



focus: pregnancy discrimination

How to engage in the interactive process to handle potential physical limitations

One of your crew members, Tina, just told you that she's pregnant. Of course, you're happy for her – and you told her so – but you can't help but wonder how she'll be able to continue to perform her job duties until she goes on maternity leave.

In order to reduce the chances of a pregnancy-discrimination lawsuit, you'll need to engage in the interactive process with Tina. Meet with her as soon as you can to come up with reasonable accommodations that you can both agree on.

Keep in mind that the accommodations will depend on the nature of Tina's job. Review her job description and note the physical requirements of her

job responsibilities.

Remember that pregnancy has side effects, such as nausea, dehydration, low blood sugar, swelling of extremities, increased body temperature, anemia, bladder dysfunction and fatigue, that could affect Tina's job performance.

The tricky part

The tricky part is that you can't assume Tina won't be able to handle the job because of these potential side effects, no matter how demanding the physical requirements of her job might be. Consider asking Tina for a doctor's note detailing any physical restrictions she might have, and then work with her to

figure out how to accommodate these potential limitations.

Fortunately, there are some options available to help deal with her restrictions.

For instance, you could allow Tina to sit while she's working, if possible. Or you could offer Tina more frequent or longer breaks, including bathroom, water, or rest breaks. Of course, you'll have to give her time off for doctors' visits.

You might also be able to offer her job restructuring, light-duty or desk-duty assignments, modified work schedules, or even the choice to work from home.

Caution: You can't force her to accept an accommodation she refuses to agree to.