

216.19 Local laws implementing chapter.

1. All cities shall, to the extent possible, protect the rights of the citizens of this state secured by the Iowa civil rights Act. Nothing in [this chapter](#) shall be construed as indicating any of the following:

a. An intent on the part of the general assembly to occupy the field in which [this chapter](#) operates to the exclusion of local laws not inconsistent with [this chapter](#) that deal with the same subject matter.

b. An intent to prohibit an agency or commission of local government having as its purpose the investigation and resolution of violations of [this chapter](#) from developing procedures and remedies necessary to insure the protection of rights secured by [this chapter](#).

c. Limiting a city or local government from enacting any ordinance or other law which prohibits broader or different categories of unfair or discriminatory practices.

2. A city with a population of twenty-nine thousand, or greater, shall maintain an independent local civil rights agency or commission consistent with agency rules adopted pursuant to [chapter 17A](#). An agency or commission for which a staff is provided shall have control over such staff. A city required to maintain a local civil rights agency or commission shall structure and adequately fund the agency or commission in order to effect cooperative undertakings with the Iowa office of civil rights and to aid in effectuating the purposes of [this chapter](#).

3. An agency or commission of local government and the Iowa office of civil rights shall cooperate in the sharing of data and research, and coordinating investigations and conciliations in order to expedite claims of unlawful discrimination and eliminate needless duplication. The Iowa office of civil rights may enter into cooperative agreements with any local agency or commission to effectuate the purposes of [this chapter](#). Such agreements may include technical and clerical assistance and reimbursement of expenses incurred by the local agency or commission in the performance of the agency's or commission's duties if funds for this purpose are appropriated by the general assembly.

4. The director may designate an unfunded local agency or commission as a referral agency. A local agency or commission shall not be designated a referral agency unless the ordinance creating it provides the same rights and remedies as are provided in [this chapter](#). The director shall establish by rules the procedures for designating a referral agency and the qualifications to be met by a referral agency.

5. The director may adopt rules establishing the procedures for referral of complaints. A referral agency may refuse to accept a case referred to it by the Iowa office of civil rights if the referral agency is unable to effect proper administration of the complaint. It shall be the burden of the referral agency to demonstrate that it is unable to properly administer that complaint.

6. A complainant who files a complaint with a referral agency having jurisdiction shall be prohibited from filing a complaint with the agency alleging violations based upon the same acts or practices cited in the original complaint; and a complainant who files a complaint with the agency shall be prohibited from filing a complaint with the referral agency alleging violations based upon the same acts or practices cited in the original complaint. However, the agency in its discretion may refer a complaint filed with the agency to a referral agency having jurisdiction over the parties for investigation and resolution; and a referral agency in its discretion may refer a complaint filed with that agency to the office for investigation and resolution.

7. A final decision by a referral agency shall be subject to judicial review as provided in [section 216.17](#) in the same manner and to the same extent as a final decision of the agency.

8. The referral of a complaint by the Iowa office of civil rights to a referral agency or by a

referral agency to the Iowa office of civil rights shall not affect the right of a complainant to commence an action in the district court under [section 216.16](#).

[C66, 71, §105A.12; C73, §601A.12; C75, 77, §601A.17; C79, 81, §601A.19]

[90 Acts, ch 1166, §1](#)

C93, §216.19

[2009 Acts, ch 133, §214](#); [2024 Acts, ch 1170, §272](#)

Subsections 2 – 8 amended