

DHS NOTICE AND PRACTICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

WHAT ARE CIVIL RIGHTS?

The U.S. Constitution as well as federal and state laws guarantee protection of your civil rights, which include freedom from discrimination. DHS and its contractors must not discriminate in its programs, services, activities, hiring practices and employment.

WHAT IS A PROTECTED CLASS?

A protected class is a group of people who may not be targeted for discrimination based on their shared characteristics. Federal and state laws mandate that protected class must not be a factor when DHS

determines an individual's eligibility for programs, services, activities, advisory groups or employment. All individuals should receive the same treatment and services.

DHS and specific DHS programs consider the following characteristics to be protected classes:

- **Race, color or national origin**
- **Gender**
- **Religion**
- **Age**
- **Disability**
- **Sexual orientation or marital status**
- **Political beliefs (for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program clients and applicants)**

WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION AT DHS?

Behavior or actions that DHS considers discriminatory include but are not limited to:

- Being denied services or provided with different services than similar individuals, or being segregated or treated separately when services are provided;
- Being treated unfairly or denied services normally provided to other members of the protected class;
- A person with a disability being refused an accommodation without the business having a valid reason to not provide it;
- Being denied American Sign Language (ASL) or spoken language interpreter services for critical information about benefits and services; or
- Being denied the chance to serve on DHS committees and boards or to act as a consultant or volunteer.

HOW DOES DHS HELP WITH COMMUNICATION?

It may be hard for people with a disability or limited English skills to participate equally in DHS programs, services and activities. DHS can help with communication by taking one or more of the following actions:

- Providing an American Sign Language interpreter;
- Converting written documents to Braille, audiotape, large text or electronic formats;
- Making help available with DHS forms and applications;
- Translating written documents from English to another language; and
- Providing language interpreters.

WHAT DOES ACCESS TO DHS BUILDINGS AND PROGRAMS MEAN?

Federal and state laws require that people with disabilities be able to access all DHS buildings and programs.

DHS will provide access to anyone who is disabled as well as their service dogs or miniature horses. DHS will also make reasonable efforts to help people with disabilities participate in DHS programs, services and activities.

WHAT IS THE DHS COMPLAINT PROCESS?

Discrimination, privacy or security violations and customer service complaints can be filed with DHS. DHS will review and acknowledge the complaint. DHS will notify the complainant if it has authority to investigate. When DHS has the authority, it will promptly and thoroughly investigate whether the evidence supports a finding of discrimination. DHS will act to correct and eliminate the identified discriminatory conduct if there is a finding of discrimination.

DHS is not an enforcement agency. Investigations determine if DHS policies, DHS rules or state or federal discrimination laws may have been violated. Obtain and return complaint forms at any DHS office.

For more information, contact:

**Oregon Department of Human Services
Governor's Advocacy Office**
500 Summer Street NE, E-17
Salem, Oregon 97301-1079
1-800-442-5238 or 503-378-6532 (fax)
dhs.info@state.or.us

WHAT OTHER AGENCIES HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO RECEIVE COMPLAINTS INVOLVING DHS?

The following agencies have the authority to enforce laws and regulations and to investigate discrimination complaints in these programs.

To file a discrimination complaint involving:

- A DHS program receiving federal funding or a health information privacy or security violation, contact the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights** 1-800-368-1019 or OCRCComplaint@hhs.gov
- The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as Food Stamps, contact the **U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office for Civil Rights** 1-866-632-9992 or program.intake@usda.gov

- Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), contact the **U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights** 206-607-1600 or OCR.Seattle@ed.gov
- Marital status or sexual orientation filed against the Department of Human Services, contact the **State of Oregon's Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI), Civil Rights Division** 971-673-0764 or crdemail.boli@state.or.us

WHAT CAN PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE THEY HAVE BEEN DISCRIMINATED AGAINST DO?

- Applicants, clients or members of the public who receive DHS services or access buildings may file a complaint. The complaint may go to either DHS or the federal or state agency authorized to enforce and investigate the particular DHS program or issue of concern.
- Individuals must file complaints in one of the following timeframes:
 - **Federal** complaints: within 180 days of the event or treatment considered discriminatory
 - **Bureau of Labor and Industries** complaints: within one year of the event or treatment
 - **DHS** complaints: within 60 days

WHAT DOES PROHIBITION AGAINST RETALIATION MEAN?

Individuals who think they have been discriminated against, or who are witnesses of alleged discrimination, can file a complaint without fearing that DHS will penalize or punish them.

This document can be provided upon request in an alternate format for individuals with disabilities or in a language other than English for people with limited English skills. To request this publication in another format or language, contact the Publications and Design Section at 503-378-3486, 711 for TTY, or email dhs-oha.publicationrequest@state.or.us.

DHS 0177 (rev 7/2014)