

The 55-a Program



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Table of Contents

Introduction 3

What are the benefits of the 55-a Program?..... 3

Who is eligible for the 55-a Program? 4

Who decides if I am eligible? 4

If I am eligible and apply, am I guaranteed a job or a 55-a position? 5

How do I apply for the 55-a Program? 5

Should you still consider taking a civil service exam if you are applying to the 55-a program or even if you are already enrolled in the 55-a Program? 7



Introduction

The City of New York encourages employment of persons with disabilities. Most positions in City government require taking a written competitive civil service exam. Section 55-a of the New York Civil Service Law allows qualified persons with disabilities to be appointed to such competitive civil service positions without having to take the exam.

New Yorkers are working for the City in 55-a positions in jobs as diverse as administrative managers, clerical associates, caseworkers, construction project managers, auto mechanics, staff analysts, electricians, investigators, stock workers, plumbers, telecommunications managers, and sanitation workers.



What are the benefits of the 55-a Program?

The 55-a Program provides qualified individuals with a physical or mental disability the opportunity to work in positions in which merit and fitness is normally established through a competitive exam without having to take such an exam. In

other words, a qualified individual with a physical or mental disability does not have to take a competitive civil service exam to be appointed to a position normally within the competitive class.

That individual, if appointed, would be appointed as a non-competitive employee. Under New York Civil Service Law, many non-competitive employees get disciplinary rights after a period of five years. Some non-competitive employees obtain disciplinary rights sooner based on collective bargaining agreements.

Who is eligible for the 55-a Program?

To be eligible for the 55-a Program, you must: (a) be certified as having a mental or physical disability, and (b) be qualified to do the job, with or without a reasonable accommodation. Your skills, education and/or experience must meet the qualifications of the position.

Who decides if I am eligible?

The New York State Office of the Adult Career and Continuing Education Services - Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCESS-VR) certifies persons as physically or mentally disabled and makes determinations as to whether the individuals are qualified to satisfactorily perform the duties of the position sought. The New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) certifies persons who are blind and makes determinations as to whether the individuals are qualified to satisfactorily perform the duties of the position sought.





If I am eligible and apply, am I guaranteed a 55-a position?

No. There is no guarantee of receiving an interview or a position. Appointments through the 55-a Program are discretionary for each City agency. The law limits the number of 55-a positions in the City to 700.

How do I apply for the 55-a Program?

You may apply to any vacancy in the competitive class for which you qualify. To learn about job vacancies, visit www.nyc.gov/jobs and www.nyc.gov/careers. You may access the Internet at a public library if you do not have a computer.

You should write on your resume or cover letter that you would like to be considered for the position under the 55-a Program. It is up to the agency to designate such a position as 55-a.

When an agency wishes to make a 55-a appointment, the agency sends the request and the necessary paperwork to the Citywide 55-a Coordinator in DCAS' Office of Citywide Diversity and Equal Employment Opportunity (CDEEO). The Citywide 55-a Coordinator makes sure that the paperwork is in order and arranges for the candidate to be certified by the relevant State agency.

Upon certification by the State agency, a CDEEO panel reviews the documentation and approves or declines the request.

Upon approval by CDEEO, it is up to the hiring agency to make the appointment.

If you are a City employee, contact your agency's 55-a Coordinator. If you do not know who your agency's 55-a Coordinator is, please visit the following website (www.nyc.gov/eeo) or contact the DCAS' Office of Citywide Diversity and Equal Employment Opportunity. The contact information is at the back of this booklet.

If you don't work for the City, you may contact the Citywide 55-a Coordinator at (212) 386-0257 for more information.

Should you still consider taking a civil service exam if you are applying to the 55-a Program or even if you are already enrolled in the 55-a Program?

Yes. While the 55-a Program provides the opportunity to work in a position that would normally be within the competitive class, the Program does not provide all of the protections of a competitive class title. The only way to become permanent in a competitive class title is to take and pass a civil service exam, be appointed from the resulting eligible list, and successfully complete the probationary period.



If you are already in the 55-a Program, you can and should take any exam for which you meet the requirements. Such exams provide an opportunity for career advancement and greater job security.

What are some of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities' employment initiatives?

The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) provides employment preparedness opportunities for people with disabilities as the local coordinator of National Disability Mentoring Day (DMD). DMD, which began as a White House initiative, is held the third Wednesday in October and promotes career development through hands-on programs, job shadowing, and ongoing mentoring for students and job seekers with disabilities. MOPD also coordinates seminars with other city agencies and partner organizations with the goal of helping individuals become better prepared for the work place. Additionally, MOPD assists DCAS in providing outreach to 55a participants and candidates, and helps to educate agencies regarding the benefits of the 55a program.

**For additional information contact
the Citywide 55-a Coordinator**



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