

When is it legal to be fired?

When can I be fired?

Most jobs are *at will*. That means your employer can fire you at any time and for any reason, unless the reason you are fired is illegal.

When is it illegal to be fired?

It is **illegal** to fire someone for

- taking time off for family or medical leave as allowed by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA);
- reporting illegal activities at work, such as health and safety violations or discrimination;
- applying for workers' compensation;
- refusing to work under dangerous conditions; or
- going to a court hearing because you or a family member need a restraining order or are a victim of a crime.

It is also **illegal** to fire someone because of their

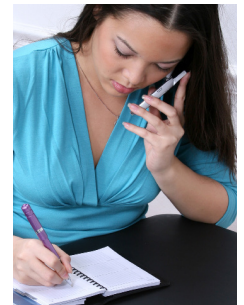
- race/color, national origin, religion;
- gender, gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation;
- age, pregnancy, or disability.

Example: A white employee arrives late to work and is warned not to do it again, while a black worker arrives late and is fired. The firing may be **illegal discrimination**.

Do I have other protections against getting fired?

If you are a union member, your contract may give you extra protections. Most union contracts say the employer must have a very good reason (or *good cause*) to fire you. Talk to your union representative.

If you have a contract or workplace rules and your firing goes against a written contract, handbook policy, or set of rules (even if the rules are not in writing), the firing could be illegal.



Example: If your handbook says a person gets three warnings before being fired but you are fired after the first warning, the firing may be illegal.

What can I do if I think I'm going to be fired?

Make notes about important things at work, including

- meetings with your supervisor, and
- comments you hear or things done during your work day that may affect your job.

NEED HELP?

Call us for help



Statewide Legal Services

1-800-453-3320

860-344-0380

Search our website for help



www.ctlawhelp.org

Keep copies of important papers, including

- warnings and work evaluations,
- changes in your pay,
- the employee handbook or other written rules, and
- emails or anything in writing from your employer.

Ask for a copy of your personnel file. If it has wrong information, write down the correct information and ask them to put your statement in the file.

If your employer asks to meet with you, you have the right to bring someone with you to the meeting.

If you are fired because of discrimination or retaliation:

Get legal help from a lawyer, your union, or one of the agencies below. They can give you advice, information, and help filing a complaint, but contact them soon. Most discrimination and retaliation cases must be filed within **180 days**.

Tip: The longer you wait, the harder it may be to find documents that support your case and witnesses who remember what happened.



Help for Low-Income People	Help for Discrimination Cases	Help for Family and Medical Leave Cases
Statewide Legal Services: Central Connecticut: 860-344-0380 Other areas of Connecticut: 800-453-3320	Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities 800-477-5737 U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, (EEOC) 1-800-669-4000	CT Department of Labor 860-263-6790 U.S. Department of Labor 1-866-487-9243