

WAC 326-20-046 Proof of social disadvantage. (1) Evidence of individual social disadvantage must include the following elements:

(a) At least one objective distinguishing feature that has contributed to social disadvantage, such as race, ethnic origin, gender, disability, long-term residence in an environment isolated from the mainstream of American society, or other similar causes not common to individuals who are not socially disadvantaged;

(b) Personal experiences of substantial and chronic social disadvantage in American society, not in other countries; and

(c) Negative impact on entry into or advancement in the business world because of the disadvantage. The office will consider any relevant evidence in assessing this element. In every case, however, the office will consider education, employment and business history, where applicable, to see if the totality of circumstances shows disadvantage in entering into or advancing in the business world.

(i) Education. The office will consider such factors as denial of equal access to institutions of higher education and vocational training, exclusion from social and professional association with students or teachers, denial of educational honors rightfully earned, and social patterns or pressures which discouraged the individual from pursuing a professional or business education.

(ii) Employment. The office will consider such factors as unequal treatment in hiring, promotions and other aspects of professional advancement, pay and fringe benefits, and other terms and conditions of employment; retaliatory or discriminatory behavior by an employer or labor union; and social patterns or pressures which have channeled the individual into nonprofessional or nonbusiness fields.

(iii) Business history. The office will consider such factors as unequal access to credit or capital, acquisition of credit or capital under commercially unfavorable circumstances, unequal treatment in opportunities for government contracts or other work, unequal treatment by potential customers and business associates, and exclusion from business or professional organizations.

(2) With respect to subsection (1) of this section, the office notes that people with disabilities have disproportionately low incomes and high rates of unemployment. Many physical and attitudinal barriers remain to their full participation in education, employment, and business opportunities available to the general public. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed in recognition of the discrimination faced by people with disabilities. It is plausible that many individuals with disabilities—especially persons with severe disabilities (e.g., significant mobility, vision, or hearing impairments)—may be socially and economically disadvantaged.

(3) Under the laws concerning social and economic disadvantage, people with disabilities are not a group presumed to be disadvantaged. Nevertheless, the office shall look carefully at individual showings of disadvantage by individuals with disabilities, making a case-by-case judgment about whether such an individual meets the criteria of this section. Subject to Title II of the ADA, the office must also ensure its SEDBE programs are accessible to individuals with disabilities. For example, physical barriers or the lack of application and information materials in accessible formats cannot be permitted to thwart the access of potential applicants to the certification process or other services made available to SEDBEs and applicants.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 39.19.030 and 39.19.120. WSR 04-08-093, § 326-20-046, filed 4/6/04, effective 5/7/04.]