

CHAPTER 1
RULES OF PRACTICE
[Prior to 1/13/88, see Civil Rights 240—1.2, Ch 9, Ch 10]

Chapter rescission date pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.7: 1/1/28

161—1.1(216) Organization and administration.

1.1(1) Organization.

a. Commission. The Iowa civil rights commission is a seven-member body. Members are appointed by the governor pursuant to Iowa Code section 216.3.

b. Location. The Iowa civil rights commission, hereinafter referred to as “commission,” is located on the First Floor, Grimes State Office Building, 400 E. 14th Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-1004; telephone (515)281-4121; toll-free in Iowa only 1-800-457-4416; facsimile transmission (fax) (515)242-5840. Office hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, or the business hours set by the office of the governor or otherwise established by the legislature.

1.1(2) Administration. The executive director is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the commission’s activities.

1.1(3) Electronic attendance of commissioners.

a. Notification. A commissioner wishing to attend the commission meeting by electronic means shall notify the executive director of this intent. The executive director will then take all reasonable measures to ensure that the necessary equipment is available at the site selected for the commission meeting. The commissioner attending by electronic means is responsible for ensuring that adequate equipment is available at the commissioner’s location.

b. Public participation. Whenever any commissioners attend by electronic means, public access to the conversation of the commission will be allowed at the location of at least one of the commissioners. Unless good cause requires otherwise, the location where public access to the conversation is provided shall be a location reasonably accessible to the public. If the location is not reasonably accessible to the public, the nature of the good cause justifying inaccessibility shall be stated in the minutes.

c. Electronic attendance of multiple commissioners. If at the time a commissioner notifies the executive director of the intent to attend electronically that commissioner’s electronic attendance would mean that four or more commissioners would be attending separately via electronic means, then that commissioner may not attend by electronic means unless the in-person attendance of any four of the commissioners attending the meeting at any of the available meeting sites is impossible or impracticable.

d. Conducting electronic meeting. Whenever four or more commissioners are separately attending a commission meeting by electronic means, the commission shall conduct the meeting in accordance with the following requirements:

(1) The commission shall keep detailed minutes of all discussion, all persons present and all action. The commission shall electronically record all proceedings in the meeting and retain such recordings for no less than one year from the date of the meeting.

(2) The minutes of the meeting shall include a statement explaining why a meeting in person was impossible or impracticable.

(3) The public notice of the meeting shall state the location of the meeting to be the location where public access to the conversation is provided.

[ARC 8749B, IAB 5/5/10, effective 6/9/10]

161—1.2(216) Commission procedure for rule making. Rescinded by 2026 Iowa Acts, Senate File 2463, section 4, effective July 1, 2026.

161—1.3(216) Procedures for oral or written presentations. Rescinded by 2026 Iowa Acts, Senate File 2463, section 4, effective July 1, 2026.

161—1.4(216) Procedure for obtaining declaratory orders. Rescinded by 2026 Iowa Acts, Senate File 2463, section 4, effective July 1, 2026.

161—1.5(216) Forms. Forms commonly used by the commission are generally available through the commission's Web site or by telephoning the commission staff.

1.5(1) "*Charge of Discrimination*," EEOC 5c, for a complaint alleging a discriminatory or unfair practice or act in all jurisdictional areas except housing.

1.5(2) "*Housing Discrimination Complaint*," HUD 903, for a complaint alleging a discriminatory or unfair practice or act in the jurisdictional area of housing.

1.5(3) "*Authorization Release Form*," to secure authorization for relevant client information.

1.5(4) "*Administrative Release Form*," to request a "right to sue" letter.

1.5(5) "*Request for Withdrawal of Charge of Discrimination*," is used by the complainant to withdraw the charge of discrimination previously filed.

1.5(6) "*Amended complaint*," to amend the charge of discrimination previously filed.

1.5(7) "*Forms notebook*." Other forms commonly used by the commission or its staff are compiled within a "forms notebook." The notebook is available for inspection by the public at the commission offices. Copies of the forms notebook can be obtained for an appropriate copying charge.

1.5(8) "*Purpose of forms*." The existence of standard forms is for the convenience of the commission, the public, and the parties. The existence of a standard form does not imply that the purpose of the standard form cannot be accomplished through a document in a different form.

[ARC 8749B, IAB 5/5/10, effective 6/9/10]

161—1.6(216) Referral and deferral agencies.

1.6(1) *Statement of purpose.* It is the purpose of the commission, in adopting these rules to promote the efficient enforcement of the Act. To this end, the commission will use referral and deferral agreements to encourage agencies with similar powers and jurisdiction to:

a. Develop procedures with remedies necessary to ensure the protection of rights secured by the Iowa Civil Rights Act.

b. Increase the efficiency of their operations.

c. Cooperate more fully with the commission in the sharing of data and resources, and

d. Coordinate investigations and conciliations with the commission in order to eliminate needless duplication.

1.6(2) *Definitions.*

a. "*Agency*" refers to any agency of municipal government established by ordinance for the purpose of eliminating discrimination on any basis protected by the Act or any state or federal governmental unit with jurisdiction over allegations of discrimination that is capable of obtaining remedies similar to those obtainable by the commission.

b. "*Referral*" means the process by which the commission cross-files a charge of discrimination with a referral agency, which extinguishes the legal ability of the commission to process the charge; provided, however, that the referral agency accepts the referred charge and that the commission has the reciprocal right to accept or reject charges cross-filed by the referral agency.

c. "*Referral agency*" means any agency of local government that has been awarded that status by contract with the commission.

d. "*Deferral*" refers to the process whereby the commission notifies an agency of local, state, or federal government that a complaint has been filed with the commission and that the commission will postpone its investigative activities for a period of 60 days while the deferral agency investigates and attempts to resolve the matter. Extensions of this time period may be granted by the commission or the executive director when just cause is shown by the agency for the time extension requested.

e. "*Deferral agency*" means any agency so designated by contract pursuant to these rules.

1.6(3) *Procedure for obtaining referral status.*

a. *Guidelines for designation.* The executive director will evaluate the applications of agencies and may designate agencies as referral agencies where they conform to the following guidelines:

(1) The agency should have professional staff to enable it to comprehensively investigate complaints and to ensure the processing of the charges expeditiously.

(2) The ordinance or enabling legislation under which the agency is established must provide at a minimum the same rights and remedies to discrimination as available under the Act, and

(3) The enabling legislation of the agency shall provide, at a minimum, that the agency may hold public hearings, issue cease and desist orders, and award damages to injured parties which shall include, but are not limited to, actual damages.

b. Application. Any agency desiring to be designated as a referral agency by the commission may send a letter of application to the executive director of the commission. Attached to the application must be a copy of the agency's enabling ordinance, a list of its investigatory personnel, the average number of hours worked by each per week, and a report for the previous 12-month period detailing the following:

- (1) The number of cases filed with the agency,
- (2) The number of probable cause and no probable cause findings,
- (3) The number of cases successfully conciliated,
- (4) The number of cases taken to public hearing,
- (5) The average length of time spent investigating each case,
- (6) The cumulative remedies obtained for the previous 12-month period and average remedy obtained per case,
- (7) An assessment of the quality of the agency's investigation,
- (8) The agency's standards to preserve quality investigations, and
- (9) The status of the agency's caseload.

c. Rejection of application. Where the executive director determines that an agency does not qualify as a referral agency, the director shall so inform the agency in writing along with the reasons for the agency's rejection.

If the reasons for the agency's rejection are corrected, the agency will then be designated as a referral agency. The executive director's decision may be appealed to the commission at its subsequent regular meeting.

d. Designation and contract. Where the executive director determines that an agency is qualified as a referral agency, the director will prepare a contract between the commission and the agency containing the terms on which cases will be referred. Upon execution of the contract, the executive director will designate the agency as a referral agency.

e. Terms of the referral contract. The referral contract shall be negotiated with the referral agency, but shall include the following:

- (1) Terms prohibiting a complainant who has filed with the commission from cross-filing with a referral agency and vice versa,
- (2) Terms permitting the commission to refer complaints filed with it to a referral agency for processing and vice versa,
- (3) Terms prohibiting the commission from processing a charge referred to and accepted by the referral agency and vice versa,
- (4) Terms permitting the commission or a referral agency to reject a charge referred to it for processing,
- (5) Terms ending the contract after two years, subject to renegotiation, and
- (6) Any other terms mutually agreed upon.

1.6(4) Procedure for obtaining deferral status.

a. Application. Any agency desiring to be designated as a deferral agency by the commission may send a letter of application to the executive director of the commission. Attached to the application must be a copy of the agency's enabling legislation or grant of jurisdiction, a list of its personnel and statement indicating their permanent or part-time status, their functions, and a summary of the agency's prior efforts at preventing and eliminating discrimination. The application must also explain how the agency is capable of obtaining remedies substantially similar to those available under the Act.

b. Guidelines for designation. The executive director will evaluate the applications of all agencies and may designate deferral agencies where the agencies conform to the following guidelines:

(1) The agency should have available resources to enable it to investigate complaints to ensure processing within a reasonable period of time,

(2) The agency's enabling legislation or grant of jurisdiction must permit it to obtain substantially the same remedies as are available under the Act,

(3) The agency must be able to make a diligent effort to investigate and resolve the complaints filed with it, and

(4) The agency is capable of obtaining remedies substantially similar to those available under the Act by informal means.

c. Rejection of application. Where the executive director determines that an agency does not qualify as a deferral agency, the director shall so inform the agency in writing along with the reasons for the agency's rejection.

If the reasons for the agency's rejection are corrected, the agency will then be designated as a deferral agency. The executive director's decision may be appealed to the commission at its subsequent regular meeting.

d. Designation and contract. Where the executive director determines that an agency is qualified as a deferral agency, the director will prepare a contract between the commission and the agency containing the terms on which cases will be deferred. After execution of the contract, the executive director will designate the agency as a deferral agency.

e. Terms of the deferral contract. The deferral contract shall include, subject to negotiations with the agency, the following:

(1) The commission will agree to notify the deferral agency of all complaints filed with the commission which are within the deferral agency's jurisdiction, except where a complainant requests in written form that the deferral agency not be notified.

(2) The deferral agency will agree to aid all complainants whose complaints come within the commission's jurisdiction in completing the commission's complaint forms as well as notarizing them and forwarding the fully executed forms to the commission where the necessity to file a formal complaint exists. If, however, a matter may be resolved informally more expeditiously the deferral agency will simply notify the commission by letter of the complaint and resolution obtained. "Informally resolved complaints" shall refer to complaints that can be resolved within ten days.

(3) The commission will agree to postpone its investigation for at least 60 days of any complaint filed with a deferral agency unless otherwise agreed to by both parties. These waiver agreements will be made on an individual case basis.

(4) The agency will agree not to disclose the filing of a complaint or confidential information pertaining to a complaint until the complaint has been officially set for public hearing.

(5) The commission and the deferral agency shall share copies of all findings, case summaries, and conciliation agreements.

(6) Where a complaint is on file with a deferral agency, the commission will allow the deferral agency access to the contents of the complainant's file provided that the deferral agency allows the commission like privileges and has not previously disclosed confidential information prior to public hearing.

(7) Photocopying of materials from commission files for use by a deferral agency is solely at the discretion of the commission staff, but will not be unreasonably denied. When the commission copies from the agency's file, the agency shall be reasonably compensated for copying costs.

(8) The commission will give substantial weight to the findings of a deferral agency where pertinent and relevant factual evidence exists to support those findings.

(9) The commission will not necessarily be bound by the agency's conclusions of law.

(10) Where a deferral agency reaches a finding of probable cause to support an allegation of discrimination the contract may permit the agency to pursue conciliation, or to refer the case back to the commission for conciliation. The contract may also permit an agency that has attempted conciliation to refer that case back to the commission for public hearing. In no case where a case has been referred back to the commission will it be referred back to the agency. Where a case is conciliated or a hearing is held by the agency or the commission, both will be bound by the final determination.

(11) The period for which the contract will be in effect shall not exceed two years, subject to renegotiation.

(12) The contract may contain other terms agreed to by the parties.

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code chapter 216.

[Filed 9/29/75, Notice 7/28/75—published 10/6/75, effective 11/10/75]

[Filed 2/20/78, Notices 12/14/77, 1/11/78—published 3/22/78, effective 4/26/78]

[Filed emergency 11/20/78—published 12/13/78, effective 1/1/79]

[Filed 4/4/80, Notice 9/5/79—published 4/30/80, effective 6/4/80]

[Filed 4/30/84, Notice 2/29/84—published 5/23/84, effective 6/27/84]

[Filed 12/15/87, Notice 8/12/87—published 1/13/88, effective 2/17/88]

[Filed 1/29/93, Notice 11/25/92—published 2/17/93, effective 3/24/93¹]

[Filed 9/21/94, Notice 7/20/94—published 10/12/94, effective 11/16/94]

[Filed 4/28/99, Notice 3/24/99—published 5/19/99, effective 6/23/99]

[Filed 5/8/03, Notice 12/11/02—published 5/28/03, effective 7/2/03]

[Filed ARC 8749B (Notice ARC 8578B, IAB 3/10/10), IAB 5/5/10, effective 6/9/10]

[Content rescinded by 2026 Iowa Acts, Senate File 2463, section 4—editorially removed in IAC Supplement 7/8/26, effective 7/1/26]

¹ Effective date of 161—1.1(1)“b,” 1.5(7) and 1.5(8) delayed 70 days by the Administrative Rules Review Committee at its meeting held March 9, 1993; delayed until adjournment of the 1994 Session of the General Assembly by this Committee May 11, 1993.