

See Spot Run? The Dogs in the Workplace Debate

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Synopsis

In response to employee requests, Tony Treanor, Director of Human Resources at Northwestern Counseling & Support Services (NCSS), was faced with making an important policy decision about permitting dogs at NCSS. Treanor, a pet owner himself, was open to the idea but was concerned about the consequences of allowing dogs in the workplace. For example, would all employees and clients welcome dogs at NCSS? How would people who fear or are allergic to dogs react to dogs in the workplace? Should he maintain the current unwritten policy of prohibiting dogs or should he adopt a policy permitting them? Adopting an informal “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy on dogs at work was also an option. Concerned with maintaining good employee morale, Treanor researched the issue and learned about legal issues and pros and cons of permitting dogs at work.

Learning Outcomes

The outcomes of this case are:

1. Identify the arguments for permitting dogs in the workplace;
2. Identify the arguments against permitting dogs in the workplace;
3. Explain the law surrounding service animals at work;
4. Describe the impact dogs at work may have on employee morale, stress, and health;
5. Outline the challenge of meeting the needs of multiple stakeholders when developing human resource policies; and
6. Create a dogs in the workplace policy.

Application

The case is appropriate for undergraduate human resource management, management, or ethical issues in human resource management courses.

Key Words

Dogs in the workplace, employee morale, stress management, human resource policy development.

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