

Civil Rights Training

TEFAP & CSFP

Civil Rights & Food Distribution

- Civil Rights are the non-political rights of a citizen and are guaranteed by the 13th and 14th Amendments of the U.S. Constitution and Acts of Congress.
- Organizations that accept Federal financial assistance must obey Federal civil rights laws, regulations, instructions, and guidance. USDA foods are considered Federal financial assistance per Civil Rights Instruction 113-1.
- Organizations that receive USDA foods must demonstrate civil rights compliance. This includes annual training for any person working with recipients of TEFAP and/or CSFP food.
- Civil rights laws, regulations, executive orders, and related other guidance can be found on this website:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cr/about-fns-civil-rights-division>

Goals of Civil Rights Training

- To provide equal treatment for all applicants and program recipients
- To provide clients with knowledge of their rights and responsibilities as a program recipient
- To eliminate barriers that prevent or deter people from receiving benefits
- To promote dignity and respect for everyone

All front-line workers, including volunteers and supervisors, must receive annual civil rights training.

Annual Training

- Knowledge of civil rights applies to most areas of food distribution programs
- All employees and volunteers who work directly with program applicants and/or recipients (and their supervisors) need to be aware of civil rights requirements
- Training must be conducted annually
- Documentation of training completion must be kept for three years plus the current fiscal year

The following policies prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, age, sex, gender, & disability

Civil Rights Laws	Protected Classes
Title VI – Civil Rights Act of 1964 Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Race/Language ✓ Color ✓ National Origin
Age Discrimination Act of 1975	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Age
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sex ✓ Gender
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Americans with Disabilities Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Disability
Title VII CFR 16.3, Responsibilities of Participation Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Religion
Title VII CFR 247 (CSFP), 250 (Food Distribution), & 251 (TEFAP) FNS Instruction 113-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ All Classes

All documents are available at:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cr/about-fns-civil-rights-division>

Types of Discrimination

- **Disparate Treatment** is when a person is intentionally discriminated against as a member of a protected class.
 - Example: Members of religious groups are denied service because their beliefs do not match the religious teachings of the organization that is distributing food.
- **Disparate Impact** is when actions that appear neutral have a negative impact on a protected class.
 - Example: A distribution site makes the Russian clients wait until the end of the day for food because interpreters are not available until late afternoon. This creates a situation where coveted food items may be unavailable to a specific group.
- **Retaliation** is the negative treatment of a member of a protected class in response to previous civil rights activity. This includes actions against their family and/or their associates.
 - Example: Family and friends of a client are denied food after the client filed a complaint against the agency.

Eligibility Requirements vs Discrimination

- Congress can establish programs that are intended for certain groups of people such as CSFP that serves only persons 60 years of age and older.
- It is not considered discrimination to exclude those who do not meet eligibility requirements for these types of programs.
- For example, Congress can set age limits and this is not age discrimination for those who do not meet those age limits.

Components of Civil Rights Training

In accordance with FNS Instruction 113-1, civil rights training must include, but not be limited to:

- Collection & use of data
- Effective public notification systems
- Complaint procedures
- Compliance reviews
- Resolution of non-compliance
- Reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities
- Language assistance
- Conflict resolution
- Customer service

Collection and Use of Data

- CSFP regulations require annual reporting of client racial and ethnic data (FNS-191 Report)
 - Applicants self-declare racial/ethnic data (CSFP)
 - If an applicant refuses to provide racial/ethnic data, they are to be advised that the information will be collected based on your observation (CSFP).
- Outreach efforts can be targeted to groups not adequately represented in program participation
- Maintain all records for three years plus the current fiscal year
- All data collected must be kept secure and confidential

Public Notification

- There are civil rights requirements for notifying the public about TEFAP and CSFP
 - All materials, including websites, must contain the USDA nondiscrimination statement
 - Convey a message of equal opportunity through photos and graphics in USDA program-related information
 - Information should be provided in different formats and languages to meet all levels of ability
 - Special efforts should be made to reach under-served groups who may qualify for services using appropriate media

Nondiscrimination Statement

- The “USDA Nondiscrimination Statement” must be included on all materials that mention USDA programs (i.e., TEFAP, CSFP, commodities)
- The statement provides contact information for anyone to file a complaint of discrimination directly with the USDA
- There is a full version and a short version of the nondiscrimination statement
- Font size for the full version may be smaller than the rest of the publication, but it must be readable
- The full version is available on the FNS website:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/civil-rights/usda-nondiscrimination-statement-other-fns-programs>

Full Version of the Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Short Version of the Nondiscrimination Statement

“This institution is an equal opportunity provider.”

- The short version may be used where the longer statement does not fit
- The short version **must** be in a font size no smaller than font size used in rest of publication
- The short version may not be used in place of the long statement on client rights documents (such as an application)

“...And Justice for All” Poster

- The poster must be prominently displayed where clients and applicants can see it
- This poster serves as a trademark indicating the site provides a USDA program without discrimination
- The poster has contact information so that anyone has information to file a discrimination complaint directly with the USDA
- Agencies can obtain free copies of this poster by contacting your partner food bank

The current “And Justice For All” Poster



Complaints

- Everyone has the right to file a complaint of discrimination
- Every employee and volunteer must know what to do if someone wants to file a complaint
 - **What is your agency's process?**
- If a complaint is elevated to the State or Federal office, the maximum time to process the complaint is **180 days**
- Be aware of the basis for which complaints may be filed:
 - *race, color, national origin, age, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, or reprisal or retaliation*
- Always attempt to resolve the complaint at the lowest level
- **Never** discourage someone from filing a complaint or voicing concerns of discrimination

Compliance Reviews

- State and federal governments are required to conduct reviews to determine compliance with civil rights laws, regulations, and requirements
- Cooperation with state and federal reviewers is required as a condition of receiving federal financial assistance. Remember, USDA food is considered financial assistance.
- There are three types of reviews:
 - Pre-award: a review conducted before an agency starts distributing TEFAP and/or CSFP
 - Post-award: in Iowa, this is part of your TEFAP/CSFP audit conducted by the state and your TEFAP partner food bank
 - Special compliance review: a review conducted by USDA for significant civil rights concerns.

Resolution of Noncompliance

- Corrective actions may be assigned as a result of the review process
- Agencies are required to cease inappropriate actions and institute proper procedures
- Failure to comply with civil rights requirements can result in the loss of federal assistance from all federal sources.

Reasonable Accommodation for People with Disabilities

- A reasonable accommodation is a change in rules, policies, practices, or services so that a person with a disability will have an equal opportunity to apply for and receive TEFAP and/or CSFP food
 - The agency should do everything they can to assist a person with disabilities
 - The agency is not required to make changes that would fundamentally alter the program or create an undue financial and administrative burden
 - Proxy distribution must be allowed
 - Reasonable accommodations may be necessary at all stages of the process, including application, receipt of benefits, and client notification

Limited English Proficiency

- Limited English Proficiency (LEP): An LEP individual is a person who is unable to speak, read, write, or understand the English language at a level that permits him or her to interact **effectively** with health and social service agencies and providers
- Service must be provided, but there is some flexibility on methods used
- Volunteers may be used as interpreters and must maintain participant confidentiality
- Children should not be used as interpreters
- There is a potential for discrimination based on national origin when accommodations are not made for LEP individuals
- Visit www.lep.gov for more information

Accommodations

- Is your distribution site accessible? Consider the parking lot, entrances, exits, hallways, elevators, and restrooms
- Do you have access to sign language interpreters or interpreters for non-English languages?
- Do you have signage and paperwork in Braille or in non-English languages?
- Do you allow service animals in your facility?
- Do you provide home delivery?

What is Reasonable

- When do I have to translate TEFAP/CSFP applications into another language or place a ramp to gain entry to the building?
- Consider the following factors to help make that decision. Keep in mind that shortage of resources does not eliminate meeting this requirement except in cases of extreme hardship.
 - What is the percentage of disabled/LEP persons being served?
 - What is the percentage of disabled/LEP persons in the eligible local population?
 - What is the frequency of disabled/LEP persons contact with program?
 - How vital is the service to the clients?
 - What are the agency's available resources and cost of services?


Conflict Resolution

- Treat others the way they want to be treated or at least be aware of what that is
- Have a written and posted policy for dealing with unacceptable behavior and conflicts
- Remain calm
- Listen and really hear the other person
- Ask questions to gather information
- Be empathetic
- Explain situation (rules, expectations)
- Get help, especially if threats or if violence is possible

Customer Service

- Treat everyone with dignity and respect and make people feel welcomed
- Be patient and polite
- Make sure all clients receive equal treatment and service
 - Equal does not mean identical
 - For example, one participant receives corn, another receives green beans
 - Staff or volunteers who need services should follow the same rules as clients
- Do not do special favors for a client if you are not prepared to do the same favor for all clients
 - Disabilities and language needs are not considered special favors since they are required

Customer Service continued

- Smile 
- Know and be able to explain policy and rules that must be followed
- Don't be afraid to apologize
- Do not treat people differently based on race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability
- Do not impose policies that unfairly impact certain groups
- Do not retaliate against anyone who files a complaint (or their family, friends or employees who cooperate with a civil right investigation)

Customer Service Final Thoughts

In order to minimize the risk of a civil rights discrimination complaint, ask yourself the following questions each time an applicant and/or participant comes to your program:

- Am I treating this person in the same manner as I treat others?
- Have I clearly explained to this person what information I need to make a determination on the application?
- Have I given this person the opportunity to clarify all relevant factors or inconsistencies?
- Have I provided the person the information they need to make necessary decisions?
- Am I treating this person as I would wish to be treated?

Equal Opportunity for Religious Organizations

- USDA Regulations (7 CFR 16) require equal opportunity for Faith Based Organizations (FBO's) and Community Based Organizations (CBO's)
- Discrimination is prohibited on the basis of religion or religious belief or character
- FBOs can use facilities for USDA food distribution without removing religious art or symbols
- Religious organizations may not use USDA funds or supplies to support worship, religious instruction, or proselytization (attempt to convert)
- Religious schools can consider religion in admission practices and required curriculum

Religious or Faith-Based Organizations

TEFAP providers must:

- Post written notice in a prominent place
- Refer a participant to an alternate provider if available
- Ensure the participant has no objection to the alternate provider

Obtain the written notice and referral letter from your food bank

Civil Rights Final Steps

- Be sure to sign a document indicating that you participated in Civil Rights training
- Talk to your food bank if you have questions about the information included in this presentation
- Thank you for completing your Civil Rights training

2022 Changes

- Nondiscrimination statement (NDS) changed on 5/5/22, to include:
 - Gender identity and sexual orientation
- Websites must be updated by 8/5/22, to include the new NDS
 - <https://www.fns.usda.gov/civil-rights/usda-nondiscrimination-statement-other-fns-programs>
- Documents, pamphlets, brochures, etc., using 2015 NDS must be updated when current supply on hand is exhausted or by 9/30/23
- All new printing must use the 2022 NDS
- And Justice for All Posters:
 - Current poster must not be removed until replaced with the new poster.
 - Your food bank will provide the poster when they receive them
 - The new poster is dated April 2022