

Fact Sheet



United States
Department of Agriculture
Forest Service

Civil Rights Programs

Civil Rights is defined as legal rights of U.S. citizens to equal opportunities and treatment, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or physical or mental disability.

The Civil Rights programs consist of two areas: Nondiscrimination in Employment (Title VII) and Nondiscrimination in Program Delivery (including Title VII). The objective of the Civil Rights Programs is to ensure that no person is denied access to, participation in, or benefits of Forest Service programs or employment because of race, color, sex (including sexual harassment), religion, age (if over 40), national origin, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation. The foundation of Civil Rights is based on the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which, is geared to prevent discrimination in Federally assisted and Federally conducted programs and employment activities.

Nondiscrimination in Program Delivery: Nondiscrimination in program delivery applies to both federally assisted and federally conducted programs.

- Federally Assisted Programs. The Forest Service administers a number

of financial assistance programs which are defined as all programs or activities where assistance is granted to a recipient who extends a service(s) or benefit(s) to others. Examples of Recipients are: State, public, or private agencies; county commissions; school boards; institutions; universities. Federally assisted areas are: Fire prevention and suppression, Use of Federal land for airports, and Assistance to States for tree planting, among others. Discrimination on the grounds of race, color, or national origin is prohibited. No person should be excluded from access to, participation in, benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. Federally assisted program compliance effectuates Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

- Federally Conducted Programs. Forest Service assistance goes directly to program participants (no intermediary). Examples of federally-conducted program areas are as follows: Youth Conversation Corps, Protection from forest resources from insects, pests, and diseases, and timber granted free or

at nominal cost to any group. No agency, officer, or employee of the USDA shall exclude from participation in, deny the benefits of, or subject to discrimination any person on the grounds of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religion, disability, under any program or activity administered by such agency, office, or employee.

- Program Delivery Non-discrimination Complaints. Nondiscrimination for federally assisted programs refers only to those bases referred to in applicable Federal law, e.g., 7 Code of Federal Regulations Part 15: “In accordance with Federal law and USDA policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.

Nondiscrimination in Employment (Title VII): Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination in employment based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin in actions affecting employees or applicants for employment. It created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and gave it the authority to investigate discrimination complaints, make findings, and attempt to resolve them through conciliation or mediation. Since then, other acts and/or policies have expanded nondiscrimination bases to include age, disability, marital status, political affiliation, and sexual orientation.

- Special Emphasis Programs. The Alaska Region observes the following mandated special emphasis programs: Hispanic

Employment Program, Federal Women’s Program, and Disability Employment Program. Other programs also observed are: African American Program, Asian/Pacific Islander Program, and American Indian/Alaska Native Program.

- Discriminatory Practices. Management must identify barriers that are affecting the advancement, career development, and employment of minorities, women, and individuals with disability in all occupations and that at all levels in the work force and initiate actions to eliminate such barriers.
- Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program (FEORP). A recruitment program for minorities and women authorized by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (Public Law 95-454), requiring agencies to conduct continuing programs to recruit women and minorities with the goal of having Federal Government employment representative of the general civilian labor force. The Human Resources staff has oversight of the FEORP.
- Affirmative Employment Program (AEP). A program that is developed to remove present effects of past discrimination. AEP requires that extra steps be taken so that minorities and women are fairly represented in the work force and in non-employment programs, and to prevent discrimination from occurring.
- Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Complaints. Any employee or applicant for employment who

believes that he/she has been discriminated against in employment due to an action or decision by an official or employee of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and believes that the discrimination is based on race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital or familial status, reprisal, equal pay, and sexual orientation, or if he/she believes that he/she has been discriminated against because of opposing a prohibited practice or participating in an EEO matter, he/she may file a charge of discrimination.

Employee complaints, grievances, and issues that are not civil rights based are handled under other Federal processes such as the Administrative Grievance Process, Merit Systems Protection Board, and Negotiated Grievance Process. Employees also may choose an informal approach to resolving their complaints, grievances, and/or issues, such as the Early Intervention Program and/or the Alternative Dispute Resolution process.

The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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