



Know your Rights



Everyone in Philadelphia, regardless of who they are, deserves to live freely and safely from unlawful discrimination. The Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations (PCHR), the city's civil rights agency, enforces the anti-discrimination laws and promotes intergroup relations.

In Philadelphia, it is illegal for employers, housing providers, businesses, providers of public accommodations and city services to treat individuals differently because of:

Race
Color
Ancestry
Disability
Ethnicity
National Origin
Religion
Sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding)

Age
Sexual Orientation
Gender Identity
Familial Status
Marital Status
Domestic or Sexual Violence Victim Status
Genetic Information
Source of Income

Not all acts of racism or prejudice rise to the level of illegal discrimination, but may be considered illegal if those acts prevent you from getting or keeping a job, housing, access to a public place or being provided a service.

When a person is treated differently than others in a similar situation based on a protected characteristic, this is disparate treatment. For example, one person getting served in a restaurant, while another person is denied service for wearing a religious head covering could be considered discrimination based on religion.

When policies, practices, or rules appear to be neutral but have an uneven effect on a protected group, this is disparate impact. For example, a policy reserving employee overtime only for after-school hours will unevenly impact individuals with children and could be considered discrimination based on familial status.

What can you do?

File a complaint:

- Immediately report acts occurring within city limits.
- Contact our Intake Unit to begin the process.
- Fill out the complaint form. (Complaints of discrimination must be filed within 300 days of the act.)
- Include details of the incident and names dates, a location, and any other helpful information.
- Staff will review all supplied information and contact you.
- If your complaint meets all legal guidelines it will be accepted.

What happens next?

The process:

- If accepted, your complaint will be docketed, served, and investigated.
- The length of the investigation process varies. (Some cases may be resolved quickly by settlement; others may take longer.)
- If the investigation determines that more likely than not discrimination occurred, your case will be scheduled for a public hearing before PCHR Commissioners.
- If the Commissioners find in your favor, the Fair Practices Ordinance allows the award of various types of penalties and damages.

If you think you are a victim of discrimination in Philadelphia, make an appointment to see us, call our office or visit us online for more information.

Contact the PCHR at 215-686-4670 or pchr@phila.gov
www.phila.gov/humanrelations