

Intake at the Minnesota Department of Human Rights

What happens when I contact the Minnesota Department of Human Rights with a complaint?

Intake is the first step in the process of filing a complaint with our agency. When you contact us with a complaint, an Intake officer will talk to you about your problem. Unfortunately, unfair treatment happens a lot, but we only have authority to look into discrimination that happens because of a “protected class” reason.

The Minnesota Human Rights Act protected classes

- Race
- Color
- Creed
- Religion
- National Origin
- Sex
- Marital Status
- Familial Status
- Disability
- Public Assistance
- Age
- Sexual Orientation
- Local Human Rights Commission Activity

Intake questions

The intake officer may ask you many questions. Your answers help us understand your situation. The intake officer needs to know:

- When the unfair treatment happened and how many times it happened;
- Why you think you have been treated unfairly;
- What reasons were given for the treatment you are complaining about;
- If the unfair treatment happened to you because you belong to a protected class.

Do you have a case?

During the intake process, our staff will look at the information about your problem to see if we have the authority to investigate your claim. Even if what happened to you was clearly unfair, we may not be able to help you with your complaint. The Minnesota Human Rights Act may not cover your problem.

If we cannot do anything about your problem, we will try to send you to another agency that can help you.

Investigation

If the Minnesota Human Rights Act covers your problem, we will draft a charge of discrimination and serve it on the “respondent” – the person you say treated you unfairly.

We look for facts that will show if what happened to you was “illegal discrimination.” The Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MDHR) is a neutral agency. This means we do not take sides, or try to “prove your case” for you.

What happens next?

After your charge is filed, the respondent has to answer the charge. They write down what they think happened and give us papers we need to start the investigation.

You will get a copy of the respondent’s answer to review. No response is required from you, but if you wish to respond, your response must be submitted in writing.

We examine this information which might resolve your case or require more investigation.

Before investigation goes any further, we may offer you and the respondent a chance to settle your case through “mediation.” Many cases can be settled when the people involved sit down and talk about the problem with a neutral person or “mediator.” If your case cannot be settled this way, we will continue to investigate your case.

How long does it take to investigate?

It can take up to a year from the date a charge is filed.

We will decide your case

After we investigate your complaint, the Commissioner of Human Rights will decide whether or not discrimination probably happened. We call this a “probable cause” or “no probable cause” determination.

We write down our reasons for the decision about your case and send this to you with a letter explaining what happens next.

If “no probable cause” is found, we will not go any further with your case. You can ask us to reconsider this decision by following the directions in the letter for making an appeal.

If “probable cause” is found, we try to get a settlement for you that in some way pays you back or “compensates” you for the discriminatory treatment.

What to do

If you think you are a victim of discrimination:

- Write down what happened to you if you think it was unfair.
- Write down the dates when the unfair treatment happened.
- Write down the names of other people that were there.
- Write down what the people who were there said.

Do not wait!

Sometimes it is hard to say what is discrimination and what is not discrimination—every situation is different. But if you think you are a victim of discrimination, do not wait. Contact the Minnesota Department of Human Rights immediately. You have one year after the discrimination happened to file a complaint.

How to Contact Us

We take phone calls Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm

Phone: 651-539-1100 (TTY 651-296-1283); Toll free: 1-800-657-3704

You do not need an appointment to visit our office

We accept walk-ins from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

Our address

Minnesota Department of Human Rights
Freeman Building
625 Robert Street North
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Email address

info.MDHR@state.mn.us

If you are emailing the department about filing a charge of discrimination and do not receive a reply within five business days, please contact our intake unit by phone at 651-539-1100 (TTY 651-296-1283) or Toll Free at 1-800-657-3704.

Getting an interpreter

Interpreters may be available to communicate with our office. Call us and say, “I need a (say your language here) interpreter.”

This document is not a complete answer to the intake at the Minnesota Department of Human Rights.