

Discrimination in Public Service

Discrimination in public service is illegal in Minnesota

Under the Minnesota Human Rights Act, public service is a “protected area.” And it is illegal to treat you differently in public service because of your:

- Race
- Color
- Creed
- Religion
- National origin
- Sex
- Disability
- Public assistance status
- Sexual orientation

These are called “protected classes.” There are some exceptions about how each class is covered under the Minnesota Human Rights Act.

Public Service is a place or service run by the government.

Some examples of public service are:

- State parks
- City buses
- Libraries
- Police and fire departments
- City, county, and state departments of health

Examples of what could be discrimination in public service

Unfair treatment happens a lot. But not every unfair act is illegal. Here are some examples of what could be illegal discrimination in public service:

- City inspectors punish people of color more severely for city code violations than they do for white people.
- A county health care service does not provide a language interpreter for you, even though you have asked for one.
- The library does not let you use its public computers because you do not speak English. This happens every week. You complain to the library manager, but he/she does nothing.

- You are the target of “racial profiling” by police. Racial profiling happens when police use race or national origin as the reason to suspect you have done something illegal, and they have no other reason to believe you have broken the law.

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 discrimination in public service under the Minnesota Human Rights Act.