

# DEVELOPMENTS IN DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION LAW

PRESENTED BY:

AMBER K. DODDS  
LAURA M. MERRITT

University of Texas School of Law, Continuing Legal Education  
May 30-31, 2024

1

## **THE OUTLINE:** Comprehensive Overview, Addressing Topics in Detail

- Impairments
- Major Life Activities
- Substantial Limitations
- QUID Definition
- Essential Job Functions
- Actionable Discrimination
- "Regarded As" Claims
- Misconduct
- Direct Threat
- Interactive Process
- Reasonable Accommodation
- Hostile Work Environment
- Medical Exams
- Association Discrimination
- Procedural/Litigation Issues

2

Welcome to our podcast-style, immersive experience!

# Disability Law Talk

with  
*Amber and Laura*



3

## ADA TRENDS: CHARGES FILED

- 2016: Highest level (28,073)
- 2017: Decline begins (26,838)
- 2018-20: Lower still (3-year avg: 23,489)
- 2021: Lowest in over a decade (22,843)
- 2022: Highest since 2017 (25,004)

After a steady trend of decline (19% drop over prior 5 years), cases are on the rise again with a 9.1% increase since 2021

Mental health impairments continue to increase as condition cited, particularly anxiety disorder, depression and PTSD

(See Appendices A and B)

4

# ADA TRENDS: ACCOMMODATION

- ❑ As with last year's update regarding mental health, legal trends mirroring societal trends
  - ❑ General flexibility "expected" by today's workers
    - ❑ Examples: Working remotely, part time work, leaves of absence . . .
  - ❑ Presumption (by employees) that accommodations are reasonable

5

# DISABILITY LAW UPDATE: CASES

*Cuellar v. GEO Group*, No. 22-50135, 2023 WL 4535079 (5th Cir. July 13, 2023)

(Discussed on page 33 of outline – future references in slides to outline pages will be "p. xx")

- ❑ Key Issue: Is the employee's (contrary) opinion about what is an essential function part of consideration?
- ❑ Key Facts:
  - ❑ Function in question (16+ hour shift requirement) requested to be *permanently* reduced to 12 hour max shifts due to employee sleep apnea
  - ❑ Employee pointed to *temporary* modifications to other employees' schedules as supportive of his conclusion

6

Find the full text of this and thousands of other resources from leading experts in dozens of legal practice areas in the [UT Law CLE eLibrary \(utcle.org/elibrary\)](https://utcle.org/elibrary)

Title search: Developments in Disability Discrimination Law

Also available as part of the eCourse

[2024 Labor and Employment Law eConference](#)

First appeared as part of the conference materials for the  
31<sup>st</sup> Annual Labor and Employment Law Conference session  
"The Evolving Law of Disability Discrimination and Accommodation"