

HELP AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

The City of Sarasota prohibits discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodation for the following **Protected Classes**:

Age	National Origin
Color	Race
Gender	Religion
Gender	Sexual Orientation
Marital Status	Veteran Status

The City of Sarasota has a law that provides a way to address discrimination informally through a conciliation/ public hearing process. The goal of this process is to resolve discrimination complaints without having to go to court. Should conciliation fail to resolve the issue, a public hearing is also available.

If you are in a protected class and believe you have been discriminated against in the areas of employment, housing, or public accommodation you may qualify for help. The alleged discrimination must have occurred within the city limits of Sarasota and must have occurred within 90 days to qualify for help.

You may be eligible to use this process if you meet the pre-qualifying guidelines described below.

PRE-QUALIFYING QUESTIONS

Please answer the following five pre-qualifying questions to see if this process may help you:

1. Do you believe you have been discriminated against regarding employment, housing, or public accommodation? Yes No
2. Do you believe this alleged discrimination was because you belong to one of the protected classes in the list? Yes No
3. Did this alleged discrimination occur within the city limits of Sarasota? Yes No
4. Did this alleged discrimination occur within the last 90 days? Yes No
5. If you file a complaint, will it be the first time you have filed a complaint for this claim of alleged discrimination? Yes No
6. Have you filed your complaint with another agency? Yes No

If you answered **YES** to each question you may be eligible for help through the conciliation/public hearing process. You may wish to file a complaint with the City's Human Relations Board.

The goal of the Human Relations Board is to provide early intervention into complaints of discrimination that result in resolutions mutually agreeable to the complainant (the person making the complaint) and the respondent (the person or company being complained against).

By offering a way to resolve complaints informally through conciliation, it is anticipated that most cases will not reach the formal hearing stage.

THE STEPS OF THE COMPLAINT PROCESS

- A complaint must be filed in writing on a Human Relations Board complaint form for either employment, housing or public accommodation. The complaint form can be completed manually, then mailed or hand-delivered to Human Resources.
- Upon receipt by the Human Relations Board, the complaint will be logged in and reviewed by City administration to ensure it meets the criteria of the ordinance.
- If the complaint does not meet the criteria of the ordinance, the complainant will be notified and the case will be closed. The complainant may be referred to another agency. If the complaint meets the criteria of the ordinance, the complainant will be notified. The respondent will be sent a copy of the complaint and will be asked to complete a response form.
- The respondent files their written response to the Human Relations Board.
- The complainant and respondent will be referred for a conciliation meeting.
- A qualified conciliator holds an informal meeting with both parties to try to resolve the complaint. The parties will enter into a conciliation agreement.
- If conciliation resolves the complaint and the Human Relations Board approves the conciliation agreement, the case is closed.
- If conciliation does not resolve the complaint, a public hearing is scheduled before the Human Relations Board. At this point, each party has the opportunity to tell their story, witnesses may be called, etc. After hearing the case, a majority vote of the Human Relations Board is required to determine if there is reasonable cause that an act of discrimination has occurred.
- If no reasonable cause is found, the case is dismissed.
- If reasonable cause is found, the complainant may request a right to sue letter from the Human Relations Board. The complainant may proceed, at their own expense, to file a lawsuit in the Circuit Court seeking monetary damages.
- Involvement by the Human Relations Board normally ends at the point of either the case being closed or issuing a right to sue letter.