

# Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights

## Complaint Investigation Unit

### Frequently Asked Questions

[Who is protected under the Minneapolis Civil Rights Ordinance?](#)

[What areas of discrimination can the Department investigate?](#)

[What are examples of situations that the Department investigates?](#)

[How do I file a complaint?](#)

[How long do I have to file a complaint?](#)

[Will the investigator assigned to my complaint advocate for my interests?](#)

[Will the people I name as witnesses be interviewed during the investigation?](#)

[How long does an investigation take?](#)

[What access do I have to information collected during the investigation?](#)

[What happens during the investigation?](#)

[What is Probable Cause?](#)

[What is mediation and is it available through the Department?](#)

[Do I need a lawyer?](#)

[What if I move out of state after filing my complaint? Will the investigation continue?](#)

[What can I do to help my investigation move along?](#)

[Can the Department tell me if my case will be successful?](#)

[Additional Resources](#)

### ***Who is protected under the Minneapolis Civil Rights Ordinance?***

The Minneapolis Civil Rights Ordinance specifies that it is illegal to discriminate based on race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex (including sexual harassment and pregnancy), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, and status with regard to public assistance. Additionally, in the area of housing, it is illegal to deny housing and real estate opportunities based on familial status.

### ***What areas of discrimination can the Department investigate?***

The Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights takes complaints of discrimination in the following areas:

- Labor Organization Membership and Referrals
- Employment, including employment agencies, employment information and employment advertisement
- Real Estate, including rental, lease and sales
- Professional Organizations
- Lending
- Public Accommodations
- Public Service
- Educational Institutions
- Business
- Reprisal, including aiding and abetting discrimination, concealing discriminatory acts and opposing discrimination

[<To the Top>](#)

***What are some examples of situations that the Department investigates?***

- Your boss asks you for sexual favors or repeatedly asks you out on dates.
- A store did not honor a discount because you are Somali.
- A school denied you admission or expelled you because you are transgender.
- A bank gives you unfavorable interest rates because you are Hispanic.
- A real estate agent or for-sale-by owner home seller refuses to sell real property to you because you use a wheelchair.
- Your union fails to help you with your grievance because of your religion.
- A landlord refuses to rent to you because you have children.

[<To the Top>](#)

***How do I file a Complaint?***

A complaint must be filed in person. If possible, complete and print an [intake questionnaire](#) or complete an [online](#) form prior to meeting with an intake officer. An intake officer will meet with you in person after reviewing your intake questionnaire. The intake officer then drafts an official charge of discrimination. After the charge of discrimination is signed and notarized, the charge is filed and all parties are notified within 10 business days.

***Intake hours for filing a complaint of discrimination***

You may come directly to the Minneapolis Civil Rights Office at **350 South 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 239** every **Tuesday or Thursday** from **8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.**, or call **(612) 673-3012** to **schedule an appointment**.

[<To the Top>](#)

***How long do I have to file a complaint?***

Charges of discrimination must be filed within one year of the alleged discriminatory act(s).

***Will the Investigator assigned to my complaint advocate for my interests?***

Investigators inform the parties to the complaint (Complainant and Respondent) of their rights under the Civil Rights Ordinance. The Department and all investigators are neutral and do not advocate for either party. Investigators cannot refer parties to lawyers.

[<To the Top>](#)

***Will the people I name as witnesses be interviewed during the investigation?***

The investigator will decide who to interview based on the relevance and reliability of the witness's information.

[<To the Top>](#)

***How long does an investigation take?***

The amount of time each investigation takes depends on the complexity of the case and the number of issues involved. Because the Department investigates a high volume of cases, we strongly encourage the parties to mediate.

### ***What access do I have to information collected during the investigation?***

The [Minnesota Data Practices Act](#) is the law that governs how the Department treats information gathered throughout the investigation and when the file is closed. We encourage parties to retain originals of all documents and send copies to the Department.

[<To the Top>](#)

### ***What happens during the investigation?***

Investigators may collect documents, interview complainants, respondents and witnesses. Investigators may make site visits as well. After relevant information is collected, the Investigator will prepare an investigatory summary (the Determination) advising the Director on whether or not "probable cause" exists to believe discrimination occurred as alleged. The Director issues the final Determination on the Complaint.

### ***What is Probable Cause?***

Probable Cause is a legal standard which means "more likely than not." It does not mean that the charging party has to show by 100% of evidence that discrimination occurred, but has to show by 51% that discrimination was a factor in how the Respondent acted. Therefore, if the Department does find probable cause, it does not mean that the Respondent was 100% discriminatory in its actions. It is the Complainant's responsibility to prove 51% of the evidence showing discriminatory motive by the Respondent.

### ***What is mediation and is it available through the Department?***

Mediation is a voluntary process, where both parties must agree to come to a resolution regarding the allegation(s) of discrimination/retaliation filed. Our department provides a volunteer mediator to assist both parties to come to an agreement that everyone is happy with. If there is an agreement, your case will be closed with our department. Our department may decide to monitor the terms of the mediation agreement. If mediation fails and there is no agreement, your case will go back to investigation. In this process, both parties are in control of the outcome. Otherwise, the Department will decide on the outcome and next steps. There is no cost to mediate your case.

[<To the Top>](#)

### ***Do I need a lawyer?***

A lawyer is not needed to engage in this process, however you may decide you would like a lawyer at any point during the investigation. The Department, including your investigator, cannot provide you with legal advice.

### ***What if I move out of state after filing my complaint? Will the investigation continue?***

The investigation continues as long as you keep the Department informed of your address and phone numbers. Provide the Investigator with any changes in address, home phone number and work phone number throughout the investigation. If the Department cannot reach you through the provided contact information, we may have no choice but to close the investigation.

[<To the Top>](#)

### ***What can I do to help my investigation move along?***

The best way to help your claim move along is to participate actively in the investigation by cooperating fully with the investigators and keeping the lines of communication open. This includes informing the investigator of new evidence/information you encounter as the investigation proceeds, informing the investigator of changes of address, home and work phone numbers, and legal representation, responding to communications promptly, and producing documents and other information promptly.

[<To the Top>](#)

***Can the Department tell me if my case will be successful?***

No. We can tell you whether or not we can accept your claim for investigation. For example, if you have a Section 8 issue, our office most likely cannot investigate the claim because Section 8 is a federal program, not a city program. We cannot inform you of whether or not your case will be successful. You will be informed of the outcome once the investigation has been completed fully and the written determination has been approved by the Director and sent out to the parties.

[<To the Top>](#)

***For additional information, see the following links:***

[Minneapolis Civil Rights Ordinance](#)

**Equal Employment Opportunity Commission**

[www.eeoc.gov/](http://www.eeoc.gov/)

Minnesota Human Rights Department

[www.humanrights.state.mn.us](http://www.humanrights.state.mn.us)

[<To the Top>](#)