

Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Commission

Quarterly Report

April to June 2025

I. Discrimination Complaints

A. Pending from previous quarters

1. Commissioner Young's disability discrimination in housing case
 - a. Filed January 2025
 - b. No probable cause found in May 2025 following investigation.
2. Commissioner Coover's racial discrimination in public accommodations case
 - a. Filed March 2025
 - b. Respondent offered settlement in May 2025; complainant rejected settlement and withdrew case in May 2025.
3. Commissioner Williams's disability discrimination in employment case
 - a. Filed March 2025
 - b. Complainant withdrew in April 2025 after reviewing respondent's statement.
4. Commissioner Shadday's disability discrimination in employment case
 - a. Filed March 2025
 - b. Due to inability to dual-file, two cases were filed at BMCHRC and EEOC. EEOC case forwarded to ICRC, which took over investigation. BMCHRC cannot investigate simultaneously. ICRC investigation is stalled.

B. New cases

1. Commissioner Jackson's disability discrimination in employment case
 - a. Filed April 2025
 - b. Respondent offered settlement in June 2025; complainant rejected settlement. Respondent offered a follow-up settlement; complainant considering it.
2. Commissioner Baker's sex discrimination in housing case
 - a. Filed May 2025
 - b. Respondent proposed settlement in June 2025. Awaiting respondent signature.
3. Commissioner Williams's racial discrimination in housing case
 - a. Filed May 2025
 - b. Investigation in progress.
4. Commissioner Bensberg's racial discrimination in public accommodations case
 - a. Filed June 2025
 - b. Complainant withdrew a few days later when the issue was resolved.

5. Commissioner Bensberg's racial discrimination in employment case
 - a. Filed June 2025
 - b. Investigation to begin after commissioner interview

II. Miscellaneous Inquiries

- A. A Human Rights Commission in another Indiana city inquired about Bloomington's Safe Haven for Gender Affirming Care resolution. Provided information and reviewed their draft resolution.
- B. An advocate said that two undocumented Latino employees were not paid for their work but that the employer and employees were of the same national origin. Suggested a wage and hour complaint.
- C. A complainant from 2024 repeated allegations of racial discrimination related to a noise complaint but did not provide requested information.
- D. A complainant alleged mistreatment but did not provide further context.
- E. An individual who had filed an EEOC complaint requested a review on her drafted response. Provided feedback.
- F. An individual sought to help advocate for her family member, who needed a ground floor apartment due to her disability. Requested that the family member get in contact with us to talk about the actions she had taken so far.
- G. A man reported that signage on accessible spaces was too hard to read. Suggested bringing the issue to the Council for Community Accessibility.
- H. An individual alleged discrimination but stated that the incident was too personal to discuss over the phone. Scheduled an in-person meeting, but they did not attend.
- I. An inmate at the Monroe County Jail reported harassment by another inmate based on his sexual orientation. Referred to the Indiana Civil Rights Commission as we cannot investigate county facilities.
- J. A man with a service dog and a mobility disability was denied access to the shortest route in a building because it went through private spaces where animals were not typically allowed. Mediated a solution for all parties.
- K. A woman's landlord claimed that she had broken an appliance and insisted she pay for it. No evidence of discrimination; directed to pro bono legal aid.
- L. An individual with Medicaid coverage and a disability alleged that he was treated dismissively by a medical provider who misled him into agreeing to a non-covered treatment he could not pay for. Established that it was based on poor service rather than discrimination; referred to legal aid or the Better Business Bureau.
- M. An individual wished to file a complaint against the Bloomington Police Department. Directed to the Indiana Civil Rights Commission.
- N. A woman believes that the Monroe County Circuit Court is violating her civil rights. Directed to the Indiana Civil Rights Commission.
- O. A woman was denied entry into a rehabilitation center because of her service animal. Provided the center information about the rights of service animals; they permitted her to stay.

- P. A transgender woman was confronted in a locker room by a staff member. Attempted to negotiate a mediation or settlement with the business. They ultimately proposed a settlement which was unacceptable to the complainant. The complainant decided to speak publicly about the incident.
- Q. A woman alleged that her employer did not accommodate an injury and retaliated against her. Requested more information to pursue a potential case.
- R. A woman with a disability had previously reached out the BMCHRC about potentially losing access to a resource in the future if she declined an inaccessible resource. The organization had promised accommodations but she had concerns about whether they were being provided. Agreed to continue serving as a resource.
- S. An individual reported that someone she had met at a local shelter had made a threatening comment to her. She had taken appropriate steps with local law enforcement. Explained that the BMCHRC cannot help with disputes between individuals but that she could continue to reach out.
- T. A woman with a disability reported that an individual was harming her. She was taking appropriate action through local law enforcement and other efforts. Suggested Indiana Legal Services as another appropriate route.
- U. A Black woman reported that her employer did not support her when a client treated her negatively because of her race. Developing an affidavit for a potential case.
- V. A woman with a disability who had requested that all people entering her apartment wear a mask said that a contracted worker had entered her apartment without notice and without a mask. She decided not to pursue a case at this time.
- W. A man with a hearing disability alleged that a company failed to accommodate his disability by communicating with him via phone calls and voicemail when he requested to be contacted only by email. Gathering information for a potential case.
- X. A woman in another county reported that she was being evicted following a situation with her ex-partner. Directed to Indiana Civil Rights Commission and Middle Way House.

III. Publicity

- A. Emailed monthly newsletter, *Rights Stuff*, to 100+ individuals and organizations and placed physical copies in City Hall and the Monroe County Public Library (downtown branch) in April only. Ahead of the May issue, the City Legal department placed CFRD newsletters on hold.
- B. Updated BMCHRC Facebook Page.
- C. Flyers were posted requesting nominations for the annual Human Rights Award.
- D. The Art/Essay Contest submissions were displayed in the atrium of City Hall between April 7 and April 24 and were advertised at the Farmer's Market.
- E. The Art/Essay Contest Awards Ceremony was held on April 24 and welcomed several dozen participants and family members.
- F. Press Release: "Local Students Win 2025 Human Rights Art & Essay Contest" (April 8, 2025)
- G. Press Release: "Nominations Open for Human Rights Award" (April 9, 2025).

- H. Vosmeier appeared on WFHB BloomingOUT on May 29, 2025, and touched on Human Rights Commission history and current work.
- I. London Montgomery appeared on WFHB BloomingOUT on June 12, 2025, and spoke about her experience mediating an allegation of discrimination with the Human Rights Commission.

IV. Networking/Education

- A. Shermis and Vosmeier attended monthly meetings for the Council for Community Accessibility (CCA).
- B. Shermis and Vosmeier attended monthly meetings for the CCA Accessibility Committee.
- C. Shermis attended monthly meetings for the CCA Transportation and Mobility Committee.
- D. Shermis attended monthly meetings of the City's Digital Accessibility Workgroup.
- E. Shermis, Vosmeier, and Coover attended monthly meetings for the Nonprofit Alliance's Community Outreach Breakfast.
- F. Shermis attended monthly meetings for the Indiana Consortium of City and State Human Rights Agencies.
- G. Shermis attended monthly meetings for ADA Indiana.
- H. Shermis led NPA Nonprofit Board Trainings on April 2 and April 9, 2025.
- I. Shermis and Vosmeier attended the Bloomington Volunteer Network's Be More Awards on April 29, 2025.
- J. Shermis and Vosmeier tabled at the 50+ Expo with the CCA on May 7, 2025.
- K. Coover tabled for another organization at Harrodsburg Heritage Days Festival on May 16-17, 2025, and provided BMCHRC brochures.
- L. Shermis attended the CJAM Breakfast on May 20, 2025.
- M. Vosmeier guest curated "Ordinance 75-67: Bloomington's First Gay Rights Amendment, 1975-1978" at the Monroe County History Center, including Human Rights Commission documents and history. It is open May 27-August 23.
- N. Vosmeier attended the Commission on the Status of Children and Youth SWAGGER Awards Ceremony on June 3, 2025.
- O. Shermis and Vosmeier attended the Tactile Map Unveiling at Switchyard Park on June 13, 2025.
- P. Baker preached at the First United Methodist Church on June 22, 2025, and spoke about the work of the Commission.
- Q. Shermis and Vosmeier attended Juneteenth on June 13, 2025.
- R. Shermis and Vosmeier participated in the CCA Disability Awareness Training with the Fire Department on June 24, 25, and 26, 2025.
- S. Vosmeier spoke at, and Shermis, Baker, Jackson, past director Barbara McKinney, and past commissioner Doug Bauder, attended, a reception for the "Ordinance 75-67" exhibit at the Monroe County History Center on June 27, 2025.
- T. Shermis attended trainings on "Fair Housing for Tenants with Disabilities" (April 16, 2025), "Outdoor Dining, Retail, and Community Spaces" (May 1, 2025), and

“Experiencing the Past: Accessibility in Historic Buildings and Facilities” (June 5, 2025).

V. ADA and Accessibility

- A. A property management company inquired about their responsibility for paying for a ramp. Generally, property owners must allow for wheelchair ramps but may not be required to pay for them.
- B. A planner from the Indianapolis MPO sought a recommendation for an Indiana-based PROWAG/ADA expert. Provided a recommendation.
- C. An individual was looking for a piece of medical equipment. Directed to the Mobility Aids Lending Library.
- D. An individual was looking for job coaching for someone with a development disability. Suggested Stone Belt, DSI.
- E. A woman called about accessible parking spaces and ramps in her apartment community. Went out to look at the issue and talked to Engineering, who will add an accessible space and repaint the curbs.
- F. A woman sought resources for her daughter on the use of a cane. Directed to Mobility Aids Lending Library.
- G. A couple needed to reapply for social security benefits for their son with a disability. Cannot assist with a federal issue.
- H. A UReport described an inaccessible path of travel to a business. They are not required to fix the issue until they remodel.
- I. Due to the Kirkwood closure, a person with a disability is unable to be dropped off close enough to a restaurant. Discussing the issues with the Kirkwood Closure team.
- J. The grates around trees on the B-Line trail near the Hopewell park are problematic for cane users. Working with Parks and Rec on potential design changes.
- K. A social worker called on behalf of a client with a disability seeking employment resources. Suggested SICIL and Voc Rehab.
- L. A complaint was made regarding construction equipment parked on the sidewalk. This was an emergency water line repair that necessitated temporary closures.
- M. Economic and Sustainable Development requested a review of bus stop installation scope of work documentation. Reviewed document; it appears that accessibility concerns have been taken into account in the design.
- N. An individual requested information about permits for a ramp to access a temporary display from the B-Line. Referred to relevant individuals in Parks and Rec.
- O. A 50+ Expo attendee said that there were not enough accessible parking spaces near Fairview Elementary. Another individual using UReport requested more accessible spaces near the Fairview United Methodist Church a block away. Spoke with the pastor, who will ask the FlexPark lot to add 2-3 accessible spaces.
- P. A 50+ Expo attendee raised accessibility concerns about Crawford. HAND is working on many concerns at Crawford, some related to accessibility and many not.

- Q. An individual stated his concern that the City Hall restrooms were inaccessible, but did not follow up with specific concerns. The restrooms in City Hall are all ADA-compliant.
- R. The Office of the Mayor introduced the developer of an accessibility app for those with hearing disabilities. Invited her to present at a CCA meeting.
- S. A police social worker from another county inquired about the City's special needs registry. Informed them that the City has moved to the Smart911 system.
- T. A person pointed out that new curb ramps were not aligned with the street. Explained that construction was not finished.
- U. An individual wanted neighborhood parallel parking to be painted with white lines. The Engineering Department stated that they are not because of maintenance burden.
- V. A man wanted to know where accessible spaces were located near a particular restaurant. Directed him to three nearby spaces.
- W. Worked with Parks and Rec to add accessibility information to the events listed in their newsletter.
- X. A woman with multiple disabilities and mental health challenge was seeking resources. Referred her to CCA, CFRD.
- Y. A complaint was filed about the ramp closure leading to the Third Street bridge. The construction has been delayed but the delay will be posted.
- Z. A woman was concerned about a historical district rule about ramps.
- AA. A man inquired about the ADA Anniversary Celebration. Let him know that it will be held on August 2.
- BB. A builder working for a church inquired about ADA requirements for a ramp. Consulted with him on ramp guidelines to make it as accessible as possible, even though churches are exempt from the ADA.
- CC. Two individuals with disabilities and limited hand mobility complained that UReport was not easy to use. Speaking to those who work on it.
- DD. Two restaurants downtown have inaccessible entrances despite exterior remodels. Another restaurant has placed tables/chairs on their ramp, making it inaccessible for wheelchair users. Checking with the county on building permits and will talk to the restaurant owner about moving the furniture on the ramp.