

Woman Wins Dog at Work Lawsuit

Jury finds that Maltese owner was fired for bringing pet to work.

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A woman who said she was fired for bringing her dog to work at a mental health clinic to ease her anxiety and depression was awarded \$45,000 last week by a Sacramento, Calif., jury.

However, the jurors rejected the woman's claims that she was the victim of disability discrimination and that the workplace had failed to provide a reasonable accommodation for her under the state's Fair Employment and Housing Act.

Chris Storm argued in her lawsuit that her employer, northern California-based Consumers Self Help Center, and its director, Meghan Stanton, had retaliated against her because she asked to keep her small, 4-year-old Maltese, Lacey, in her office.

Storm, who was the center's fiscal director, had been bringing Lacey and a previous dog to work with her for more than eight years when Stanton, the new director, told her not to bring the dog in to work anymore because it was an office hazard.

In July 2003, Storm filed a grievance, saying she needed Lacey as therapy for her depression. Later, Stanton and members of the clinic's board eliminated Storm's job.

In their March 9, 2007 decision, jurors agreed that the center had retaliated against Storm and hadn't properly handled Storm's grievance.

Jurors said the relatively low damage award was based on evidence that Storm hadn't made significant efforts to find another job.