

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Civil Rights

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Policy

The Department of Children and Families shall ensure nondiscrimination and equal opportunity to all persons in accordance with the United States Constitution, and other relevant federal laws and their implementing regulations.

Each program or activity for which the Department of Children and Families receives federal financial assistance is operated in accordance with this policy. No individual, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, age, handicap (including impaired vision or hearing), sex, sexual orientation, religious belief, or political belief, is excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any of the Department's programs, activities or employment.

Parents' Right to Know

DCF shall publish a Parent's Right to Know brochure which shall be available on the DCF website and which shall be provided to all new DCF clients.

Title VI

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

Legal Reference: 42 USC §2000d, 45 CFR 80.

Section 504

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination against otherwise qualified individuals on the basis of a disability. An individual with a disability is any person who:

1. has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities;
2. has a record of such an impairment; or
3. is regarded as having such an impairment.

Legal Reference: 29 USC§794; 45 CFR 84.

Age

The Age Discrimination Act of 1975 prohibits discrimination on the basis of age.

Legal Reference: 42 USC §6101; 45 CFR 90.

MEPA

The **Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994 (MEPA)**, as amended by the **Removal of Barriers to Interethnic Adoption Provisions of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996** protects individuals from discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin in foster care and adoption programs and activities. MEPA prohibits publicly funded child welfare agencies from delaying or denying the placement of a child into foster care or for adoption on the basis of the race, color or national origin of the foster or adoption parent, or the child, involved. MEPA also prohibits publicly funded child welfare agencies from denying to any individual the opportunity to become a foster or adoptive parent, on the basis of the race, color or national origin of the individual, or of the child, involved

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Section 1557 (ACA)

Section 1557 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

The Department of Children and Families complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. The Department of Children and Families does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

The Department of Children and Families:

- Provides free aids and services to people with disabilities to communicate effectively with us, such as:
 - Qualified sign language interpreters
 - Written information in other formats (large print, audio, accessible electronic formats, other formats).
- Provides free language services to people whose primary language is not English, such as:
 - Qualified interpreters
 - Information written in other languages.

If you need these services, contact:

- Your assigned Social Worker, Social Worker Supervisor, or Program Supervisor
- The DCF Office of the Ombudsman, 505 Hudson Street, Hartford CT 06106, (Local: 860-550-6301, Toll-Free: 1-866-637-4737, Fax: 860-566-7947, E-mail: Commissioner.DCF@ct.gov).

Sexual Harassment

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded education program or activity. Title IX also applies to any education or training program operated by a recipient of federal financial assistance.

HIPPA

See DCF Policy 6-2, "Confidentiality" and DCF Policy 2-4, "Information Systems".

Affirmative Action

Cross reference: DCF Policy 7-1, "Office of Diversity and Equity."

Other Agencies

Individuals may file claims as permitted with other agencies such as:

- Connecticut Commission on Human Rights Organization
 - Department of Justice / Civil Rights Division
 - Health and Human Services / Office of Civil Rights Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
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Complaint/ Grievance Procedure

The Department of Children and Families has adopted an internal grievance procedure providing for prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging any action prohibited by any of the above Acts or implementing regulations. The Law and Regulations may be examined in the office of the Ombudsman, (Local: 860-550-6301, Toll-Free: 1-866-637-4737), who has been designated to coordinate the efforts of the Department of Children and Families to comply with the laws and regulations.

Any person who believes she or he has been subjected to discrimination may file a grievance under this procedure. It is against the law for the Department of Children and Families to retaliate against anyone who files a grievance or cooperates in the investigation of a grievance.

Note: Employees or Applicants for employment who wish to file a grievance should utilize the Complaint process under DCF Policy 7-1 "Office of Diversity and Equity Overview".

Complaints received by the Ombudsman relating to employment matters or as to protected classes may be referred to the Office of Diversity and Equity for handling as set forth under DCF Policy 7-1, "Office of Diversity and Equity Overview."

Procedure:

- Grievances must be submitted to the Coordinator within 90 days of the date the person filing the grievance becomes aware of the alleged discriminatory action.
- A complaint must be in writing, containing the name and address of the person filing it. The complaint must state the problem or action alleged to be discriminatory and the remedy or relief sought.
- The Coordinator (or his designee) shall conduct an investigation of the complaint. This investigation may be informal, but it must be thorough, affording all interested persons an opportunity to submit evidence relevant to the complaint. The Coordinator will maintain the files and records of the Department of Children and Families relating to such grievances.
- The Coordinator will issue a written decision on the grievance no later than 30 days after its filing.
- The person filing the grievance may appeal the decision of the Coordinator by writing to the Commissioner within 15 days of receiving the Coordinator's decision. The Commissioner shall issue a written decision in response to the appeal no later than 30 days after its filing.
- The availability and use of this grievance procedure does not prevent a person from filing a complaint of discrimination with the US Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights.

The Department of Children and Families will make appropriate arrangements to ensure that disabled persons are provided other accommodations, if needed, to participate in this grievance process. Such arrangements may include, but are not limited to, providing interpreters for the deaf, providing taped cassettes of material for the blind, or assuring a barrier-free location for the proceedings. The Coordinator will be responsible for such arrangements.