

Copy

October 12, 2016

Dear Ms. Susan Alford,

I am writing to inform you of incidents in which DSS supervisors, Gilda Kennedy and Hazel Parker, violated state and federal laws. I was employed with Project Hope for about four months. In that time, I asked for accommodations for my disabilities. I submitted an FMLA form to HR, which was accepted. I also was asked to comply with Vocational Rehabilitation recommendations, which I did. I had requested several accommodations, which only one was granted. Once this one accommodation was approved, I was terminated along with three other coworkers. I was informed by Hazel Parker that I was being terminated for using a flexible work schedule that had already been approved. I have emails from Tamara James which support this. When I first brought my disabilities to the attention of my supervisor, Leon Carter, he laughed at me. This was indicative of how myself and other employees were treated while we worked for Project Hope. During our time with DSS, we were exposed to a very hostile work environment, which included harassment, humiliation and retaliation by Gilda Kennedy and Hazel Parker. If you check into it, you will find that many employees made formal complaints against them.

There were also blatant HIPPA violations in our office which we tried to address with Leon Carter, Gilda Kennedy and Hazel Parker. While I was employed in the Project Hope office, client's files were not secured and confidential information such as Social Security numbers, mental health and health related information was compromised. There was also an incident in which another coworker and Leon Carter did not report an incident in which a child was in danger. This was extremely concerning to us, but our concerns were ignored. Our staff was not supplied with essential equipment and supplies in order to do our jobs. One of my coworkers was buying her own supplies in order to perform her job duties. During this time, the staff was beginning to think that there was some mismanagement of federal funds due to our lack of resources. Gilda Kennedy and Leon Carter used our state vehicle for non-state related activities. On several occasions, I observed Leon Carter sexually harass two female coworkers. Things were quite the mess in the office for months while employees were all making complaints about the work environment and asking for answers from administration. Tamara James met with our staff to resolve issues and stated to us that she had an "open door policy" and that we should report to her if things don't improve. The situation didn't improve, in fact got worse. When we contacted Ms. James she asked that we go up the chain of command and that it was inappropriate for us to address her directly with our concerns. Once administration was informed that several of us were going to be making complaints to the federal government based on discrimination due to disability, hostile work environment, retaliation, sexual harassment and humiliation, we were terminated.

We appealed this decision with the Department of Employment and Workforce. The Tribunal found that we were discharged without cause and became unemployed through no fault of our own. We have suffered several other serious personal losses due to being discharged from employment and the loss of healthcare benefits. We have retained an attorney to help with this situation, but felt that you probably did not know about it. I would like to have an opportunity to discuss this matter further. I can be reached at (803)283-1252.

Sincerely,

Dr. Wayne Schaefer, Ed.D, LPC

