

Discrimination in Education

Discrimination in education is illegal in Minnesota

Under the Minnesota Human Rights Act, education is a “protected area.” And it is illegal to treat you differently in education—public, private, or trade schools, universities and colleges—because of your:

- Race
- Color
- Creed
- Religion
- National origin
- Sex
- Age (if you are 25 years or older)
- Marital status
- 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.

Examples of what could be discrimination in education

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

- A college will not accept applications from people who are over 50 years old.
- A teacher treats non-English speaking students unfairly because he/she thinks these students can not learn, and they should not be in school anyway.
- An Asian student is bullied a lot at school because of his race. The student tells his/her teachers and the school principal what is happening. The school does nothing about the bullying even though it happens every week.
- A college accepts fewer applications for enrollment from people of color than it does for white people. The college does this because it wants most of its students to be white.

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 education under the Minnesota Human Rights Act.