Ground Floor, State Capitol Building Des Moines, Iowa 50319 515.281.3566

Iowa Civil Rights Commission

Purpose and History

The Iowa Civil Rights Commission is the agency charged with enforcing Iowa's Civil Rights Act. 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 Iowa Civil Rights Commission is 300 days from the date of the last discriminatory act.

The purpose of the Iowa Civil Rights Commission is to function as a neutral, fact-finding administrative agency that enforces Iowa'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. Sex, 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 Iowa landlords are aware of the law and know how to handle prospective tenants who are disabled or have young children. Housing cases are primarily resolved through settlements that include 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 Department of 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

More Information

Iowa Civil Rights Commission: icrc.iowa.gov
LSA Staff Contact: Alice Fulk Wisner (515.281.6764) alice.wisner@legis.iowa.gov

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 the HUD's Region VII.

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

Local Commissions

The Iowa 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 and 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

Iowa Code chapters 216, 729, and 729A
Iowa Administrative Code 161