**Know Your Rights - Federal Civil Rights Protections**

There are many federal laws that protect people from discrimination. These laws prohibit discrimination on many bases, such as race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, religion, or genetic information. If you believe you have been discriminated against, you may file a complaint with one or more of the federal agencies listed below. Additional protections may be available to you through state or local laws. Most organizations also have a process of investigating civil rights complaints internally. Also note that some laws require that complaints with federal agencies be filed within certain time limits.

Federal laws prohibit all forms of discrimination, including retaliation and harassment.

Retaliation means taking adverse actions against individuals for asserting the right to be free from discrimination based on the above characteristics. Opposing such discrimination or participating in any manner in a complaint process is protected from retaliation.

Sexual harassment is one form of discrimination and is against the law when it is sufficiently serious to create a hostile environment or when it results in an adverse action. Harassment on other protected characteristics is similarly against the law.

**U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS)**

HHS conducts investigations of discrimination at entities funded by HHS including the National Institutes of Health (NIH). If you believe that you have been discriminated against on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or religious or moral objections, you may file an electronic complaint through the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal at the agency’s website or file by telephone.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights

1-800-368-1019, 800-537-7697 (TTY) / Website: [www.HHS.gov/ocr](http://www.HHS.gov/ocr).

**U.S. Department of Education (ED)**

Federal laws prohibit a school that receives federal funds from discriminating against people on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age, in any of its operations, including, for example, in admissions, recruitment, financial aid, academic programs, student treatment and services, counseling and guidance, discipline, classroom assignment, grading, vocational education, recreation, physical education, athletics, or housing. Anyone who believes that a school is engaging in unlawful discrimination may file a complaint with ED’s Office for Civil Rights:

Telephone: 800-421-3481 / TTY: 800-877-8339 Email: [OCR@ed.gov](mailto:OCR@ed.gov) /

Website: www.ed.gov/ocr

**U.S. Equal Opportunity Employment Commission (EEOC)**

If you believe that you have been discriminated against at work because of your race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information you may go to the EEOC. EEOC does not accept charges by telephone or on-line but you can start the process by calling 1-800-669-4000 and you may use its on-line assessment tool to help you decide if EEOC is the correct agency to assist you.

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission  
1-800-669-4000 / 202-663-4494 (TTY)

For more information, visit www.EEOC.gov.