

# How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint

USDA prohibits discrimination against its customers. If you believe you experienced discrimination when obtaining services from USDA, participating in a USDA program, or a program that receives financial assistance from USDA, you may file a complaint with USDA. OASCR, through the Center for Civil Rights Enforcement, will investigate and resolve complaints of discrimination in programs operated or assisted by USDA.

USDA prohibits discrimination on the bases of race, color, religion, sex, sexual harassment, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, familial status, disability, limited English proficiency, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from a public assistance program. In programs that receive Federal financial assistance from USDA, discrimination is prohibited on the bases of race, color, religious creed, sex, political beliefs, age, disability, national origin, or limited English proficiency. (Not all bases apply to all programs.) Reprisal is prohibited based on prior civil rights activity.

To file a program discrimination complaint, you may obtain a complaint form by sending an email to [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov). You or your authorized representative must sign the complaint form. You are not required to use the complaint form. You may write a letter instead. If you write a letter, it must contain all of the information requested in the form and be signed by you or your authorized representative. Incomplete information will delay the processing of your complaint. Employment civil rights complaints will not be accepted through this email address.

Compliance with Title IX is a joint responsibility. The USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) investigate complaints, conduct compliance reviews, and provide technical assistance and guidance.

Title IX applies to any recipient of federal funds. Any applicant to, participant in, or employee of, a program receiving federal financial assistance from NIFA has the right to file a Title IX complaint through OASCR if they feel that they have been discriminated against or harassed based on their sex. Please see [USDA DR 4330-002: Nondiscrimination in Programs and Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance from USDA](#) as well as the [Title IX Fact Sheet](#) and [Title IX Best Practices from NIFA Land Grant Universities](#).

Program information is available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, and American Sign Language) should contact (1) the responsible State or local Agency that administers the program or (2) USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or (3) contact USDA through the Federal Telecommunications Relay Service at 711.

**[USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#) (PDF, 293 KB)**

**[USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form \(Spanish\)](#) (PDF, 328 KB)**

## **What do I need to include in my complaint letter?**

### **Include the following in your complaint letter:**

- Your name, address and telephone number.
- The name, address, and telephone number of your attorney or authorized representative, if you are represented.
- The basis of your complaint. The basis is what you believe was the motivating factor for the discrimination. For example, you may believe you were treated differently because of your race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, familial/parental status, disability, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from a public assistance program. (Not all bases apply to all programs).
- The date(s) that the incident(s) you are reporting as discrimination occurred. Please note that we cannot accept a complaint about an incident that took place more than 180 days prior to the filing of the complaint. If the discrimination occurred more than 180 days prior to filing your complaint, you may request a waiver of the filing requirement. (See waiver information below.)
- The name of the individual(s) or entity you believe discriminated against you and the agency or recipient that employs that/those individual(s).
- The issue(s) of your complaint. The issue is a description of what happened, or the action that was taken by the individual(s) or agency that discriminated against you, resulting in some harm. Explain as clearly as possible what happened, why you believe it happened, and how you were discriminated against. Please include how other persons were treated differently from you, if applicable. If you were denied a benefit or service, please provide a copy of the denial letter. If you have documents to support the events you are reporting, provide a copy of the supporting documents.

## **How do I request a waiver of the 180-day filing deadline?**

A waiver may be granted for the following reasons: (1) the discriminatory act could not reasonably be expected to be known within the 180-day period; (2) illness or incapacitation; (3) the same complaint was filed with another Federal, state, or local agency; and (4) any other basis determined by the Director of the Center for Civil Rights Enforcement.

## **Who may I contact for further information on filing a program discrimination complaint?**

You may contact the Center for Civil Rights Enforcement Customer Service Unit for further information at (866) 632-9992 (toll free) (202) 260-1026, or (202) 690-0443 (voice and TDD).