Budget Unit Brief



Iowa Civil Rights Commission

Purpose and History

The <u>lowa Civil Rights Commission</u> is the agency charged with enforcing <u>lowa's Civil Rights Act</u>. Under contracts with the federal government, the Commission is also required to assist in enforcement of housing and employment discrimination laws. The Act prohibits discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, credit, public accommodation, and education. Discrimination is prohibited based on the personal characteristics of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, physical disability, mental disability (in all areas but credit), age (in employment and credit only), familial status (in housing and credit only), and marital status (in credit only). The statute of limitations for filing a complaint with the lowa Civil Rights Commission is 300 days from the date of the last discriminatory act.

The purpose of the lowa Civil Rights Commission is to function as a neutral, fact-finding administrative agency that enforces lowa's Civil Rights Act of 1965. The Commission prevents discrimination and enforces antidiscrimination by: investigating and resolving discrimination complaints, facilitating reconciliation of complaints by mediators and conciliators, conducting education and training programs for businesses and landlords, and providing consultation and direction for local human and civil rights agencies.

Employment is the largest area of complaints filed, followed by accommodation and housing. Gender, disability, and race are the most frequently named bases (personal characteristics) for discrimination in nonhousing cases. Disability and race are the most frequently named bases for discrimination in housing.

In regard to housing, testing by the Commission helps to ensure that lowa landlords are aware of the law and know how to handle prospective tenants that are disabled or have young children. Housing cases are primarily resolved through settlement that includes training of the landlords and an end to the discriminatory policy.

Funding

Funding for the Iowa Civil Rights Commission varies annually. It is approximately 50.0% State General Fund appropriation and 50.0% federal funds. The Commission contracts with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Both contracts have training and maintenance of effort requirements. The EEOC's maintenance of effort requirement is to process between 50 and 100 employment cases per year. The Iowa Civil Rights Commission has averaged in excess of 1,500 cases per year for the last several years. The HUD's maintenance of effort requirement is to process approximately 10 to 20 cases per year. The Iowa Civil Rights Commission has averaged over 100 housing cases per year for the last several years. The Iowa Civil Rights Commission is usually one of the highest performing Fair Housing Partners in HUD's Region VII.

The lowa Civil Rights Commission employs volunteer attorneys statewide to conduct mediation. Over 20 lowa lawyers volunteer to help the Commission resolve complaints through alternative dispute resolution.

Local Commissions

The lowa Civil Rights Commission partners with local human and civil rights commissions to provide education, shared office space for mediation of cases, the use of volunteers, and website links. Complaints are cross-filed between the state and local agencies, and the Commission has contracts with local agencies to process/investigate cases. The Commission's data system ensures cases that are cross-filed at the federal, state, and local level are investigated by only one agency.

Related Statutes and Administrative Rules

lowa Code chapters 216, 729, and 729A

161 Iowa Administrative Code

Revised August 26, 2016

More Information

lowa Civil Rights Commission: https://icrc.iowa.gov/ lowa General Assembly: https://icrc.iowa.gov/

LSA Staff Contact: Laura Book (515-725-0509) laura.book@legis.iowa.gov