

Race, National Origin and Religious Discrimination

Discrimination based on race, national origin—where you or your ancestors are from—and religion is illegal in Minnesota

Under the Minnesota Human Rights Act, race, national origin and religion are “protected classes.” And it is illegal to treat you differently because of your race, national origin or religion* in these protected areas:

- Employment
- Housing
- Public accommodations
- Public services
- Education
- Credit
- Business *(religion is not a protected class in business)

There are some exceptions about how each class is covered under the Minnesota Human Rights Act.

Examples of what could be race, national origin or religious discrimination

Unfair treatment based on race, national origin and religion happens a lot. But not every unfair act is illegal. Here are some examples of what could be illegal discrimination based on these protected classes:

- A store security guard always searches people who look Mexican. The guard does not search people who look white.
- A company allows its workers flexible schedules—unless they are Hmong. The rules are different for only the Hmong workers.
- A bank will not give loans to any person that has an accent or last name that sounds Russian.
- A restaurant owner will not serve Muslims because he/she does not agree with their religion.
- An apartment caretaker treats renters differently because of their national origin. The caretaker always makes repairs first for renters born in America.
- 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 based on race, religion or national origin under the Minnesota Human Rights Act.