



U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Press Release

04-30-2024

Covenant Woods to Pay \$78,000 in EEOC Discrimination Lawsuit

Settles Federal Charges Retirement Community Fired Long-Tenured Receptionist Because of Age and Disability

ATLANTA – Covenant Woods Senior Living, LLC and BrightSpace Senior Living, LLC (together, “Covenant Woods”), which operate the Covenant Woods retirement community in Columbus, Georgia, will pay \$78,000 to settle an age and disability discrimination lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the federal agency announced today.

The EEOC charged in its suit that, in February 2022, Covenant Woods fired a long-tenured receptionist, despite having recognized the 78-year-old employee as one of its employees of the year in January 2022. The receptionist’s termination came shortly after a brief hospitalization. The EEOC alleged that upon the receptionist’s return to work, Covenant Woods’ general manager asked her how long she planned to continue to work, whether she needed to work, and whether she would prefer to spend her time traveling and seeing family instead of working.

Although the receptionist expressed her desire to continue working, and despite having never previously raised substantial performance concerns to the receptionist, the general manager told the receptionist that Covenant Woods had

lost confidence in her ability to work, citing her recent hospitalization. The receptionist was fired the next day and replaced by substantially younger employees.

This alleged conduct violated the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which respectively prohibit age and disability discrimination in the workplace. The EEOC filed suit (EEOC v. Covenant Woods Senior Living, LLC and BrightSpace Senior Living, LLC, Case No. 4:24-cv-00022-CDL) in U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Georgia after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its administrative conciliation process.

Resolving the suit, the court-approved two-year consent decree requires the company to provide monetary relief to the victim, revise its ADEA and ADA policies, post a notice in the workplace informing employees of the settlement, and train all employees and supervisors on their rights and responsibilities under both the ADEA and the ADA. Moreover, the company agreed to provide the EEOC with periodic reports regarding any future complaints of age or disability discrimination including a description of each employee's allegations and the company's response.

"Employers have a responsibility to evaluate an employee's performance without regard to age, if the employee is 40 and over, and without regard to an actual or perceived disability," said Marcus G. Keegan, regional attorney for the EEOC's Atlanta District Office. "The EEOC is pleased that through this early resolution, the former receptionist will be compensated, and that Covenant Woods has agreed to take steps to ensure that it meets its obligations under the ADEA and the ADA going forward."

Darrell Graham, district director of the Atlanta office, said, "Employees have a right to a fair evaluation of their performance, irrespective of their age or medical impairment. The EEOC remains committed to enforcing that right."

For more information on age discrimination, please visit [**https://www.eeoc.gov/age-discrimination**](https://www.eeoc.gov/age-discrimination) ([**https://www.eeoc.gov/age-discrimination**](https://www.eeoc.gov/age-discrimination)). For more information on disability discrimination, please visit [**https://www.eeoc.gov/disability-discrimination**](https://www.eeoc.gov/disability-discrimination) ([**https://www.eeoc.gov/disability-discrimination**](https://www.eeoc.gov/disability-discrimination)).

The EEOC's Atlanta District Office has jurisdiction over Georgia and the counties of Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, Colleton, Dorchester,

Georgetown, Hampton, Jasper, and Williamsburg in South Carolina.

The EEOC prevents and remedies unlawful employment discrimination and advances equal opportunity for all. More information is available at www.eeoc.gov (<http://www.eeoc.gov>). Stay connected with the latest EEOC news by subscribing to our [email updates \(https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEEOC/subscriber/new\)](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEEOC/subscriber/new).

Recent Press Releases from the Atlanta District Office

[EEOC Sues Reliable Maintenance Solutions for Disability Discrimination \(https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-reliable-maintenance-solutions-disability-discrimination\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-reliable-maintenance-solutions-disability-discrimination)

[EEOC Sues Lubin Logistics for Disability Discrimination \(https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-lubin-logistics-disability-discrimination\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-lubin-logistics-disability-discrimination)

[EEOC Sues Sureste Property Group for Race Discrimination \(https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-sureste-property-group-race-discrimination\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-sureste-property-group-race-discrimination)

Recent Press Releases on the Subject of Age

[Urbana School District No. 116 to Pay \\$206,301 in EEOC Age Discrimination Lawsuit \(https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/urbana-school-district-no-116-pay-206301-eeoc-age-discrimination-lawsuit\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/urbana-school-district-no-116-pay-206301-eeoc-age-discrimination-lawsuit)

[Gregg Orr Auto to Pay \\$325,000 to Resolve Disability and Age Discrimination Lawsuit \(https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/gregg-orr-auto-pay-325000-resolve-disability-and-age-discrimination-lawsuit\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/gregg-orr-auto-pay-325000-resolve-disability-and-age-discrimination-lawsuit)

[Ohio Amusement Park to Pay \\$50,000 in EEOC Age Discrimination Suit \(https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/ohio-amusement-park-pay-50000-eeoc-age-discrimination-suit\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/ohio-amusement-park-pay-50000-eeoc-age-discrimination-suit)

