

Case Study 3

Jeffrey vs. Electronics Warehouse Emporium

This is a fictional case study but is similar to many of the complaints that the Nova Scotia Human Rights receives.

Jeffrey is a man in his late 20s, who is currently employed as a sales clerk with a large electronics store in Halifax. Jeffrey has been working for this store for five months, and he was just voted employee of the month by his co-workers. Jeffrey lived in Toronto for several years, having attended university there, he studied computer science. He moved back to Halifax about a year ago, and he lives with his parents. Jeffrey's interest in technology and electronics has helped him become an excellent sales clerk who is well liked and respected by coworkers and customers alike.

The electronics store operated on a rotating shift schedule, and Jeffrey always worked a Saturday or Sunday shift so that he could have a weekday off work. It was convenient for the store to have coverage during the weekend, and it was convenient for Jeffrey as well to have a day off during the week so that he could attend medical appointments and spend time with friends and family. When Jeffrey had first been hired, it was explained that weekend work was involved and that his days off would likely fall during weekdays.

On his day off, Jeffrey who had been living with a diagnosis of schizophrenia for several years, attended a therapy support group at the mental health clinic which is located next to a shopping center. Quinten, an assistant manager at the electronics store, was at the shopping mall who was also on his day off, and saw Jeffrey coming out of the mental health clinic. Quinten was in his car at the time in a parking lot, and Jeffrey didn't see him.

Quinten brought up that he had seen Jeffrey at the mental health clinic at a managers meeting the next day, he shared this information with another assistant manager, and the store manager. Quinten had explained that he had heard that the clinic was for people that were "crazy", and was worried that Jeffrey could be violent or dangerous. Soon after this information was shared, Jeffrey was transferred to overnight shifts stocking shelves with new inventory.

Jeffrey was told that this change needed to happen to help run the business more effectively, and that the store wasn't busy enough to continue with as many sales clerks on the sales floor during the daytime. While Jeffrey wasn't happy with this change in scheduling, he didn't question it very much because he needed the job.

Soon after the change took place, other employees started to ask members of the management team why Jeffrey had been switched to overnight shifts, and they shared that they missed working with him. All of the managers explained to the employees that it was a change that needed to happen to help run the business more efficiently. A few weeks after the scheduling shift took place, Quinten was eating lunch in the break room and casually told another employee that he thought Jeffrey might be "mental" because he had seen him at the clinic.

The employee shared this information with one of Jeffrey's friends, who thought it was strange that the assistant manager had shared such private information with staff members, and shared this knowledge with Jeffrey.

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When Jeffrey found out that his co-workers and managers at the electronics store had been talking about him, he felt very upset, disrespected, and frustrated.

1. If the manager had a concern how could he have approached it differently?
2. Was there any indication that Jeffrey might have required a workplace accommodation?
3. What assumptions and biases might have been involved?
4. Would Jeffrey have grounds to file a human rights complaint?