who has a record of such impairment. "Physical impairment" means any physical condition, anatomic loss, or cosmetic disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect, or illness. "Mental impairment" means (i) a disability attributable to intellectual disability, autism, or any other neurologically handicapping condition closely related to intellectual disability and requiring treatment similar to that required by individuals with intellectual disability or (ii) an organic or mental impairment that has substantial adverse effects on an individual's cognitive or volitional functions, including central nervous system disorders or significant discrepancies among mental functions of an individual.

Certificate of Disability: A letter from the Virginia Department for Aging & Rehabilitative Services (DARS) stating the applicant has a documented disability and qualifies for hiring consideration under [2.2-1213](#). The letter must be on official letterhead from DARS and include a signature from the DARS Certified Rehabilitation Counselor.

Reasonable Accommodations: Modifications or adjustments in a work site, program or job that enable qualified employees with disabilities to perform the essential functions required by the position or for an applicant to progress through the hiring process.

Wage Employment: As defined in the [DHRM Policy 2.20, Types of Employment](#), employees who receive pay for hours worked rather than a fixed salary. Wage employees are sometimes referred to as hourly or P-14 employees. Wage employment is intended to cover peak workloads and seasonal or short-term needs.

Classified: Salaried employees whose terms and conditions of employment are subject to the Virginia Personnel Act (Va. Code § 2.2-2900 and following) as further defined by [DHRM Policy 2.20, Types of Employment](#).

Non-covered Salaried Positions: Salaried positions that are not covered by the Virginia Personnel Act such as Faculty, At-Will, or University.

Department for Aging & Rehabilitative Services: <https://www.vadars.org/#gsc.tab=0>

DARS Vocational Rehabilitation: <https://www.vadars.org/drs/vr/>