

Voice of the Nation's Blind Blog

Equal Treatment in the Workplace Means Equal Access to Technology

Posted by [Mark Riccobono](#) | 04/26/2018 | [Access Technology](#), [Advocacy](#)



The National Federation of the Blind engages in strategic legal action to defend the rights and advance the equality of blind people. While we do not have the financial resources to assist every blind individual who experiences discrimination, we help individuals bring legal action where we believe that the result is likely to be important systemic change. With our help, a blind employee of Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), one of the largest public-school systems in the country, has just filed suit in federal

court against its school board. The suit alleges violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Florida state law.

Dr. Jan Bartleson, a counselor and emotional/behavioral disabilities clinician with M-DCPS for twenty-six years, has been unable to perform critical parts of her job independently because her employer requires that she utilize software, web content, and web platforms that are not compatible with screen reading technology. Dr. Bartleson's job is to provide clinical services to students with emotional disabilities, individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, and conflict resolution, as well as participating in IEP meetings.

She is forced to rely on assistance from her sighted coworkers to perform tasks as basic as inputting student progress notes into an integrated student information system and accessing her own employment benefit information. Furthermore, she has been unable to apply for promotions and other employment opportunities within the school system for which she is highly qualified.

Because of the school system's inaccessible technology, Dr. Bartleson had to fight for additional clerical assistance to perform these functions, the only remedy that the system made available to her. The small amount of assistance that the school system has provided is inadequate. It's also beside the point, which is that no blind member of the faculty, staff, or student body of the M-DPCS can succeed without equal access to the technology being used. Dr. Bartleson's lawsuit asks the court to order M-DCPS to fix the district's inaccessible technology and web content or to replace it with accessible technology.

Dr. Bartleson is being represented with the assistance of the National Federation of the Blind by [Sharon Krevor-Weisbaum](#) of the Baltimore firm Brown, Goldstein & Levy LLP, and by Matthew W. Dietz of Disability Independence Group, Inc. of Miami, FL.