

UNIT B. OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

§ 2-1411.01. Establishment of the Office of Human Rights.

- (a) Pursuant to § 2-1204.04(b), there is hereby established, in the Executive Branch of the government of the District of Columbia, an Office of Human Rights under the supervision of a Director, who shall carry out the functions and authorities assigned to the Office. The Office of Human Rights (“Office”) is established as a separate agency as of October 1, 1999.
- (b) The Director shall have full authority over the Office and all functions and personnel assigned thereto, including the power to redelegate to other employees and officials of the Office such powers and authority as in the judgment of the Director are warranted in the interests of efficiency and sound administration.

§ 2-1411.02. Purpose.

The purpose of the Office is to secure an end to unlawful discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and educational institutions for any reason other than that of individual merit. The Office shall seek to eradicate discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, familial status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, physical handicap, source of income, and place of residence or business.

§ 2-1411.03. Functions.

The functions of the Office shall be to:

- (1) Educate the public, including District residents and employers, about Unit A of this chapter (“Human Rights Act”);
- (2) Undertake investigations and public hearings on racial, religious, or ethnic group tensions, prejudice, intolerance, bigotry, disorder, and on any form of unlawful discrimination pursuant to the Human Rights Act;
- (3) Receive, review and investigate complaints of unlawful discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, or educational institutions;
- (4) Receive and investigate complaints of violations of § 32-501 et seq. and § 32-1201 et seq. and take appropriate enforcement action regarding these complaints;
- (5) Mediate complaints of unlawful discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, or educational institutions to help parties to a complaint reach a voluntary settlement;

- (6) Conciliate complaints of unlawful discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, or educational institutions, after the Office has made a finding of probable cause to believe that an act of unlawful discrimination has occurred, to help the parties to a complaint reach a voluntary settlement;
- (7) Certify a complaint to the Office of the Corporation Counsel for legal action needed, in the Director's judgment, to preserve the status quo or to prevent irreparable harm to a party to the complaint; and
- (8) Forward to the Commission on Human Rights, for a hearing, decision, and order, any complaint that has resulted in a finding of probable cause by the Office.

§ 2-1411.04. Transfers.

All positions, personnel, property, records, and unexpended balances of appropriations, allocations, and other funds available or to be made available to the Department of Human Rights and Local Business Development for the human rights functions set out in Reorganization Plan No. 1 of 1989, effective November 1, 1989, are hereby transferred to the Office.

§ 2-1411.05. Organization.

(a) There are hereby established the following 5 primary organizational functions in the Office:

- (1) The Office of the Director, which sets overall policy and performance targets for the Office, supervises and evaluates staff, administers the budget, and promotes conciliation after a determination of probable cause has been reached.
- (2) Education and Research, which studies patterns of discrimination in employment, public accommodations and educational institutions, and educates District residents, employers, community groups, and other concerned parties about the Human Rights Act and federal anti-discrimination laws in order to prevent unlawful discrimination.
- (3) Intake, which counsels prospective complainants on the Office's functions and statutory responsibilities, evaluates the complainants' allegation of unlawful discrimination, and completes the forms and procedures necessary for the filing of a complaint;
- (4) Mediation, which trains and oversees the activities of mediators who assist the parties to a complaint in trying to reach a voluntary settlement; and

- (5) Investigations, which solicits and evaluates evidence provided by the complainant and respondent to prepare a written determination about whether there is probable cause to believe that the respondent has violated the Human Rights Act.
- (b) The Director, in the performance of his or her duties and functions, is authorized to restructure the organizational components of the Office as he or she deems necessary to improve the quality of services.

§ 2-1411.06. Abolishment of the Department of Human Rights and Local Business Development.

Pursuant to § 1-1204.04(b), the Council hereby abolishes the Department of Human Rights and Local Business Development, established under Reorganization Plan No. 1 of 1989, effective November 1, 1989. The Department of Human Rights and Local Business Development is abolished as of October 1, 1999.