UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE

Disability & Aging   Cutler Institute

6-1-2007

Maine State Employee Survey on Disability

Commission on Disability and Employment

Department of Financial and Administrative Services Bureau of Human Resources

Muskie School of Public Service University of Southern Maine

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/aging

Part of the Health Policy Commons, Health Services Research Commons, and the Public Policy Commons

Recommended Citation

Commission on Disability and Employment, Department of Financial and Administrative Services Bureau of Human Resources, and Muskie School of Public Service University of Southern Maine, "Maine State Employee Survey on Disability" (2007). *Disability & Aging*. 128.
https://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/aging/128

Muskie School of Public Service

m

Maine State Employee
Survey on Disability

June 2007

usm

UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MAINE

Maine State Employee Survey
on Disability

Part of Executive Order #13 (FY 06/07):
Maine State Government as a Model Employer of
Workers with Disabilities

Commission on Disability and Employment

Department of Financial and Administrative Services
Bureau of Human Resources

Muskie School of Public Service
University of Southern Maine

June 2007

Table of Contents

Introduction

The Executive Order regarding Maine State Government as a Model Employer of people with disabilities was signed on February 24, 2006. The order included several action steps, including a survey of State employees to ascertain the prevalence of workers with disabilities in State employment.

Maine's Bureau of Human Resources and the Commission on Disability and Employment were named to oversee this survey. The University of Southern Maine's Muskie School of Public Service administered the survey and analyzed results. Each of these three organizations are members of an Executive Order Working Group designed to overall all action steps under the Executive Order.

Maine's survey was modeled after a Vermont survey of State employees focusing on disability issues in the workplace. This allows comparison of survey findings with another northern New England state.

Methods

In 2006, there were over 13,000 State employees in Maine that worked within thirteen divisions.[1] Within each department, a representative random sample of employees was drawn.[2] Using this process a total of 6,300 employees were randomly selected to take the survey.

The Bureau of Human Resources sent a letter to all State employees informing them about the survey and that employees would be randomly selected to participate. In September 2006, an invitation was sent to the 6,300 randomly selected participants, inviting them to participate in the survey. The survey was completely voluntary, with no impact on employment whether the survey was completed or not.

Randomly selected employees were either sent invitations to participate online or by paper. For those with work email addresses, this invitation was sent by email with a web address link to access the survey online. All entries were confidential and were entered on a secured server (SSL encryption). For those with no email address, a paper copy was mailed to their work address, along with a paid return envelope. Following a deadline, those that did not complete the survey were telephoned and offered the following options:

- Complete the survey over the phone,
- Be mailed a paper copy,
- Use a link to complete the survey online, or
- Decline to participate in the survey.

---

[1] These thirteen divisions – 12 departments plus "other" - encompass all State employees.
[2] A stratified random sample was drawn, based on a 95% confidence level within a confidence interval of 5 and an expected 45% response rate. Expected response rate target was based on Vermont's State employee survey response rate.

Responses

Overall, the response rate for the survey was 55% of employees who completed the survey; 3,446 people filled out the survey. Workers with work email addresses were sent an invitation to fill out the survey online. Those without work email addresses were mailed paper copies of the survey to fill out. People who did not respond to the survey were given a follow up call about the survey. The survey was filled out by the following methods:

Online	56%
Telephone	32%
Paper	9%
Other[3]	3%

The table below shows the response rate from each of the thirteen departments. It was anticipated that Maine would have a similar response rate to Vermont's study (45%). While the response rate overall was 55%, responses from specific Maine departments ranged from 35% to 71%.

Divisions	Percentage that responded from each agency[4]
Administration/Finance	55%
Education	48%
Transportation	47%
Health and Human Services	59%
Corrections	43%
Marine Resources	54%
Agriculture	46%
Conservation	35%
Environmental Protection	71%
Inland Fisheries & Wildlife	61%
Labor	70%
Public Safety	50%
Other[5]	57%

---

[3] Phone or paper survey not specified.

[4] Based on survey responses; some did not respond to this question.

[5] Arts Commission, Atlantic Salmon Commission, Attorney General, Audit, Baxter Park, Comm. on Governmental Ethics, Defense & Veterans, Dental Examiners, Dept. Econ. & Comm. Development, Dirigo, Executive, Historic Preservation, Human Rights, Maine Health Data Organization, Maine Military Authority, Maine State Library, Maine State Museum, Medicine, Nursing, Osteopathic Examiner, Pro & Fin Regulation, Pro Engineers, Property Tax Review, Public Utilities, Sec. of State, Treasury, Workers Compensation Comm.

Summary of Results

The following summary presents highlights from the survey results. The number of respondents to each question can vary. A full listing of responses to each question is provided in the appendix and should be consulted for further interpretation of results.

Characteristics of Survey Participants

A total of 3,446 employees participated in this survey. There were a total of 31 questions survey participants could potentially be asked. Based on responses, some questions did not apply to all participants.

Some selected characteristics:

- Respondent ages ranged from 18 to 76 years old, with the average age being 47 years old.
- A little over half of respondents were male.
- The two departments with the highest participation percentage of employees were the Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Administrative/Financial Services.

Topic	Response	Percentage
Gender	Male	51%
	Female	47%
	No Response	1%
Age	Range of ages	18-76
	Average age	47
	Median age	49
Percentage of all survey responses by Division	Health and Human Services	13%
	Administrative/Financial Services	11%
	Labor	10%
	Transportation	10%
	Environmental Protection	8%
	Public Safety	8%
	Corrections	8%
	Inland Fisheries and Wildlife	5%
	Conservation	5%
	Education	4%
	Marine Resources	3%
	Agriculture	2%
	Other (please specify):	12%
	No Response	1%
Length of time working in current position	0 - 6 months	7%
	7 months - 1 year	10%
	2-5 years	30%
	6-10 years	21%
	11+ years	31%

Topic	Response	Percentage
	No Response	1%
Length of time working in state employment	0 - 6 months	3%
	7 months - 1 year	4%
	2-5 years	18%
	6-10 years	19%
	11+ years	54%
	No Response	1%
Disability	Yes	10%
	No	88%
	No Response	3%

The primary way individuals learned about working for the State was from a friend (30%) or newspaper ad (18%). When looking at people's length of working for the state, newer employees (had worked for a year or less) were significantly more likely to learn about their job online (26%).[6]

Employees with Disabilities

Within all survey respondents, ten percent (339 people) reported they had a disability. The following section highlights specific findings in relation to employees who reported having a disability.

Employment Comparisons

There are two key comparison points to help interpret the numbers of employees reporting that they had a disability

- In comparison with the number of employed adults with a disability overall in Maine (determined using data from the American Community Survey[7]), there were slightly more people with disabilities working in State employment.
- However, in comparison with Vermont[8], Maine had a fewer percentage of employees with disabilities in State employment.

It should be noted that the definition of disability differed between these three surveys. The following is how disability was defined in each survey:

Maine State Employee Survey: A disability is defined as any person who has a physical or mental impairment which <u>substantially</u> limits one or more of such person's major life activities, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Major life activities include: walking, seeing, hearing, learning, self-care, speaking, lifting,

---

[6] n=3,446; p=<.0001
[7] Source: Muskie School of Public Service calculations using the 2005 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS)
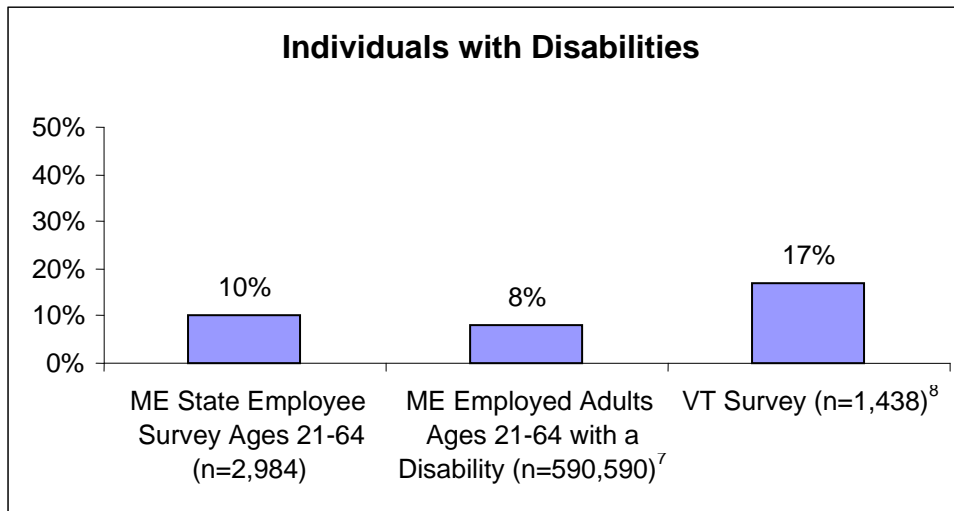[8] Vermont's responses are for all respondents, not only 21-64 years old

reaching, thinking, performing manual tasks, breathing, working and interacting with others.

Census definition of disability: "…a long lasting physical, mental or emotional condition. This condition can make it difficult for a person to do activities such as walking, climbing stairs, dressing, bathing, learning or remembering. This condition can also impede a person from being able to go outside the home alone or work at a job or business."

Vermont State Employee Survey: The Americans with Disabilities Act defines a person with a disability as any person who: (1) has a non-temporary disability, which substantially limits one or more major life activities; (2) has a record of such impairment; or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment.

Individuals with Disabilities

ME State Employee Survey Ages 21-64 (n=2,984)	ME Employed Adults Ages 21-64 with a Disability (n=590,590)[7]	VT Survey (n=1,438)[8]
10%	8%	17%

When looking at the percentage of employees with disabilities in each Maine department, the Department of Labor had a significantly higher percentage of employees with disabilities compared to the other departments (21%)[9]. Other departments had a range of 3% to 12% of employees with disabilities. In regards to how people learned about their job and how long they had been employed by the state, there were relatively similar responses to those without disabilities.

Disability

The majority of people reported their primary disability was physical (67%), followed by those reporting a mental health condition (13%) or a sensory condition (13%). Those working for the State for one year or less were significantly more likely to have a sensory disability (29%).[10]

---

[9] n=341, p=<.0001
[10] n=21, p=.02

Primary Disability	Percentage
Physical health condition	67%
Mental health condition	13%
Sensory condition	13%
Cognitive condition	4%
Developmental condition	* (less than 1%)
Acquired Brain Injury	-
Other: please tell us:	2%
No Response	1%

Slightly over half reported their disability stated before working for the State (54%). Having or developing a physical or sensory disability was significantly more likely than other disabilities, regardless of when it started.

Accommodations

Over half (53%) reported that they had requested a job accommodation. For those who had not requested an accommodation, 68% reported it was because one was not needed, and 7% reported they were afraid to ask for one.

For those that had requested an accommodation, 80% received the accommodation. Of those who had requested an accommodation, 42% received it immediately, while others received it in a month or more, or not at all. About a third (32%) report having difficulty getting a job accommodation.

The two major types of job accommodations have included adjustments to a work station (40%) and flexible work schedule and/or location (23%).

For those that did not receive an accommodation, the top two accommodations people reported they needed but did not receive were changes to a work station (19%) and flexible schedule and/or location (16%). Reasons that employees reported for being denied an accommodation included the department did not consider them disabled (7%), a money issue (4%), or not following the instructions for requesting an accommodation (4%).

Of those who did not get the accommodation they asked for, 26% received another accommodation.

When asked about a number of potential supports to return to work or to maintain a job, the highest reported supports included a supportive employer and co-workers, flexible work activities, flexible work schedule, and special equipment/medical devices.

Family and Household Members with Disabilities

About one in four respondents (22%) reported someone in their household or immediate family had a disability. Of those who had a family member with a disability, a significant number of respondents (38%) were between the ages of 51-60.[11] In addition, a significant number of respondents (18%) reported they also had a disability themselves.[12]

When asked what the primary disability of their family or household member was, most reported it was physical (49%), followed by a mental health disability (16%). Over half (58%) report they have had to provide care for this individual which has caused them to miss work. However, 64% report current supports in the workplace are adequate to provide care for this individual.

Discrimination

Survey participants were asked if they ever felt discriminated against while working for the State. The primary types of discrimination reported were gender (8%) and age (4%). Respondents could answer with more than one type of discrimination.

When asked who was responsible for the discrimination, supervisor and manager were primarily named (27% and 22%, respectively). Seventeen percent reported the discrimination occurred within the past year, and 18% reported it occurred between one to five years ago. Most respondents (79%) reported they were aware of the procedures for filing a complaint about workplace discrimination.

Next Steps

The members of the Executive Order workgroup, individually and collectively will be reviewing the results of the survey to determine next steps in relation to the overall development and promotion of Maine State Government as a model employer of workers with disabilities. Recommendations and next steps will be determined. This information will be reported to the Governor and to other audiences.

As a part of the survey, all respondents were asked if they would like to participate in a discussion group to talk more in-depth about some of the questions asked in the survey. Over 50 people responded with initial interest. The purpose of this group will be to learn more about issues or questions raised from the survey results.

A follow-up survey is being considered for 2008.

---

[11] n=756; p=.0002
[12] n=756; p=<.0001

Appendix A: Survey Results

The "n" in each table refers to the number of people who were asked the question.

1. What is your gender?

	ME (n=3,446)	VT (n=1,442)
Male	51%	49%
Female	47%	51%
No Response	1%	-

2. What is your date of birth?

Age range	ME (n=3,446)
18-20	* (less than 1%)
21-30	7%
31-40	15%
41-50	28%
51-60	33%
61-64	5%
65+	2%
No Response	12%

	ME (n=3,051)	VT (n=1,402)
Average Age	47	46
Median Age	49	47
Range	18-76	20-78

3. What agency do you work for? (n=3,446)

Health and Human Services	13%
Admin./Financial Services	11%
Labor	10%
Transportation	10%
Environmental Protection	8%
Public Safety	8%
Corrections	8%
Inland Fisheries and Wildlife	5%
Conservation	5%
Education	4%
Marine Resources	3%
Agriculture	2%
Other (please specify):	12%
No Response	1%

"Other" responses included (n=411)**:**

Secretary of the State/ Bureau Motor Vehicles	19%
Maine Military Authority	12%
Office of Attorney General	11%
Professional & Financial Regulation	8%
Workers Compensation Board	6%
Veterans & Emergency Management	5%
Public Utilities	5%
Maine State Library	4%
Executive	4%
Economic & Community Development	2%
Office of Information Technology	2%
Maine State Museum	1%
State Planning Office	1%
Other	21%

4. How did you learn about your job working for the State? What was your employment referral source? (n=3,446) [Respondent could answer more than one response]

Friend	30%
Newspaper ad	18%
Online ad / Internet	7%
Career Center (DOL)	7%
Schools (High School and College)	6%
State Vocational Rehabilitation	1%
Department of Veterans	1%
Other Federally Sponsored Programs (e.g. Project Able, Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities, etc.)	1%
Other (specify):	30%
No Response	2%
Unknown	3%

"Other" responses included (n=1,028)**:**

Family	14%
On the register	13%
Word of mouth	10%
State jobs list/ Human Resources	9%
Temporary position	7%
Working in other State job/ in house	6%
Recruited	5%
Unemployment Office	2%
Working with agency that works with the State	2%
Other	31%

5. How long have you been in your current position? (n=3,446)

0 - 6 months	7%
7 months - 1 year	10%
2-5 years	30%
6-10 years	21%
11+ years	31%
No Response	1%

6. How long have you worked for the State? (n=3,446)

0 - 6 months	3%
7 months - 1 year	4%
2-5 years	18%
6-10 years	19%
11+ years	54%
No Response	1%

Based on how long someone has worked for the State, how did they learn about their job working for the State? Those that have worked for the State for one year or less were significantly more likely to learn about their job online.

	Friend	News-paper	Online	Career Center/ DOL	Schools	State VR	Dept. of Veterans	Other Federal Programs	Other	No Re-sponse	Unknown
Overall	**30%**	**18%**	**7%**	**7%**	**6%**	**1%**	**1%**	**1%**	**30%**	**2%**	**3%**
1 year or less (n=260)	30%	18%	26%[13]	* (less than 1%)	4%	* (less than 1%)	* (less than 1%)	1%	%	1%	1%
2-5 years (n=633)	31%	19%	15%	4%	3%	1%	1%	1%	26%	2%	1%
6-10 years (n=649)	29%	23%	7%	3%	4%	1%	1%	2%	28%	2%	3%
11+ years (n=1,864)	31%	16%	1%	3%	8%	1%	* (less than 1%)	1%	34%	3%	5%

7. Do you have a disability?[14]

Maine State Employee Survey: A disability is defined as any person who has a physical or mental impairment which <u>substantially</u> limits one or more of such person's major life activities, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Major life activities include: walking, seeing, hearing, learning, self-care, speaking, lifting, reaching, thinking, performing manual tasks, breathing, working and interacting with others.

---

[13] p=<.0001

[14] When comparing the Maine State Survey responses to other survey results, the definition of disability differed. The following is how disability was defined in the other surveys.

Census definition of disability: "…a long lasting physical, mental or emotional condition. This condition can make it difficult for a person to do activities such as walking, climbing stairs, dressing, bathing, learning or remembering. This condition can also impede a person from being able to go outside the home alone or work at a job or business."
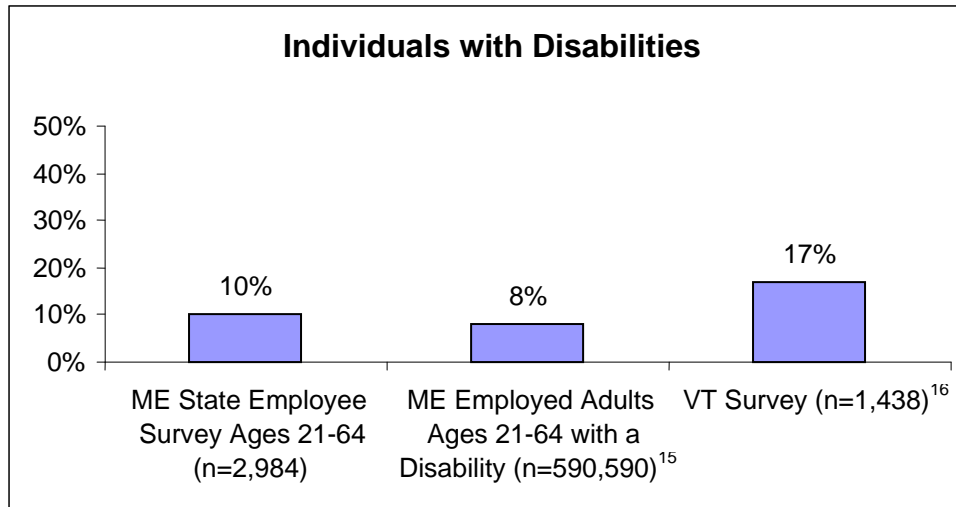
Vermont State Employee Survey: The Americans with Disabilities Act defines a person with a disability as any person who: (1) has a non-temporary disability, which substantially limits one or more major life activities; (2) has a record of such impairment; or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment.

	ME State Employees Ages 21-64 (n=3,446)	ME Employed Adults Ages 21-64 with a Disability (n=590,590)[15]	VT Survey (n=1,438)[16]
Yes	10%	8%	17%
No	88%	92%	83%
No Response	3%	-	-

Of all respondents to the survey (n=3,446), ten percent reported they have a disability. When you compare Maine's State Employee Survey results with the American Community Survey for Maine, the comparison is only for respondents ages 21 to 64. When you limit the Maine State Employee Survey to respondents ages 21 to 64 (n=2,984), ten percent of employees report they have a disability. This provides a more equitable comparison between survey results.

Individuals with Disabilities

Overall, ten percent of survey respondents reported they had a disability. Of those who were employed by the following agencies, the percentage that reported having a disability.

Labor (n=341)	21%[17]
Corrections (n=285)	12%
Health and Human Services (n=455)	11%
Agriculture (n=73)	10%
Public Safety (n=258)	9%
Education (n=130)	9%
Administration/Financial Services (n=366)	8%
Transportation (n=344)	8%
Conservation (n=179)	7%
Environmental Protection (n=287)	6%
Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (n=186)	6%
Marine Resources (n=88)	3%
Other (n=411)	10%
No Response (n=43)	0%

The chart below shows the length of employment with the State for those who report having a disability.

Length of employment for those with a disability (n=339)

11+ years 56%
1 year or less 6%
2-5 years 15%
6-10 years 22%

---
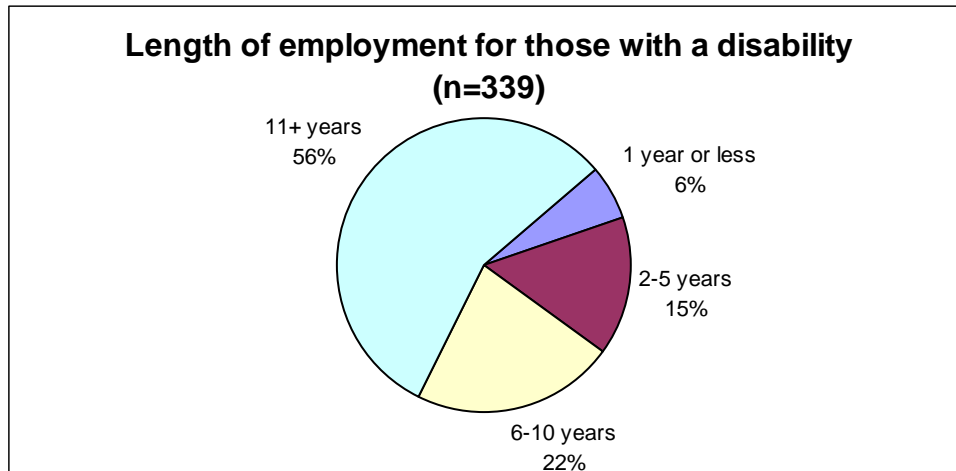
[17] p=<.0001

People with disabilities learned about their job working for the State in similar ways compared to people without disabilities. The table below shows the following resources people with disabilities used to find employment with the State (n=339).

Friend	27%
Newspaper ad	18%
Online ad / Internet	4%
Career Center (DOL)	4%
Schools (High School and College)	3%
State Vocational Rehabilitation	3%
Department of Veterans	3%
Other Federally Sponsored Programs (e.g. Project Able, Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities, etc.)	2%
Other (specify):	30%
No Response	2%
Unknown	5%

8. Please tell us which you consider to be your primary disabling condition. (Mark only one)

Disability[18]	ME (n=339)	VT (n=239)
Physical health condition	67%	68%
Mental health condition	13%	16%
Sensory condition	13%	13%
Cognitive condition	4%	Included in developmental condition
Developmental condition	* (less than 1%)	3%
Acquired Brain Injury	-	NA
Other: please tell us:	2%	* (less than 1%)
No Response	1%	-

"Other" responses included (n=7): more than one disability.

---

[18] Physical disabilities such as arthritis, amputation, spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, seizures, Parkinson's disease, head injury, heart disease, circulation problem, emphysema, cystic fibrosis or asthma. Mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, manic-depression, or schizophrenia. Sensory conditions such as deaf or hard-of-hearing, blindness or vision impairment. Cognitive conditions such as learning disability – Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), dyslexia. Developmental conditions such as mental retardation, autism.

For those that reported they have a disability, the following shows the agency they work for and the types of disabilities present in each agency. [19]

	Physical Health	Mental Health	Sensory Condition	Cognitive Condition	Developmental Condition	Other	No Response
Overall (n=339)	**67%**	**13%**	**13%**	**4%**	*** less than 1%**	**2%**	**1%**
Health and Human Services (n=51)	67%	18%	4%	4%	-	8%	-
Administration/Financial Services (n=30)	70%	7%	20%	-	-	3%	-
Labor (n=70)	63%	16%	11%	6%	-	-	4%
Transportation (n=29)	62%	7%	14%	10%	4%	4%	-
Environmental Protection (n=17)	88%	6%	6%	-	-	-	-
Public Safety (n=24)	75%	21%	4%	-	-	-	-
Corrections (n=34)	77%	9%	12%	3%	-	-	-
Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (n=11)	55%	18%	18%	9%	-	-	-
Conservation (n=12)	58%	17%	17%	8%	-	-	-
Education (n=12)	42%	17%	33%	-	-	8%	-
Agriculture (n=7)	43%	14%	43%	-	-	-	-
Other (n=39)	67%	13%	15%	5%	-	-	-

The following chart shows the types of disabilities for those with varying length of employment with the State. Of those who were employed with the State for a year or less, there were significantly more people reporting a sensory disability.

	Physical Health	Mental Health	Sensory Condition	Cognitive Condition	Developmental Condition	Other	No Response
Overall (n=339)	**67%**	**13%**	**13%**	**4%**	*** less than 1%**	**2%**	**1%**
1 year or less (n=21)	57%	10%	29% [20]	5%	-	-	-
2-5 years (n=52)	65%	17%	12%	6%	-	-	-
6-10 years (n=75)	63%	16%	12%	7%	-	1%	1%
11+ years (n=191)	70%	12%	12%	3%	1%	3%	1%

---

[19] Note that "Marine Resources" responses are not presented due to small sample size.
[20] p=.02

9. Did your disability start before or after you came to work for the State?

	ME (n=339)	VT (n=240)
Before I started working for the State	54%	45%
After I went to work for the State	46%	55%

This chart shows the length of employment for people, based on when their disability started.

	Before working for the State (n=182)	After I worked for the State (n=157)
Overall (n=339)	**54%**	**46%**
0 - 6 months	6%	1%
7 months - 1 year	6%	-
2-5 years	22%	8%
6-10 years	25%	19%
11+ years	42%	73%

The table below shows the types of primary disabilities that people reported, based on when the disability started. Having or developing a physical or sensory disability was significantly more likely than other disabilities, regardless of when it started. Developing a mental health disability either before or after employment was not found to be statistically significant.

	Physical Health	**Mental Health**	**Sensory Condition**	**Cognitive Condition**	**Developmental Condition**	**Other**	**No Response**
Overall (n=339)	**67%**	**13%**	**13%**	**4%**	*** less than 1%**	**2%**	**1%**
Before I started working for the State (n=182)	57%[21]	16%	18%[22]	6%	1%	2%	1%
After I went to work for the State (n=157)	78%[23]	10%	6%[24]	2%	-	3%	1%

10. Since you have worked for the State, have you requested that your employer make a change or modification to your workspace or equipment, work schedule, work tasks or responsibilities, or other changes because of your disability? (These changes are often called **job accommodations**)

	ME (n=339)	**VT (n=239)**
Yes	53%	39%
No	46%	62%
No Response	2%	-

---

[21] p=<.0001
[22] p=<.0001
[23] p=.0012
[24] p=.0012

Based on the primary disability reported, almost half or more have asked for a job accommodation.

Percent that have asked for job accommodations, based on disability type

Disability type	Percent
Cognitive (n=14)	29%
Sensory (n=43)	47%
Physical health (n=226)	54%
Other (n=7)	57%
Mental health (n=45)	60%
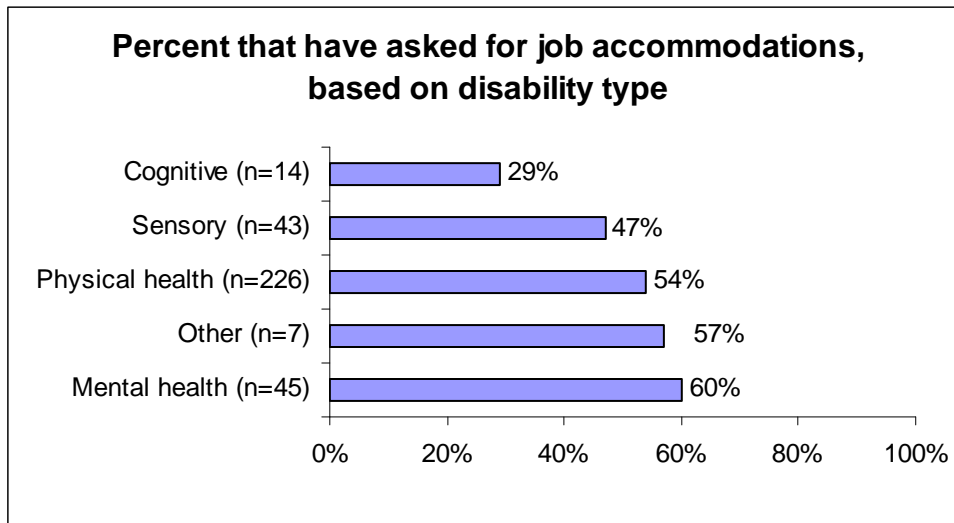
11. If no, why not?

	ME (n=156)	**VT (n=147)**
I did not need any job accommodations	68%	71%
I was afraid to ask for job accommodations because (please specify):	7%	16%
Other reason (please specify):	10%	13%
No Response	6%	-

"Afraid to ask for job accommodations" reasons included (n=11)**:** fear of losing their job, fear of impact on co-workers work load and relationships, fear of being unable to do their job, feeling their current employer would not understand, fear of losing credibility, previous bad experience in another job, stigma, unseen disabilities (i.e. cognitive) treated differently than visual ones (i.e. physical).

"Other" responses included (n=16)**:** not sharing their need for accommodation at the interview, supervisor made changes without employee having to ask, not aware job accommodation could be asked for, sick time and leave time to cover accommodations needed.

12. If you have requested a job accommodation, how long did it take for you to receive it? (n=178)

Almost immediately	42%
1 month	11%
2 months	7%
3 months to 1 year	11%
More than 1 year	10%
Never received it	15%
No Response	5%

For those with a disability and had requested a job accommodation, the length of time to receive an accommodation varied. The tables below show the length of time to receive an accommodation by primary disability.[25]

	Almost Immediately	1 Month	2 Months	3 Months – 1 Year	More Than One Year	Never Received It	No Response
Overall (n=178)	**42%**	**11%**	**7%**	**11%**	**10%**	**15%**	**5%**
Physical health (n=121)	36%	12%	7%	12%	13%	16%	4%
Mental health (n=27)	59%	4%	4%	15%	7%	7%	4%
Sensory (n=20)	70%	10%	10%	-	-	10%	-

	Received It	Never Received It	No Response
Overall (n=178)	**80%**	**15%**	**5%**
Physical health (n=121)	80%	16%	4%
Mental health (n=27)	89%	7%	4%
Sensory (n=20)	90%	10%	-

---

[25] Note that "cognitive", "other", and "no response" answers are not presented due to small sample size.

13. If your employer has made a job accommodation(s), please tell us what it is (n=151)

Work station (chair, height of desk, amplified telephone)	40%
Flexible work schedule/location	23%
Software	5%
Parking	3%
Other (e.g. change in type of work, change in work load, interpreters)	23%
No Response	7%

This table shows the length of time to receive an accommodation according to the type of accommodation made. [26]

	Almost Immediately	1 Month	2 Months	3 Months – 1 Year	More Than One Year	Never Received It	No Response
Overall (n=178)	**42%**	**11%**	**7%**	**11%**	**10%**	**15%**	**5%**
Work station (chair, height of desk, amplified telephone) (n=60)	53%	13%	10%	8%	12%	-	3%
Flexible work schedule/location (n=34)	53%	12%	6%	12%	15%	-	3%
Software (n=7)	43%	-	-	57%	-	-	-
Other (e.g. change in type of work, change in work load, interpreters) (n=35)	54%	3%	6%	17%	17%	-	3%

---

[26] Note that "parking" is not presented due to small sample size.

14. Since you have worked for the State, have you had a problem getting a job accommodation(s)?

	ME (n=178)	VT (n=227)
Yes	32%	17%
No	62%	48%
Does not apply. I do not need any job accommodation(s).	-	35%
No Response	6%	-

This chart shows the primary disability of those who had a problem getting a job accommodation.

Those who had a problem getting a job accommodation, by primary disability

Category	Value
Physical health (n=121)	35%
Mental health (n=27)	22%
Sensory (n=20)	15%
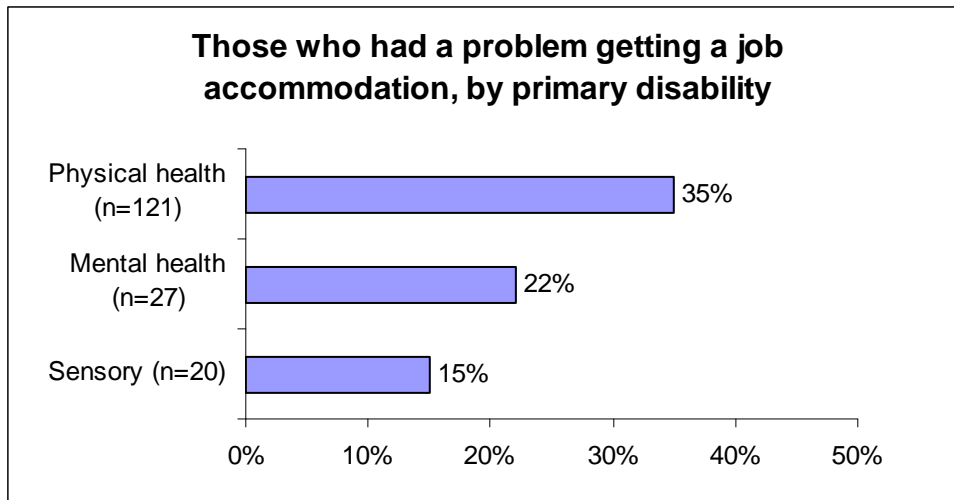
Forty percent of men (n=67) reported having a problem getting a job accommodation, whereas only twenty-six percent of women reported a problem (n=108). This was not a statistically significant finding.

15. If yes, what accommodation did you feel you needed but did not get? (n=57)

Work station	19%
Flexible schedule/location	16%
Work place (e.g. ventilation system, doors and handles)	7%
None	5%
Software	4%
Parking	4%
Other (e.g. change in type of work, change in work load)	39%
No Response	7%

16. Did you get other accommodations instead?

	ME (n=57)	VT (n=39)
Yes	26%	26%
No	58%	74%
No Response	16%	-

17. If yes, what? (n=15)

ME (n=15)	Vermont
Work location changed	Deal with problems on own
Reassignment	Using healthcare benefits
Start time was adjusted	Change in workstation
Accommodations for deafness	
Keyboard	

18. If a job accommodation was denied for you, what reason did the agency give you for the denial? (n=45)

Agency did not consider me disabled	7%
Money	4%
Did not follow instructions for requesting accommodation	4%
Unable to justify a need for the job accommodation	2%
Not job function related	2%
Undue hardship on the agency	-
Other reason(s) (please specify):	56%
Don't know	11%
No Response	13%

"Other" responses included (n=25): would be accommodated when agency moved to new location, request was not seen as "job accommodation" by the law, vacation time could not be used for sick time, alternative accommodation was not acceptable, fear that other employees would ask for same accommodation, flexible schedule was not possible for the job.

19. We are interested in learning about things that help people with disabilities return to work or maintain a job. If you have a disability, please tell us if any of the things listed below assisted you to return to work. (**Mark one response to each statement**)

Statement		Very much	Somewhat	Not very much	Not at all	Need, but do not have	Do not need	No Response
a. I am assisted with help caring for children or others in my home.	ME (n=339)	2%	* (less than 1%)	1%	5%	2%	74%	16%
	VT (n=200)	2%	2%	1%	5%	2%	90%	-
b. I am assisted with help with personal needs such as bathing, dressing, and housework.	ME (n=339)	1%	2%	1%	6%	2%	73%	15%
	VT[27]	2%	3%	0%	4%	3%	90%	-
c. I am helped by personal/medical care assistance services at work.	ME (n=339)	1%	1%	* (less than 1%)	7%	2%	74%	16%
	VT (n=194)	3%	3%	1%	6%	2%	87%	-
d. I am helped by reliable transportation to and from work.	ME (n=339)	4%	1%	-	7%	2%	70%	16%
	VT (n=194)	11%	1%	1%	6%	2%	81%	-
e. I am helped by a job with a flexible work schedule.	ME (n=339)	13%	15%	2%	5%	5%	47%	14%
	VT (n=199)	21%	13%	2%	2%	10%	52%	-
f. I am helped by a job with flexible work activities.	ME (n=339)	14%	17%	2%	5%	4%	45%	13%
	VT	RESPONSES WERE INCORPORATED IN 'E'						-
g. I am helped by special equipment or medical devices	ME (n=339)	10%	5%	2%	7%	3%	58%	9%
	VT (n=190)	9%	8%	2%	4%	2%	75%	-
h. I am helped by a supportive employer and/or co-workers.	ME (n=339)	28%	20%	5%	5%	3%	26%	14%
	VT (n=206)	46%	18%	3%	3%	6%	25%	-

---

[27] Number of respondents not reported for this question.

The following chart shows respondents' ratings of how helpful the following supports are and if this support is needed.[28]

Of those that reported the following primary disabilities, this chart shows the percent that reported the following types of supports are helpful.

At All Helpful Supports	Physical Health Condition (n=226)	Mental Health Condition (n=45)	Sensory Condition (n=43)	Cognitive Condition (n=14)
Caring for children or others in home	3%	2%	-	-
Personal care	3%	2%	2%	-
Personal/medical care at work	1%	2%	-	-
Reliable transportation to work	4%	4%	9%	-
Flexible work schedule	28%	44%	12%	21%
Flexible work activities	35%	29%	12%	36%
Special equipment/ medical devices	15%	4%	26%	7%
Supportive employer/ co-workers	46%	64%	42%	50%

Of those that reported the following primary disabilities, this chart shows the percent that reported needing the following types of supports, but currently not having this support.

Needed Supports	Physical Health Condition (n=226)	Mental Health Condition (n=45)	Sensory Condition (n=43	Cognitive Condition (n=14)
Caring for children or others in home	1%	2%	-	7%
Personal care	3%	-	2%	7%
Personal/medical care at work	2%	-	-	7%
Reliable transportation to work	2%	-	-	7%
Flexible work schedule	5%	4%	2%	7%
Flexible work activities	4%	4%	-	7%

---

[28] "At all helpful" was created by combining "very much" and "somewhat" responses. "Not very helpful" was created by combining "not very much" and "not at all" responses. "No response" and "Do not need" are not included in this analysis.

Needed Supports	Physical Health Condition (n=226)	Mental Health Condition (n=45)	Sensory Condition (n=43	Cognitive Condition (n=14)
Special equipment/ medical devices	2%	-	7%	14%
Supportive employer/ co-workers	3%	4%	-	-

20. If you are helped by special equipment or medical devices, please specify equipment or devices: (n=59)
    - ADA door handles
    - Keyboard
    - Cubicle window
    - Hand controls for vehicle
    - Hearing aides
    - Leg and knee braces
    - Listening device for meetings
    - Chair
    - Telephone amplifier
    - TTY
    - Voice recognition software
    - Wheelchair

21. Does someone in your household or immediate family meet the definition of disability? Disability is defined in question 7. Immediate family includes your parents, children, spouse, partner and siblings. (n=3,446)

Yes	22%
No	76%
No Response	3%

Of those who reported "yes" to having a family member with a disability (n=756), a significant number of respondents (38%) were between the ages of 51-60.[29]

Of those who reported "yes" to having a family member with a disability (n=756), a significant number of respondents (18%) had reported they also had a disability themselves.[30] For those with disabilities themselves (n=136), having someone in their home or family with a disability was more of an issue for those between the ages of 51-60 (45%) and the ages of 41-50 (29%). These were not statistically significant results. For those with disabilities themselves (n=136), the most common disability respondents reported they had were physical disabilities. This was not a statistically significant result.

---

[29] p=.0002
[30] p=<.0001

22. What type of disability does someone in your household or family member have? (n=756) [Respondents could only check off one disability].

Disability[31]	Percentage
Physical health condition	49%
Mental health condition	16%
Sensory condition	8%
Cognitive condition	9%
Developmental condition	6%
Acquired Brain Injury	2%
Other: please tell us:	9%
No Response	2%

"Other" responses included (n=67): multiple disabilities, stoke-related issues, older age-related issues, Alzheimer's.

23. Have you ever had to provide care for this individual that caused you to miss work? (n=756)

Yes	58%
No	40%
No Response	2%

Of those who have provided care that caused them to miss work (n=436), over half (51%) cared for an individual with a physical disability.

24. Are the current supports in the workplace adequate to allow you to provide care for this individual? (n=756)

Yes	64%
No	8%
Don't know	21%
No Response	8%

Of those who reported the current supports are adequate to provide care (n=481), over half (51%) cared for an individual with a physical disability.

---

[31] Physical disabilities such as arthritis, amputation, spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, seizures, Parkinson's disease, head injury, heart disease, circulation problem, emphysema, cystic fibrosis or asthma. Mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, manic-depression, or schizophrenia. Sensory conditions such as deaf or hard-of-hearing, blindness or vision impairment. Cognitive conditions such as learning disability – Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), dyslexia. Developmental conditions such as mental retardation, autism.

25. What additional support do you need to provide care for this individual? (n=271)

Flexible schedule	19%
None	10%
Leave time (sick/vacation time)	6%
Not applicable	5%
Attitude of staff	2%
Emotional support	1%
Other	11%
Unknown	4%
No Response	42%

"Other" responses included (n=30): support for workload (back up system), increased financial support, increased in home care support, information on the rules and their rights.

26. What is your race? (Mark only one)

Race[32]	ME Survey (n=3,446)	ME 2005 American Community Survey (n=1,283,673)	VT (n=1,419)
White (not of Hispanic origin)	93%	97%	97%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1%	1%	2%
Hispanic	1%	1%	1%
Black (not Hispanic origin)	* (less than 1%)	1%	* (less than 1%)
Asian or Pacific Islander	* (less than 1%)	1%	1%
No Response	5%	-	-

---

[32] **White:** Persons having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East.
American Indian or Alaskan Native: Persons having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, and who maintain cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.
Hispanic: Persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or any other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.
Black: Persons have origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa
Asian or Pacific Islander: Persons having origins in any of the original peoples of the far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands. This area includes, for example, China, India, Japan, Korea, the Philippine Islands and Samoa.

27. Have you ever felt that you were discriminated against during your employment with Maine State government because of your: (Please check all that apply)

	ME (n=3,446)	VT (n=1,443)
Gender	8%	13%
Age	4%	7%
Disability	2%	3%
Race	1%	1%
Sexual orientation	1%	1%
Religion	1%	2%
Ethnic group	1%	1%
National origin	* (less than 1%)	1%
Color	* (less than 1%)	* (less than 1%)
Other (describe)	5%	6%
Does not apply to me	58%	55%
No Response	12%	-

"Other" responses included (n=148)

Weight	10%
Internal politics	7%
Personality conflict	5%
Political	5%
Education	5%
Length of time on the job	4%
Marital status	3%
Veteran/military	3%
Union	3%
Not born in Maine	2%
Pregnancy	2%
Taking care of a person with a disability	2%
Illness	1%
Height	1%
Other (e.g. socioeconomic status, affirmative action, computer skills, dress, outspokenness)	48%

28. If you checked any of the above, who was responsible for the discrimination?
    (Check any that apply)

	ME (n=1,038)	VT (n=1,443)[33]
Supervisor	27%	11%
Manager	22%	10%
Co-Worker	15%	9%
Client/Public	4%	3%
No Response	9%	-

29. When did this occur? (Check only one response) (n=1,038)

Within the past year	17%
More than a year ago but less than 5 years	18%
More than 5 years ago but less than 10 years	8%
More than 10 years ago	9%
No Response	47%

30. Are you aware of the procedures for filing a complaint about workplace
    discrimination?

	ME (n=3,446)	VT (n=1,311)
Yes	79%	68%
No	16%	32%
No Response	5%	-

---

[33] Please note that total sample for this question was for people who had responded to Q27 with a response other than "No Response" or "Does not apply to me". Vermont's study includes everyone who responded to Q27, including those who responded "Does not apply to me".

31. Do you have ideas about what the State could do to create a more supportive or healthy environment for employees with disabilities? If so, please describe. (n=745).[34]

Positive work environment already exists	16%
Education	14%
Work environment (physical)	12%
Training	8%
Flexible work schedule	6%
Management issue	4%
Hiring people with disabilities	3%
Follow through/ discipline/accountability	3%
Human Resources issue	2%
Workspace	2%
Workload	1%
Leave time (sick, vacation, disability)	1%
Support for staff that have families with disabilities	1%
Information technology	1%
Parking	1%
Advocate	1%
Other	25%

---

[34] Note that sample size is only for those who responded ("no response" and "not sure/no comments" answers are not shown).

Sample quotes from suggestions in each category:

Positive work environment already exists
- My experience has been that the State does well in this area.
- I think State government does very well supporting people with disabilities, very accommodating.
- Compared to the private sector…there seems to be a much more supportive environment in State employment. I see many more 'disabled' employees than I ever did working in non-State jobs.

Education
- Establish organizational cultures conducive to diversity.
- More education for employees who are already working within State government, especially those people who are responsible for hiring.
- Educate the employees who do not have these disabilities as to how difficult it can be in the daily life of someone with a disability.
- On-going discussion about disabilities, present success stories - work to remove the 'veil of secrecy'.
- I think there is not enough education of the worker about how to sign up for Family Medical Leave and how to ask for accommodations. This causes much unease to the affected employee.
- More interactive activities when/where people with disabilities and people without can talk together about what the 'disabled' experience is like.
- More public awareness. I think the State does a pretty good job of having people with visible disabilities in the workplace, but I am not sure we do much to make the public aware of the fact or to step forward as an employer to promote the employment of people with disabilities.
- Educate State employees about the accommodations needs of persons with disabilities. Make all programs accessible.
- Anything that would convince State of Maine managers and supervisors that the State of Maine is serious about eliminating discrimination…
- Sensitivity and/or awareness education for management.

Work environment (physical)
- Make all facilities ADA compliant…
- Buildings, parking lots, entry ways, doors, etc. should be handicapped accessible whether the building is owned by the State or is leased for State office space.
- Air quality should be better.

Training
- More training, for ALL employees, on ADA laws, on examples of how employer can accommodate various disabilities. Discussion on the topic of disabilities needs to become much more commonplace. I don't believe the majority of employees are comfortable asking for special accommodations.

- Evacuation plans for buildings (State owned and rented) need to be more precise about how to evacuate people who have trouble walking long distances or climbing stairs. I know several managers who had great difficulty during fire drills evacuating people who use oxygen tanks, wheelchairs or have lung/heart trouble that prevents them walking more than a few yards quickly.
- Require periodic staff training about the life experience of people with disabilities to educate and raise awareness. Create opportunities for sharing information, experiences and feelings.
- Train supervisors about how to utilize people with disabilities more efficiently. Share examples of success stories of those that are disabled.
- Managers and supervisors need to be trained in and dedicated to the ways of reasonable accommodations. I've experienced that when this happens, the rewards are bountiful.
- Training to managers about confidentiality about workers comp and disability issues.
- Regular mandatory meetings or trainings about disability rights/discrimination issues.
- Training for everyone or at least for employees who are likely to be on the front line with clients and employment applicants.
- Have regular refresher classes.

Flexible work schedule
- More flexibility in scheduling - in a manner that would not compromise job performance.
- Job sharing and part time work would be very useful rather than just offering full time work. This would allow people with both physical and mental health disabilities to work without the stress of full time work. It is done much more regularly in the private sector where job carving and sharing is more common place.
- …work from home, be able to leave work if emergency situation, use of sick time to care for or go to appointments of disabled family member…

Management issue
- Make sure direct supervisors are held accountable if they do not deal with an issue of harassment or discrimination.
- Have supervisors and managers be more understanding.
- My disability was talked about and laughed about in certain meetings by personnel in higher positions; some of my coworkers who happened to be in attendance contacted me to and informed me of this…
- Management has their favorites and others who are not in that group are more or less ignored…
- Many managers in State Government are poor supervisors
- … Get rid of the Good old boy system…

Hiring people with disabilities

- The State could take a more active role in hiring and accommodating people with disabilities. Actively recruit people with disabilities (as the law allows).
- For applicants with disabilities, there should be better outreach and job development to encourage new employment of people with disabilities.

Follow through/discipline/accountability
- Hold people accountable for their actions and not simply shrug off complaints when filed.
- Consistent enforcement of existing laws and policies in all State departments with proper discipline for supervisors and managers who violate these polices and laws.
- Less tolerance for offensive Statements.
- See that policies and 'visions' created years ago are implemented and enforced at regional and local levels.

Human Resources issue
- More informed HR personnel about perceived problems with absenteeism and working with employees to reduce liability and to help employees become as effective as possible. Need to do something about retaliating, bullying supervisors.
- Personnel officers in agencies are in the position to know about most people with disabilities and can individually act where needed. I assume this is being done, no evidence to the contrary but would be a place to focus.
- Hold offenders accountable.
- Making sure that employees know what to do in case of discrimination.
- As a person that supervisors, when HR is considering someone with a disability as an employee, they skip the tests and make a decision, don't discuss it with the supervisors. They make the decision if the person meets the minimal qualifications…

Workspace
- Work with the Office of Elder Affairs for ideas for redesign of work environments and other accommodations that will benefit both people with disabilities and aging employees with chronic conditions that impair function; universal design works for all.
- Make sure all work places are readily accessible to [people with disabilities].

Workload
- State employees are so over worked now that a decrease in anyone's work time will make additional difficulties for other workers as they have to take up the slack.
- I believe that almost all of my coworkers would try very hard to be supportive of an employee with disabilities. However, with everyone having overwhelming work loads, it should be recognized as a work assignment and responsibility for someone to ensure that the employee with disabilities has what they need rather than to just assume someone somewhere will be kind enough to assist them.

- The State should be aware of the repercussions to the non-disabled employee who has to pick up the extra work for an absent employee.

Leave time (sick, vacation, disability)
- My biggest issue is having enough sick time to take care of my families extra needs. 8 hours per month is not enough…[suggest] earning sick time at the same rate that you earn vacation time - based on how may years of service you have to the State.
- …have a different type of leave, like disability leave…
- One thing would be sick leave banks - where all who want to can donate sick leave that has been unused - to another person who may need it.

Support for staff that have families with disabilities
- Retirement should not be affected staff need to take time off or limit their schedule due to caring for others at home.
- The State should provide better supports for workers who have a disabled person as a member of their family.

Information technology
- Make all software accessible as well as all presentations - make presenters aware of the special needs so they can adjust their presentations for the visual, hearing and ambulatory disabled.
- The Office of Information Technology, in which all computer services and support have been centralized, needs to develop expertise in voice-activated software and develop a technical assistance program that is readily available to employees. OIT needs to adapt Dragon software to the States Oracle, Access, and Excel.

Parking
- Lack of snow and ice removal in parking and access routes to buildings for people with disabilities.
- Adequate handicapped parking.

Advocate
- Assign someone at each office to be the contact person to help someone with disabilities to acquire any necessary consultation and/or equipment, software, etc., to make the job easier...such as someone to show the person how to adapt their computer for someone with a visual impairment, obtain voice activated word processing software for someone who finds data entry painful, etc. These types of assistance should be available without filing a worker's comp claim.
- Establish an office that assists individuals with disabilities and other types of workplace accommodations for those that don't necessarily meet the full disability designation but could be more effective and need less time off from work because the State will accommodate their specific limitations.

Other
- Do more to encourage and promote healthy life styles.
- Do not treat [people with disabilities] any different than any other employee.
- Look into the education levels people should be encouraged to seek further training to help with their own independence.
- …as long as the lines of communication between employees and our employer remain open then any concerns that may arise will be taken care of properly and in a timely fashion.
- Avoid forcing solutions on all, instead of tailoring a solution to the person who wants help.
- Becoming pro-active instead of re-active…Immediately, or at the very least promptly, provide special accommodations, etc to the employee and THEN conduct whatever investigation or research they deem necessary in order to determine the factuality of the requests for special accommodations. This is in contrast to the current policy of immediately denying employee requests for special accommodations until there is a resolve that at times can take an extended period of time to accomplish…In the meantime, the employee continues to work in unsafe working environments or under conditions that only exacerbate the need for accommodations in the first place.
- Recognize that people without disabilities have difficulties in life and in some cases these difficulties are more significant than a bona fide disability. I have a recorded history of having a disability, but felt guilty getting a better deal than others simply by labeling myself. It is in fact a reverse discrimination problem. I am doing well but I watch people who have labeled themselves disabled get services and jobs before non labeled individuals. Again in some cases the difficulties overcome equal to if not more significant than some who has a disability. It just does not seem right.

Appendix B: Discussion Group Results

State Employee Survey Follow Up Discussion Groups
October 2007

Introduction

At the end of the state employee survey on disability, participants were given the opportunity to be a part of a discussion group to further discuss some of the issues raised in the survey. Over 50 people responded with initial interest. Potential participants were contacted for discussion groups throughout the state. After contacting participants, there were only enough respondents in the Augusta area to hold two discussions. People who were unable to participate were given the option of having a phone interview. A total of five people participated in the focus groups and twelve people were interviewed. Many of the comments in the interviews echoed what was discussed in the focus groups. The following is a summary of the focus groups and interview that were conducted in October 2007.

Respondents in both focus groups and interviews primarily consisted of employees that had worked for the state six or more years and had family members with disabilities. A large number of those interviewed had disabilities themselves.

		Focus Group (n=5)	Interview (n=12)
Supervision	Has supervising responsibility	3	2
Length of Employment	2-5 years	1	2
	6-10 years	2	3
	11+ years	2	7
Disability	Has a disability	2	9
Family Member	Has a family member with a disability	4	7

Overall, some recurring themes included the need for supervisor training on disability employment, respect for all individuals, understanding of disability issues, and knowledge about the current system for accommodations, internal supports, and external support resources. Leave time was a big concern for many, and trying to figure out how to make everything work created more stress to an already stressful situation. Having someone to go to about questions one might have on disability issues was mentioned as a needed resource. While going to one's supervisor is often the first strep, going beyond, such as human resources, is not always seen as an option for employees. Demystifying the system of how to get support is a key part of making a supportive environment for workers with disabilities.

What's Working

Participants noted several positive experiences with disability issues while working for the state. Participants mentioned the state has made an effort to make building facilities accessible for all employees. Some employees also have a flexible work schedule, as well as supervisors that understand. Accommodations have been provided for several employees, and some departments truly embrace hiring people with disabilities. A supportive supervisor has made a big difference for some employees. The benefits provided by working for the state was also noted as a positive aspect of working for the state. "[When working for the private sector], their benefits could not hold a candle to the state's benefits." The importance of good medical coverage was mentioned as essential to making continued employment possible. Without accommodations and the support provided, they would not be able to work as much as they currently do.

Areas for Improvement

While some experienced these positive elements, some did not have the same experience. Some key issues mentioned by several people included both supervisors and co-workers not understanding disability issues. This is especially difficult if the disability is not obvious. "If you can't see it, it can't be." Understanding the process for requesting and getting an accommodation is not always known by both staff and supervisors. Having questions answered about disability issues is not always easy, and can sometimes involve multiple people or departments to get an answer. In addition, there is inconsistency in policies and practices due to changing staff every few years that makes it difficult to fully understand the system. Getting needs met is sometimes slow and difficult. Even when an accommodation is provided, changing departments can result in having to restart the accommodation process, since you can't take the accommodation with you from one department to another. While some buildings are maintained and accessible, this is not the case for all facilities. A key issue that many mentioned as a major barrier to improving these issues is money. In terms of accommodations, "There is no line item [in the budget] for accommodations."

Lack of understanding by one's supervisor and mixed messages from management were mentioned as two key problems that currently exist. Attitude is key. Management needs to see the person as an individual with skills and see how they can maximize their skills on the job. Having a preconceived idea of how a job is to be done can be a barrier to people with disabilities working. Departments handle issues differently. In some departments, the burden is on the person with a disability to have to fight for themselves. Being put in this position, especially by supervisors, can result in co-workers not respecting the employee as an equal. In other departments, everyone is responsible and one person does not feel singled out or ostracized.

Accommodations

Accommodations can include a number of things, such as flexible work schedule, adjustments to a work station, and changing job responsibilities. While accommodations may be provided, they may not always fully meet the need or may take a long time to getting the need met. One respondent mentioned they had received an accommodation and stated, "They [the state] has come a long ways, but it does have to do with the supervisor you have." How to request an accommodation is not clear to all employees, including supervisors. One supervisor noted she was not aware of the paperwork she needed to fill out for her own accommodation request. Flexible scheduling is not always an available option to people. "For people with disabilities, 20 hours a week would work, but there's not an option to work part time. [I] don't want to give up completely because I want to be able to work. I'm trying to save my strength – flexibility at work would help." Going to the employee assistance program has also been found to be not helpful, as they do not have many resources. The unions were not seen as being involved in disability issues or providing support to employees.

The time frame for getting an accommodation or following doctors orders has been a struggle for some. Some have mentioned the time to get accommodations can be longer than expected and can pose a real problem, especially if the need is immediate. The number of layers to get assistance was mentioned by more than one respondent. "You just can't ask a question. You have to go through two to three department levels. Anywhere along this line could stop getting a request." Two similar situations were mentioned where it has taken months for management to enforce the environment required by a doctor's note. Even so, the burden is on the employee to make formal complaints when the note is not being followed. The energy involved in consistent fighting for one's accommodation can be draining.

Family Members with Disabilities

In addition to the challenges faced by workers with disabilities, some staff have family members with disabilities that they provide care for. A flexible work schedule was a key element to making this arrangement work. Caring for family members with disabilities often includes having to take time off for their medical appointments. Some supervisors are not supportive of this as others are. One employee took three days of to care for their family member, but was stressed because of

her caseload. "…they expect us to work from home, which is draining if trying to take care of someone."

In addition, having enough leave time to provide care when needed was a challenge faced by several. Some departments allow staff to donate unused leave time into a pool that other employees can use when their own resources are used up. Participants mentioned this was a great system, but was department specific and not available to all employees. Flexible working schedule or working from home options were two accommodations that respondents felt would be very helpful for people to be more successful in the workplace.

External Supports
Participants were asked about what external supports have helped people with disabilities be able to work. There were fewer responses to this question, as many did not have a lot of experience with external supports. Family support was mentioned as a very important external support that people relied on. Supportive co-workers were another key support mentioned. Other supports, such as vocational rehabilitation and Career Centers, were helpful resources to some, but not to others. Participants mentioned there is a lack of knowledge by both co-workers and supervisors about external supports available.

Ideas for Improvement
Some ideas were raised on how to make a healthy and supportive work environment. One idea was to have a support group or informal network for people with disabilities to provide both support and information that may be needed. This group could be a way to share experiences and ideas and to test the reality of one's experiences. "There's been no outlet to discuss these issues." Another idea was to have a central source of information about internal and external supports available. Especially for someone with a "new" disability, there needs to be some kind of system set up or orientation or someone to go to for assistance. "Disability may be new to you, but they don't say to you, 'You have a disability – here is the form to fill out [to get an accommodation].' There is no regular system to define how to get things." A disability coordinator was one position mentioned that might address this, or a hotline could also help in this process. Having a place to go to talk confidentially about issues going on in the workplace is needed. Going to the supervisor is not always an option, as the issue may be with the supervisor.

The importance of management and employees needing more resources and training was stressed by several respondents. Understanding and sensitivity training by supervisors and co-workers is key to making the workplace more supportive. This training could include information about disability issues, internal supports, such as how to request an accommodation, as well as external supports and what might be available to assist people. Providing this training may be needed on an ongoing basis for those that have been in the system awhile. One respondent felt information was not shared early enough with people. Waiting until a situation becomes desperate is often too late for getting information. Sharing information and services available should go beyond what each department does on their own; there should be more sharing between departments. One idea is to create an information kit or booklet for management to assist them in knowing what resources are available. Other ideas included developing a statewide pool for sick time that employees could donate unused time. This exists in some departments, but is not available statewide.