

## PREVENTION THROUGH EDUCATION

The Bloomington Human Rights Commission is dedicated to eliminating discriminatory practices before they happen. The people we wish to reach include landlords and tenants, employers and employees, owners and patrons of public accommodations, real estate agents, bankers and home buyers, teachers and students. The Commission sponsors educational forums and publishes pamphlets. Commissioners and staff members are available to speak at meetings or to individuals at no charge.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BLOOMINGTON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Bloomington Human Rights Commission enforces the Bloomington Human Rights Ordinance. The Commission consists of seven citizen-representatives of our community. Four of the members are appointed by the mayor and three by the common council. Commission members hold public meetings once a month. The Human Rights Commission has three primary responsibilities:

- preventing discrimination through education;
- investigating complaints; and
- devising solutions.

# Bloomington

## Human Rights Commission

The Bloomington Human Rights Ordinance promotes equal opportunity in employment, education, housing and access to public accommodations, regardless of race, sex, religion, color, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry or disability. The ordinance also prohibits familial status discrimination in housing. Every person who lives or works in Bloomington is entitled to certain rights, and has certain responsibilities, pursuant to the Human Rights Ordinance.

*The Bloomington  
Human Rights Ordinance*

### Bloomington Human Rights Commission

401 N. Morton Street  
Post Office Box 100  
Bloomington, Indiana 47402-0100

## PROCESSING COMPLAINTS

**Filing a Complaint and Investigation:** If you believe that you have been discriminated against, you may file a complaint with the Bloomington Human Rights Commission. The complaint is a sworn, written statement that explains the basis of your belief in understandable language. It should be taken seriously, for it charts the scope of the investigation. The BHRC will collect and summarize the facts and law related to your complaint. The BHRC must collect the best evidence available for each side. You may be asked to supply documents or other information that supports your complaint. Most investigations are completed within four months.

Your lawyer is welcome to participate in the investigation, but you do not have to hire an attorney. Few complainants do. Often, complaints are settled on terms agreeable to both parties during the investigation period.

**Probable Cause Determination:** If there has been no settlement after all the facts are gathered, the BHRC decides whether to proceed further with your complaint. If we believe that there are grounds to believe discrimination has occurred, we will issue a finding of "probable cause." If we do not believe there are grounds to believe discrimination occurred, we will issue a finding of "no probable cause." If we find no probable cause, your complaint will be dismissed, unless you appeal.

**Formal Conciliation:** Upon finding probable cause, the BHRC sends a proposed consent agreement to the parties and invites them to settle. This proposal can be negotiated.

**Public Hearing:** If we find probable cause, and if the parties cannot agree on a settlement through conciliation, the BHRC will hold a public hearing to decide your case. This is relatively rare. After hearing all the evidence, the BHRC will issue an order in your case that is binding on the parties. Final orders of the BHRC can be reviewed by a court. If such a review is requested, however, the court will not hold a trial. It simply will review the record of the public hearing before the BHRC and consider legal arguments.

## DEVISING SOLUTIONS

If the BHRC finds for the complainant, it may issue an order requiring changes to be made that will help eliminate discrimination in the future and that will help make the complainant whole. These changes could include reinstatement to a job, reimbursement for lost wages, making a house or apartment available, changes in policies or practices or any other appropriate relief that will help meet the goals of the ordinance. The BHRC may award money damages where evidence showed that the discrimination resulted in a monetary loss.

Complainants are protected in their right to file a complaint. It is unlawful for any person to retaliate or discriminate in any manner against a person because he or she has filed a complaint, acted as a witness or assisted the BHRC in the investigation of a complaint.

Respondents are protected against unfounded charges. The BHRC realizes that some charges are in fact not based on unlawful discrimination, and it provides investigations, written determinations, conciliations and public hearings to weed out such charges. Please realize, however, that the BHRC must investigate each charge before deciding whether it is well-founded.

## JURISDICTION

The Bloomington Human Rights Commission has jurisdiction only within the city limits of Bloomington and thus complaints may be filed with the BHRC only if the alleged discrimination occurred within the city limits. For complaints outside the city limits, the BHRC will make an appropriate referral.

## HATE INCIDENTS

The BHRC also collects data and issues reports on hate incidents. Hate incidents include verbal or physical abuse directed at individuals or groups because of their race, sex, color, disability, age, sexual orientation, ancestry, religion or national origin.

## MEETINGS

Commission meetings are usually held on the fourth Monday of the month in the Showers Building, 401 N. Morton Street. The public is encouraged to attend. Notices of meetings are regularly published in the *Bloomington Herald-Times*.

**For more information, or to file a complaint, contact**

**Bloomington Human Rights Commission**

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Bloomington, IN 47402-0100

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