



Questions to Consider when Evaluating Potential Employers

Q: What is the Civil Rights policy? Are sexual orientation and gender identity included?

Q: Are health insurance benefits offered to same sex partners of employees and the children of same sex partners?

Q: Can paid or unpaid leave that be used to the meet the needs of an employee's same-sex partner or the partner's children? For example, leave used to attending routine family medical appointments, school and early childhood educational activities, and elderly relatives' health or care needs.

Q: If employee assistance programs are offered that provide free short term counseling for employees, and their families, are they also offered to same sex domestic partners and their children? Is the employee assistance program trained in addressing issues regarding sexual orientation and gender transition?

Q: If child care services or subsidies are offered, are they extended to children of same sex partners?

Q: If relocation services are offered, are they extended same sex partners of employees?

Q: If other amenities are offered to employees, their spouses, and their children, such as participation in retirement investment and long-term insurance plans, access to fitness facilities,

including credit union membership, and access to counseling services, are they also offered to same sex partners and their children?

Q: What is the process for obtaining benefits for same sex partners and their children? Is there a form to fill out?

Q: What work is being done to provide new benefits to same-sex domestic partners of your employees?

Q: Are leadership and human resources active participants in the process?

Q: Is there a recruiting and retention plan for the LGBT community?

Q: Is sexual orientation training provided to employees? If so, how?

Q: Are LGBT employees out in the workforce? If so, at what levels do they work? (i.e. leadership and management)

Q: How do leadership and management demonstrate for support for the LGBT community? Examples: including positive examples of LGBT people in outreach materials, participation in the "It Gets Better" campaign, recognition of Pride month with activities, LGBT emphasis or resource group.

For more information on employment opportunities with the federal government, please visit:

<http://www.usajobs.gov/>

For more information about the Natural Resources Conservation Services, please visit:

<http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov/>

<http://www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov/>

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/home>

A History of LGBT Inclusion in the U.S. Department of Agriculture

Discrimination against LGBT individuals wasn't invented in 1953, but that is where we will start our history. Presidential Executive Order 10450 was issued by President Eisenhower in 1953. It required investigations of federal employees for security clearances and specifically made mention of 'sexual perversion' as reason for denial and removal from service. This era was known for McCarthyism and, to a lesser degree, the Lavender Scare. During this time homosexuals were considered as dangerous a threat to national security as Communists.

In April of 1993, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy issued the Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Civil Rights Policy Statement which specifically prohibited discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation. Two months later a Departmental Task Force was formed to develop recommendations designed to implement the Secretary's policy regarding this issue.

In 1998, President Clinton issued Presidential Executive Order 13087. It amended Executive Order 11478, which covers equal employment opportunity in the federal government, to provide for a uniform policy for the federal government to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation. Executive Order 13087 was issued a full five years AFTER the USDA's Policy Statement on sexual orientation inclusion! This demonstrates how the USDA was leading the charge on sexual orientation inclusion.

Then in July 1999, USDA announced the formation of the Second USDA Task Force on Sexual Orientation. The Task Force found: "If the Department fully implements its sexual orientation nondiscrimination and diversity policy, USDA stands to gain greater openness, job satisfaction, and retention among its workforce; increased productivity and customer service; and the prevention of costly complaints. We have estimated the potential savings that could be realized by the Department through this course of action to be approximately \$23 million annually." And that was \$23 million in the year 2000.

In the fall of 2000, the Secretary of Agric Advisory Council on sexual orientation was established: Gay & Lesbian Employee Advisory Council (GLEAC). It advised USDA leadership on issues affecting LGBT employees, assisted in the implementation of Departmental policies, and developed and delivered training addressing sexual orientation nondiscrimination.

Finally in June 2009, Secretary Vilsack signed Departmental Regulation 4230-002 creating a Special Emphasis Program for LGBT employees. This effectively replaced the Gay and Lesbian Employees Advisory Council (GLEAC).

Every year USDA and NRCS's Civil Rights Policy Statements are reissued by the Secretary of Agriculture and the Agency Chief. Our Civil Rights Policy now specifically states, "It is NRCS' policy to treat all customers and employees equitably regardless of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and expression), religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or familial status, parental status, and protected genetic information..."

For more information on the USDA's commitment to civil rights and LGBT inclusivity, please visit the following website:

<http://www.ascr.usda.gov/>