



How to File a Discrimination Complaint

Commerce is committed to ensuring all individuals have the right to participate in programs and activities operated by our sub-recipients regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity, religion, age, disability, or veteran status. Discrimination occurs when a person is treated differently or denied equal treatment or access because of their membership in a protected class, such as, race or religion. In addition to these, individuals, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, have the right to participate programs and activities operated by sub-recipients of grants under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 1994, as amended. These prohibitions include discrimination in employment as well as the provision of services.

If you believe you, or someone you know, were discriminated against, there are federal and state organizations that can assist in protecting your rights. The following are organizations that you can use in order to find out more information or to file a complaint.

How to File a Complaint:

Agencies with which you may file a complaint - *The links will take you directly to the online complaint filing website.*

[Washington State Human Rights Commission](#) : The Washington State Human Rights Commission (WSHRC) is a state agency responsible for administering and enforcing the Washington State's Law Against Discrimination. This state law prohibits discriminatory practices in the areas of employment, places of public resort, accommodation, or amusement, in real estate transactions, and credit and insurance transactions on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, families with children, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, age (40 and older), honorably discharged veteran or military status, or the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability (whether it is an actual disability or just perceived to be one). This law also prohibits retaliation against a person who oppose a discriminatory practice, and those who file health care and state employee whistleblower complaints. For more information or if you would like to file a complaint please click on the WSHRC link above or call (800)233-3247 or (360)753-6770. Please be aware that the statute of limitations for employment, public accommodation, credit and insurance transactions complaints is six months from the date of the



alleged harm, for housing discrimination it is one year, and for state employee whistleblower retaliation it is two years.

[U.S. Department of Justice \(DOJ\)](#) : The Office for Civil Rights (OCR), Office of Justice Programs (OJP), U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) is responsible for enforcing federal civil rights laws that collectively prohibit agencies receiving financial assistance from the DOJ from discriminating in the delivery of services and employment practices on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, gender identity, or sexual orientation. If you feel that your civil rights were violated and would like to file a complaint with the OCR, then please click on the link listed above or call the OCR at (202) 307-0690.

[U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#): The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is responsible for enforcing federal laws that makes it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or employee because of the person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information. It is also illegal to discriminate against a person because the person complained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation lawsuit. EEOC laws has jurisdiction over most employers with at least 15 employees (20 employees in age discrimination cases), and most labor unions and employment agencies. The laws apply to all types of work situations, including hiring, firing, promotions, harassment, training, wages, and benefits. If you would like more information or would like to file a complaint with the EEOC Seattle Field Office, then please click on the EEOC link above or call (206)220-6884. Please be aware that you **GENERALLY** have 180 days from the day the discrimination took place to file a complaint, but there are several exceptions and your time limit could be as few as 45 days or as many as 300 days. For more information on time limits please click on this [link](#) for more information or call the EEOC Seattle Field Office at (206)220-6884.

[U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#) : The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Civil Rights (HHS-OCR) enforces civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination for all persons in the United States on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age, sex (gender), and religion by certain health care and social service programs. HHS-OCR also protects your health information, as well as, provides conscience protection for health care providers. OCR has jurisdiction over health care and human services entities, such as state and local social and health services agencies; and hospitals, clinics, nursing homes or other entities receiving [Federal Financial Assistance](#) from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. While HHS-OCR enforces certain laws and regulations that



prohibit discrimination, they generally do not enforce laws and regulations that apply to housing, police and law enforcement, the courts, prisons or employment. If you feel a health care provider, or state or local government agency has discriminated against you or someone you know and would like more information or would like to file a complaint, then please click on the HHS link above. Please be aware that complaints have to be filed within 180 days from the date of the alleged discriminatory act; although, HHS-OCR will give extensions if you can show “good cause” for the delay.

Contact Information – Complaints may be filed by email, mail or by phone at:

Washington State Human Rights Commission

www.hum.wa.gov

Washington State Human Rights Commission 1-800-233-3247
711 S. Capitol Way, Suite 402,
Olympia, WA 98504

Office for Civil Rights - U.S. Department of Justice

<https://ojp.gov/about/ocr/complaint/htm>

Office for Civil Rights
Office of Justice Programs
U.S. Department of Justice
810 Seventh Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20531

202-307-0690

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

www.eeoc.gov

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
131 M Street, NE
Washington, DC 20507

1-800-669-4000

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

www.hhs.gov/ocr/

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services 1-800-368-1019
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Washington State Department of Commerce*

amy.goodall-rasmussen@commerce.wa.gov

Human Resources Manager
Washington State Department of Commerce
1011 Plum Street SE
Olympia, WA 98504

360-725-2656



Complaint Should Include – May vary by receiving agency (see their website)

Contact Information: Name and address/email/phone number)

Please describe in detail what happened.

Please include names(s) of harasser and witnesses and the date(s) the incident(s) occurred

Staff receiving complaints will immediately forward the complaint to the Human Resources Manager

Please keep in mind that the information given is only a brief description of the different agencies that can assist you if you believe that you were discriminated against. Please refer to the different agencies websites or contact their offices, in order to receive more information.

*Note: The Washington Department of Commerce does not itself have the authority or the resources to investigate external complaints. Such complaints filed with the Department of Commerce will be processed by the Human Resources Manager, who will determine the most appropriate agency to investigate the complaint, and forward the complaint to that agency. The Human Resources Manager will also notify the complainant of such action and specify which agency the complaint has been referred to.