



Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Commission 2025 Annual Report

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The **Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Commission** (BMCHRC) is a seven-member volunteer body charged with enforcing the Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Ordinance and investigating allegations of discrimination in Bloomington and unincorporated areas of Monroe County. Through investigations, education, and community engagement, the Commission works to ensure that residents are able to live, work, learn, and access public spaces free from discrimination.

It is my honor to present the Commission's Annual Report for 2025.



This year also marks a transition in leadership for the Commission. I want to extend my sincere thanks to former Chair Ryne Shadday for his service and leadership over the past seven years. His commitment to civil rights and to the mission of the Commission helped strengthen our work and our presence in the community. I am grateful for the opportunity to build on that foundation as we continue our efforts to protect and promote human rights in Bloomington and Monroe County.

Over the course of the year, the Commission continued its core mission of investigating discrimination complaints within our jurisdiction. Four case investigations opened in 2024 were brought to a close, and fourteen new investigations were opened during 2025. While some complaints resulted in findings of probable cause or settlements that provided meaningful relief to complainants, others concluded with findings of no probable cause after careful investigation. Each matter required thoughtful review of complex facts and competing accounts. Regardless of outcome, the Commission's goal remains the same: to provide a fair and impartial process and to ensure that community members have access to a forum where allegations of discrimination can be heard and evaluated. You can read about each case in **Case Investigations** (page 10).

In addition to formal investigations, the Commission serves as an important point of contact for community members seeking guidance about civil rights concerns. In 2025, the BMCHRC received 83 inquiries from individuals seeking information, referrals, or assistance navigating issues related to discrimination, housing disputes, disability accommodations, employment concerns, and other matters. Even when a situation falls outside the Commission's jurisdiction, staff and commissioners work to connect

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individuals with appropriate resources and organizations that may be able to assist them. An overview of these inquiries is available in **Inquiries** (page 14).

The Commission also remained engaged in the broader civic life of Bloomington and Monroe County. Commissioners and staff participated in community events such as PrideFest, the ADA Anniversary Celebration, and cultural events throughout the city, helping raise awareness of civil rights protections and the services the Commission provides. We also continued longstanding initiatives such as the Student Art and Essay Contest, which invites young members of our community to reflect on how diversity strengthens Bloomington. In 2025, the Commission was proud to present the Human Rights Award to the Bloomington Severe Winter Emergency Shelter (B-SWERS), recognizing the organization's extraordinary work providing shelter, dignity, and community for unhoused residents during the coldest months of the year. To learn more about our **Community Engagement**, you can turn to page 29 of this report.

The work of protecting civil rights is ongoing and complex. The cases and inquiries described in this report illustrate both the persistence of discrimination and the importance of accessible local institutions that can respond to it. The Commission remains committed to carrying out its responsibilities with fairness, diligence, and respect for all members of our community.

Bloomington has long taken pride in striving to uphold the principles of equality and inclusion. The Human Rights Commission is honored to contribute to that tradition. We look forward to continuing this work in 2026 by investigating complaints, educating the public, and supporting a community where every person is treated with dignity.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Emma Williams".

Emma Williams, Chair

COMMISSION PURPOSE

The Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Commission (BMCHRC) enforces the Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Ordinance and educates community members about their rights and responsibilities under various civil rights laws. The BMCHRC is also responsible for issuing reports on bias incidents and hate crimes in our community.

The BMCHRC is established under Bloomington Municipal Code 2.23.100. It is composed of seven volunteer commissioners who investigate allegations of discrimination and civil rights violations and oversee the work of the Commission. The City of Bloomington supports the Commission with a staff liaison, an administrative assistant, and an assistant city attorney.

Commissioners serve two-year terms. Three commissioners are appointed by the Mayor, two by the City Council, and two by the Monroe County Commission. Bloomington's Human Rights Commission has existed since the 1970s and has conducted over 700 formal investigations.

The Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Ordinance forbids discrimination on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, housing status, or status as a veteran, in employment, housing, public accommodations, and education, within the City of Bloomington and unincorporated areas of Monroe County. The activities of the BMCHRC are focused on enforcing this ordinance and combating discrimination in our community.

COMMISSION OVERVIEW

The seven commissioners of the BMCHRC attend monthly meetings, share information at local events, and investigate allegations of discrimination in a fair, thorough, and unbiased way.

COMMISSIONERS

NAME	TERM EXPIRES	APPOINTED BY
Sharon Baker	January 2027	Monroe County Commissioners
Kathleen Bensberg	January 2026	Common Council
Stephen Coover (Secretary)	January 2026	Monroe County Commissioners
Amy Jackson (Vice Chair)	January 2027	Mayor
Emma Williams (Chair)	January 2027	Common Council
Lilliana Young	January 2026	Mayor
[Open]		Mayor

CITY STAFF

- Michael Shermis, Human Rights Liaison
- Annabelle Vosmeier, Administrative Assistant

KEY STATISTICS AND IMPACT

In 2025, the Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Commission investigated 18 cases, received and assisted with 83 inquiries, and recorded three hate incidents. In his role as the ADA Coordinator, the Human Rights Liaison consulted on or assisted with an additional 59 ADA inquiries. Detailed information about each of these complaints or information requests is reported in the following sections. Some key information and statistics are presented below.

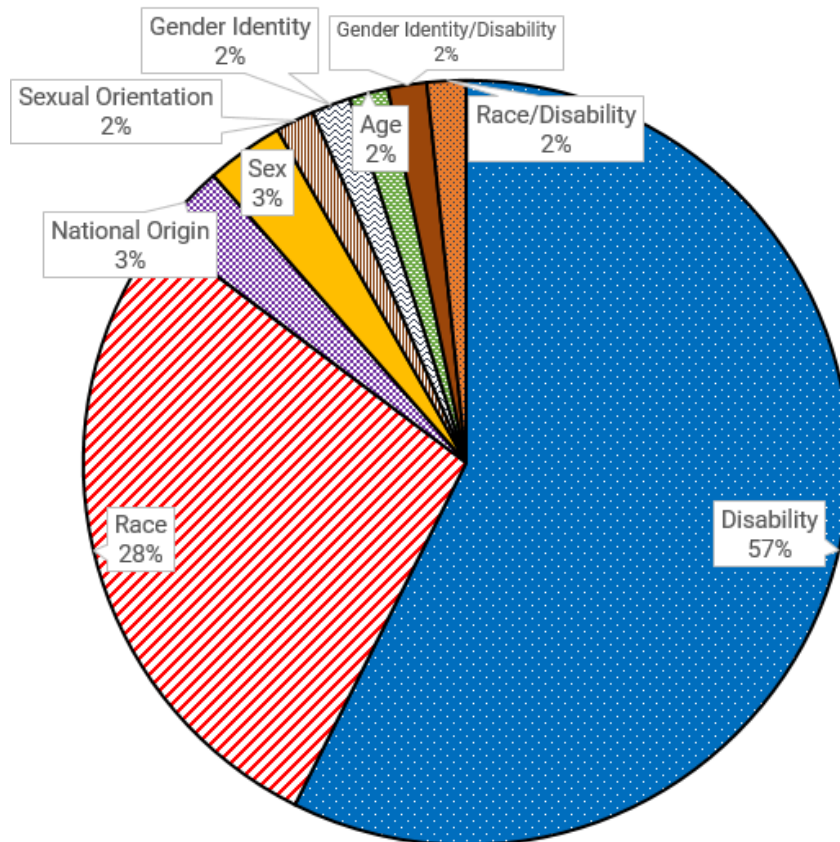
Categories and Outcomes of 2025 Cases

Docket #	Protected Class	Area of Alleged Discrimination	Outcome
0711	National Origin (Latin America)	Housing	Probable Cause
0712	Race (African American)	Employment	Withdrawal
0713	Race (African American)	Housing	Withdrawal
0714	Disability (Mental Health)	Housing	Settlement
0715	Disability (Mental Health)	Housing	No Probable Cause
0716	Disability (Mental Health)	Employment	Withdrawal
0717	Race (African American)	Employment	Withdrawal
0718	Disability	Employment	Withdrawal
0719	Disability (Mental Health)	Employment	Settlement
0720	Sex (Woman)	Housing	Settlement
0721	Race (African American)	Housing	No Probable Cause
0722	Race (African American)	Public Accommodations	Withdrawal (Issue resolved)
0723	Race (African American)	Employment	No Probable Cause
0724	Race (African American)	Employment	No Probable Cause
0725	Race (African American); Disability	Housing	No Probable Cause; Appeal scheduled for 2026
0726	Gender Identity; Disability	Housing	Withdrawal (Accommodation granted)
0727	Disability	Housing	No Probable Cause
0728	Disability	Employment	Investigation Ongoing

2026 Complaints – Protected Class

Among new cases and the 61 complaints citing a protected class, approximately 57% centered on disability, followed by race (28%). National origin and sex appeared in two complaints or cases, while sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and age appeared in one complaint each. One case alleged discrimination based on both gender identity and disability, while another alleged discrimination based on both race and disability.

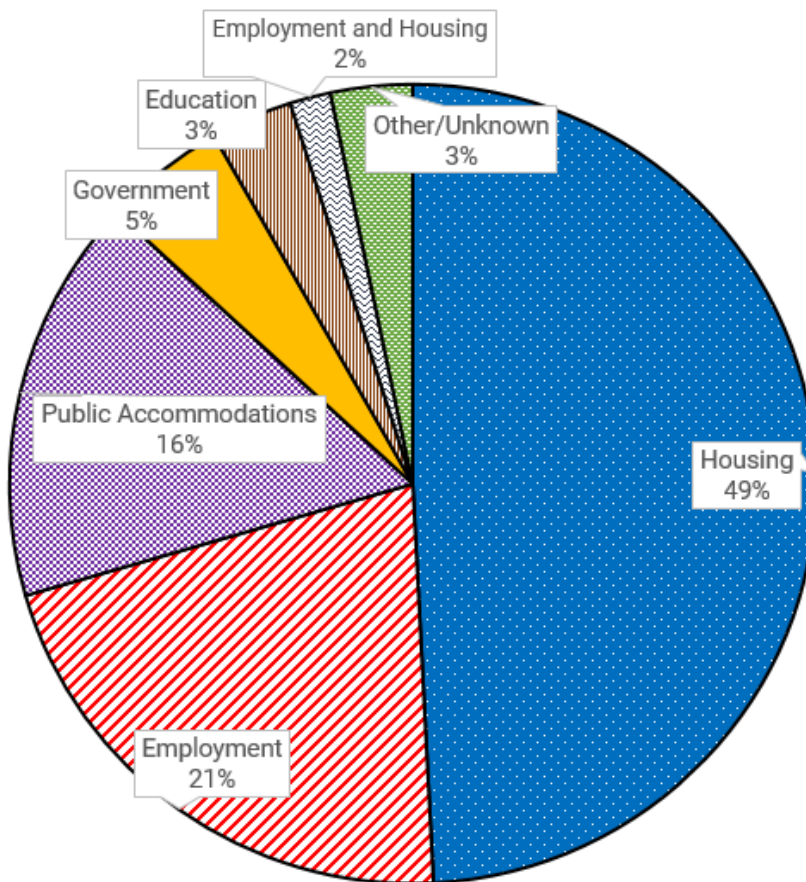
Protected Class	Number	% of Complaints
Disability	35	57%
Race	17	28%
National Origin	2	3%
Sex	2	3%
Sexual Orientation	1	2%
Gender Identity	1	2%
Age	1	2%
Gender Identity and Disability	1	2%
Race and Disability	1	2%
Total	61	



2026 Complaints –Area of Alleged Discrimination

Among new cases and the 61 complaints citing a protected class, approximately half alleged discrimination in housing (49%) followed by employment (21%) and public accommodations (16%). Government and education were mentioned three and two times, respectively, while one complaint alleged discrimination in both employment and housing and two complaints did not specify.

Area of Alleged Discrimination	Number	% of Complaints
Housing	30	49%
Employment	13	21%
Public Accommodations	10	16%
Government	3	5%
Education	2	3%
Employment and Housing	1	2%
Other/Unknown	2	3%
Total	61	



FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Item	Expense
Arts and Essay Contest Prizes (WonderLab passes)	\$420
Arts and Essay Contest Catering and Supplies	\$71.50
Indiana Consortium of State and Local Human Rights Organizations 2025 Dues	\$100
Fourth of July Parade Supplies and Candy	\$181.84
Human Rights Awards	\$115.85
PrideFest Tabling Fees	\$175
Total Expenses	\$1,064.19

Out of the \$1,064.19 expenses, \$992.69 was covered by the General Fund (Community and Family Resources). \$71.50 was paid out of the HRC accounts.

- Beginning Balance: \$2,502.24
- Final Balance: \$2,430.74

CASE INVESTIGATIONS

The primary function of the BMCHRC is to conduct investigations of discrimination allegations. A complainant approaching the BMCHRC with an allegation of disparate treatment based on a protected class has the opportunity to begin the formal process by signing an affidavit describing the incident. The case is then assigned to one of the Commission's seven investigating commissioners to determine cause.

In 2025, four investigations opened in 2024 were brought to a close.

BMCHRC Docket #0711:

A Spanish-speaking couple from Latin America moved into a rental property and alleged that they were not given a lease to review and sign and that the property owner harassed them by strictly enforcing rules they had not been made aware of. The property owner denied the allegations but was unable to produce a signed lease or other evidence. Complaint filed in October 2024; a Probable Cause finding was issued and a monetary settlement reached in February 2025.

BMCHRC Docket #0712:

A Black man alleged racial discrimination in employment when he lost his job based on a prior criminal conviction, arguing that a non-Black employee with a similar conviction had not lost their employment. Complaint filed in October 2024; respondent showed evidence disproving his claims and complainant ceased responding to HRC staff. Complaint withdrawn by default in April 2025.

BMCHRC Docket #0713:

A Black man alleged that his property manager enforced certain rules more stringently with him than with white neighbors and that he was excluded from routine maintenance. Complaint filed in November 2024; complaint withdrawn in March 2025 after complainant filed with the Indiana Civil Rights Commission (ICRC) due to jurisdictional and other issues.

BMCHRC Docket #0714:

A student with a mental health disability requested to break her year-long lease as a disability accommodation when she was forced to withdraw from classes and leave Bloomington to seek treatment. Her mother filed a complaint of discrimination when the landlord did not grant the accommodation request. Complaint filed in December 2024; a settlement was reached in March 2025 granting the breaking of the lease and the relief of responsibility of the remaining monthly rent payments.

In 2025, 14 new investigations were opened, of which two remain in progress.

BMCHRC Docket #0715:

A woman with a mental health disability alleged that management treated her more poorly than other tenants and failed to communicate clearly with her. She also

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alleged disparate treatment when her lease was not renewed. Complaint filed in January 2025; No Probable Cause finding issued in May 2025 following investigation and interviews.

BMCHRC Docket #0716:

A man with a mental health disability was indefinitely suspended after having a panic attack at work and responding negatively to a customer. Complaint filed in March 2025; complainant withdrew in April 2025 following the respondent's position statement as he had found a new job.

BMCHRC Docket #0717:

A Black man reported that a manager at a branch of a national business had called him the N-word and claimed that she was "joking." She had been terminated due to the incident. The company offered a settlement of store credit and the best available customer status. The complainant elected to withdraw and pursue a more substantial cash settlement through a lawsuit or other means. Complaint filed in March 2025; complainant withdrew in June 2025.

BMCHRC Docket #0718:

A man with a disability applied for a sales position and was offered an interview. When the company discovered he used a wheelchair, they canceled his interview without discussing potential accommodations, stating that he would not be able to complete aspects of the position like traveling door-to-door. Complaint filed in March 2025. Because the BMCHRC ceased to be a Fair Employment Practices Agency for the EEOC, the EEOC reassigned the dual-filed case to the ICRC, who took precedence. The BMCHRC could not investigate the case simultaneously, and it was eventually withdrawn in August 2025.

BMCHRC Docket #0719:

A man with a mental health disability (ADHD) requested accommodations from his supervisor such as a clear written to-do list. He alleged that the supervisor made offensive race- and disability-related comments about others and retaliated against him, including by refusing accommodations and setting him up to fail. Investigation was initially inconclusive, but the respondent chose to offer a monetary settlement before the investigation could be completed. Complaint filed in April 2025; a settlement was reached in July 2025.

BMCHRC Docket #0720:

A young woman student reported that her male landlord threatened and intimidated her prior to a City inspection; the City inspector corroborated that she had seemed frightened. Complaint filed in May 2025; after significant delay on the part of the property management company, they agreed to a settlement allowing a no-fault break of the lease a few weeks before she moved out in August 2025.

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BMCHRC Docket #0721:

A married Black couple alleged that a property management company promised them a series of apartments and asked them to pay application fees before stating that the apartments were no longer available. The property management company showed that the couple had paid one non-refundable application fee and that they had been denied based on a third-party credit check. Complaint filed in May 2025; No Probable Cause finding issued in September 2025.

BMCHRC Docket #0722:

A Black woman stated that a local agency had told her that an assistance program's funding was depleted when she suspected that funding was still available. Before investigation could begin, the agency approved her for the program. Complaint filed in June 2025; complainant withdrew in June 2025 when issue was resolved.

BMCHRC Docket #0723:

A Black woman working in the home health care field alleged that the agency she worked for had ignored her concerns, denied her worker's compensation, and fired her unjustly. The agency provided complete on-call logs and other evidence showing that the complainant had not reported concerns about her clients, that they had responded appropriately to similar concerns reported by other employees, and that her termination had been unrelated to her race. During investigation, billing information was corrected to resolve the worker's compensation complaint. Complaint filed in June 2025; No Probable Cause finding issued in September 2025.

BMCHRC Docket #0724:

A Black woman working in the home health care field (for a different agency than the one referred to in Docket #0723) alleged that the agency did not support her when her sole client made racist comments. The agency said that they had warned the client about the comments, that they supported the complainant's decision to decline working with the client, and that they would have placed her with another client but did not have anyone available who matched the complainant's preference for an overnight shift. Complaint filed in June 2025; No Probable Cause finding issued in September 2025.

BMCHRC Docket #0725:

A Black man with a disability alleged that a recovery home treated him more poorly than white residents, subjected him to worse living conditions, allowed another resident in a position of authority to make racist remarks toward him, and removed him unjustly. A long and complex investigation, involving many interviews of witnesses and other residents, did not substantiate his allegations. In response to the complaint, the recovery home created antidiscrimination policies and requested antidiscrimination training for leadership. Complaint filed in July 2025; No Probable Cause finding issued in October 2025. Complainant requested an appeal hearing in October 2025 but was unable to attend several dates due to health issues; appeal hearing rescheduled for 2026.

BMCHRC Docket #0726:

A transgender woman with a disability alleged discrimination by her property management company when they made eviction threats relating to untimely rent payments and upkeep of her unit. The property manager agreed to a disability accommodation allowing her to request extensions to upkeep deadlines. Complaint filed in August 2025; complainant withdrew in November 2025.

BMCHRC Docket #0727:

A woman with a mobility disability alleged housing discrimination when her property management company did not respond in a timely way to her accommodation requests. During investigation and interviews, the property manager showed that the problems were due to miscommunication, mistakes, and poor service caused by staff turnover and a busy period, not by discrimination or animus against the tenant. They provided the accommodations and committed to being more responsive in the future. Complaint filed in September 2025; No Probable Cause finding issued in December 2025.

BMCHRC Docket #0728:

A man with a disability was offered a position by a large company contingent on passing a third-party drug screening. He passed an initial screening before being hospitalized related to his disability. When he failed a second screening before his delayed start date, he alleged that the medical review officer had not considered records of drugs prescribed during his hospitalization. Complaint filed in November 2025; investigation in progress.

INQUIRIES

In 2025, the BMCHRC received 83 inquiries which did not become formal cases and which were not filed as hate incident reports. These inquiries are categorized and summarized below. These 83 inquiries represent a decrease from 108 inquiries received in 2024. However, staff also recorded 59 ADA-specific inquiries made to the ADA Coordinator as a separate category. These are reported in the following section.

Disability Accessibility and Accommodations (12):

BMCHRC staff provide information and advice on questions of disability discrimination, including disability accessibility, accommodations, and emotional support and service animals.

- A woman who had recently had an injury and surgery sought information about requesting a reasonable accommodation from her landlord. Provided guidance and invited her to contact us if she encountered barriers; she did not call back.
- A mother called on behalf of her young daughter. She was worried that her daughter's school would not follow her new 504 accommodation plan, which would go into effect that day. Invited her to contact us if she felt the school did not respond appropriately; she did not call back.
- 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.
- A man reported that signage on accessible spaces was too hard to read. Suggested bringing the issue to the Council for Community Accessibility.
- 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.
- 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.
- A woman was seeking resources for finding accessible housing in Bloomington. Suggested that she get involved with CCA and directed her to a HAND resource.
- A man walked into City Hall and detailed several challenging situations, none of which were directly related to discrimination. Met with him to hear out his complaints. He described attempting to work with a local agency who insisted that he fill out a form online, which he was not comfortable with. Communicated with the agency about assisting him with the form in person as a reasonable accommodation.

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- A woman experienced challenges working with her landlord to get emotional support animals approved for her children. Extensively mediated the situation, which was resolved when the animals were approved.
- A woman with long COVID was unable to respond to issues raised in a housing inspection in the time she was allotted. Recommended she request an accommodation, which she did; the property manager provided the accommodation. She later reported further issues but stopped responding to follow-ups.
- A woman reported that she had requested to move to a different apartment in her complex during mediation of black mold, but that her apartment complex had told her she would have to pay. Suggested she contact her doctor for a letter of accommodation and to contact us again if this was unsuccessful.
- A man with a smoke allergy related to disability said that his property manager was not enforcing a nonsmoking rule. Recommended getting a letter from a doctor, making a formal accommodation request, and calling back if it did not work.

Landlord/Tenant Disputes, Eviction Cases, and Poor Property Management (7):

The BMCHRC does not have jurisdiction over housing code or landlord/tenant disputes. When we receive calls about poor maintenance or offensive behavior by property management, we are not able to act unless the actions appear to be motivated by discrimination against a protected class. We refer these inquiries to the Housing and Neighborhood Development Department or the Eviction Prevention Project (now a part of the Community Justice and Mediation Center).

- A woman who had previously alleged housing discrimination with the BMCHRC shared a maintenance issue unrelated to discrimination. Referred to HAND.
- A landlord requested information about her rights because her tenant's behavior made her uncomfortable. Referred to HAND.
- An individual spoke about a housing situation and asked if it was discrimination. It did not seem likely to be discrimination; shared additional resources and referred to HAND.
- A woman's landlord claimed that she had broken an appliance and insisted she pay for it. No evidence of discrimination; referred to pro bono legal aid.
- A woman who had previously filed a complaint with the BMCHRC called back about landlord-tenant issues. Referred her to CJAM and HAND.
- A woman described experiencing retaliation from her leasing company following complaints to HAND. She was waiting to hear back from CJAM; also referred her to Indiana Legal Services and HAND.
- A person requested assistance with an eviction case but did not believe it was related to discrimination. Referred to Indiana Legal Services and CJAM.

Allegations of Housing Discrimination (13):

The BMCHRC investigates housing discrimination based on membership in a protected class. In the following instances, a formal investigation may have been a possibility, but the complainant did not choose to follow through or another issue prevented an investigation from going forward.

- A man without a disability believed he was being moved down an apartment waitlist below those who are elderly or disabled. He was not able to show proof of his allegations.
- A man left a voicemail stating that he was experiencing harassment and discrimination in housing but did not answer a return call or have voicemail set up.
- A man who had previously started the intake process with the BMCHRC alleged retaliation from his landlord. Suggested that he continue the intake process to file a complaint, but he did not reply.
- A Black man alleged discrimination in housing when his landlord did not alert him of more appropriate units becoming available. Met with him, but he chose not to finalize a formal complaint.
- A woman alleged that her landlord did not accommodate her disability, which exacerbated her health conditions, and gave her a poor reference as retaliation for her complaints. Chose not to pursue a complaint after canceling two intake interviews.
- A complainant from 2024 repeated allegations of racial discrimination related to a noise complaint but did not provide requested information.
- 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. Later in the year, she shared additional concerns relating to renovations and her disability. Assisted her in requesting accommodations.
- A Black woman alleged racism, discrimination, and threats to her safety at a shelter where she was staying. She did not follow up or respond to attempts to contact her.
- A woman reported that her landlord was not renewing her lease because she had used rental assistance programs. She described additional problematic behavior, including racist language toward her biracial child. She had an appointment scheduled with CJAM; suggested she follow through with the CJAM process and call back if the issues were not resolved.
- A man with a disability in recovery from addiction experienced challenges moving into housing he had been previously approved for. Assisted him to mediate the situation, which was resolved when he moved into the housing.

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- A Black man suggested that he was experiencing racial discrimination in both employment and housing but chose not to give full details until he decided whether to pursue a formal complaint; he did not return to pursue a formal complaint.
- A Black man expressed that his landlord was treating him unfairly by changing policies about keeping items on his porch. Spoke to him in an intake interview and then spoke to the property manager, who explained that the policies were in his lease and implemented fairly and that they were working with him to address the issues.
- An individual called about a complex housing issue including allegations of crimes. Stated that we could only address discrimination, not criminal matters, but that he was welcome to fill out an intake form. He did not follow up.

Allegations of Employment Discrimination (8):

The BMCHRC investigates employment discrimination based on membership in a protected class. In the following instances, a formal investigation may have been a possibility, but the complainant did not choose to follow through or another issue prevented an investigation from going forward.

- A woman who had previously corresponded about a disability accommodation asked about a different employment issue. Suggested she contact a lawyer to navigate the issue.
- 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.
- An individual who had filed an EEOC complaint requested a review on her drafted response. Provided feedback.
- A woman alleged that her employer did not accommodate an injury and retaliated against her. Requested more information to pursue a potential case.
- A Black woman alleged racial discrimination in her workplace; scheduled an intake interview and started developing an affidavit. The relevant incidents occurred outside of our jurisdiction; directed her to EEOC.
- A Black woman alleged racial discrimination in employment during a walk-in. Asked her to fill out an intake form and schedule a time to come in, but she did not follow up.
- A woman alleged that her employer began to treat her more negatively after she disclosed her mental illness. Working with her to develop an affidavit.
- A man originally from a West Asian country alleged national origin and age discrimination in employment while living in Bloomington and working remotely. Scheduling an intake interview.

Allegations of Public Accommodations Discrimination (7):

The BMCHRC investigates public accommodations discrimination based on membership in a protected class. In the following instances, a formal investigation may have been a possibility, but the complainant did not choose to follow through or another issue prevented an investigation from going forward.

- A woman with disabilities believed she was at risk of losing her place in line with a nonprofit agency if she declined an offered resource that was inaccessible to her. Corresponded with the organization, which clarified their documentation and promised accommodations.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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. Interviewed for a potential case, but he chose to pursue recourse through the legal system.
- An individual with a developmental disability reported several complaints about a service provider but decided to file in the court system.
- A man reported that staff at a local business had mocked him for his disability. Invited him in for an interview, but he declined as he did not want to pursue the issue.
- An unhoused individual shared with the Office of the Mayor that staff at a local shelter had made racist remarks to him. Following up with him for more information.

Complaints Regarding Local or Federal Government (7):

Due to conflict of interest, the BMCHRC is not able to pursue any complaints that allege discrimination in federal or local government, including the Bloomington Police Department or Monroe County Courts. However, we endeavor to direct those who call with these complaints to the correct resources.

- A couple alleged discrimination in public housing. Due to confusion about whether this would constitute a conflict of interest, we referred them to HUD.

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- A woman working in a government office alleged that she was terminated and experienced retaliation after whistleblowing. Suggested that she contact an attorney, which she did.
- 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.
- An individual wished to file a complaint against the Bloomington Police Department. Directed to the Indiana Civil Rights Commission.
- A woman believes that the Monroe County Circuit Court is violating her civil rights. Directed to the Indiana Civil Rights Commission.
- A woman wanted to file a complaint against a judge in the Monroe County Courts. Directed her to the Complaint Against a Judge form on in.gov.
- A man alleged sex discrimination in family court. Directed to judicial complaint form and Indiana Civil Rights Commission.

Out of Jurisdiction (8):

We were not able to pursue the following complaints as they fall outside of our geographic jurisdiction; however, we attempted to refer callers to other resources.

- A woman from Michigan wished to file a complaint with us because she does not have a nearby agency that works with the EEOC. Shared contact information for the district EEOC office as we are unable to take a case outside of our jurisdiction.
- A woman claimed her privacy had been violated at a truck stop outside of our jurisdiction. Suggested she contact a private attorney.
- An out-of-state caller left an unrelated voicemail following his arrest.
- 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.
- A Black man alleged discrimination by the Department of Child Services and several nonprofits when his children were placed in foster care. He decided not to pursue a complaint against the nonprofits.
- An individual stated that he believed the sheriff and police department were harassing and monitoring him. The HRC cannot investigate governmental bodies. He reported that he would speak to a lawyer about the issue.
- A woman felt she was being discriminated against because she had not been moved up on a Section 8 housing list. She lived out of county and was not part of a protected class.
- A man living out-of-state reported problems with his ex-wife and children that were not related to discrimination. Referred to Indiana Legal Services.

Out of Scope (7):

We were not able to pursue the following complaints as they fall outside of our legal scope; however, we attempted to refer callers to other resources.

- 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.
- 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.
- A man with a felony on his record had been turned down by a potential landlord. Directed him to the Fair Housing Center and provided resources but were unable to help him directly since past involvement with the justice system is not a protected class in Bloomington.
- A man was having trouble finding housing because he had pending criminal charges. Referred him to resources from the Fair Housing Center.
- A woman said that she had been evicted and experienced property loss and damage. She attributes her experience to discrimination based on her income level, which is outside of the HRC's parameters. She reported that Indiana Legal Services was also unable to help her because she was seeking monetary damages.
- A family member reported that a maintenance worker had been fired for "speaking up" about a property manager's abusive treatment of tenants. Expressed that it was not in our purview but recorded information about the situation.
- An individual stated that she had been discriminated against in an educational opportunity due to her age. The HRC can only take age discrimination cases in employment due to the structure of laws.

Unclear Complaints (3):

The following complaints did not provide enough information to pursue or were written in an unclear or incoherent way.

- A complainant alleged mistreatment but did not provide further context.
- 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.
- A man said that his landlord had not renewed his lease but did not mention if he was a member of a protected class.

Miscellaneous Requests for Information (11):

These inquiries do not fall under prior categories and were often requests for a specific piece of information.

- The newly established Muncie Ethics Commission requested to review the BMCHRC's rules and regulations, which we provided.
- A woman who works in a restaurant and makes less than new hires sought information about the living wage ordinance. Provided info from the website.
- A caller requested information about Know Your Rights cards (red cards) and local ACLU chapters. Shared a printable card from the Immigrant Legal Resource Center and directed to the ACLU of Indiana.
- A representative of a nonprofit that had previously corresponded with the BMCHRC inquired about City event equipment available to nonprofits to borrow. Directed to Public Works.
- 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.
- The Evansville Human Rights Director was seeking information regarding a potential gender affirming care resolution in their city. Discussed the structure of Bloomington's resolution.
- An individual asked a long series of questions about employment law and discrimination via email. Answered those questions that are relevant to the BMCHRC.
- In the week following the assassination of Charlie Kirk, a man left a voicemail in which he described himself as a Republican and Christian army veteran and asked about being protected from hate speech from the left. City Legal provided a response regarding free speech rights.
- An IU student shared information about a publicized event where a lecturer had been removed from her class for speaking about "Make America Great Again" in terms of white supremacy. Shared the article for information and discussion purposes in the *Rights Stuff* newsletter.
- A writer called to look for insight after he lost his job following a disagreement. Following up.
- A Hispanic individual asked for insight about a settlement he had been offered following an internal harassment investigation by his employer. He had already started negotiations, but we provided some support.

ADA INQUIRIES

The liaison for the Human Rights Commission also serves as the City of Bloomington's ADA Coordinator. In 2025, staff recorded 59 inquiries made to the ADA Coordinator as a separate category from those made to the Human Rights Commission. These inquiries are categorized and summarized below.

Internal Consulting (14)

- Consulted with Parks & Rec and Engineering on the development of the Powerline Trail.
- Participated in discussions about outdoor dining, the parklets, and the Kirkwood closure.
- Worked closely with Parks and Rec on developing the Switchyard Park tactile map.
- Received and shared complaints by people with disabilities regarding plowed snow blocking accessible spaces in City lots and street parking.
- Consulted with Parks and Rec on the development of a new restroom/pit toilet at Griffy Lake.
- Advised Engineering on temporary ramps.
- Worked with Engineering to get input from people who are blind on tactile directional indicators.
- Spoke to a representative from Economic and Sustainable Development about a grant application they had received from a nonprofit to add automatic doors.
- 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.
- Worked with Parks and Rec to add accessibility information to the events listed in their newsletter.
- 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.
- Parks and Rec had an internal query about an accessible elevator. Provided guidance.
- Engineering had an internal query about the ADA transition plan and other documents for a State of Indiana department. Provided guidance.
- A staff member from another City department asked for guidance regarding an online form. Under the circumstances, recommended allowing someone to submit the information over the phone if they were not comfortable with online forms.

External Consulting (11)

- 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.
- A planner from the Indianapolis MPO sought a referral for an Indiana-based PROWAG/ADA expert. Provided a referral.
- A local nonprofit wanted to know about accessibility modification grants. Directed to ESD and Zone Business.
- 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.
- An individual submitted a uReport regarding the Bloomington Transit transit station's restroom, which did not have the toilet paper in the correct location. Provided information to BT on accessibility specifications.
- An individual reported that a clothing retailer was using its accessible changing room for storage. Contacted the owner, who was extremely responsive and returned the accessible changing room to service. Connected the business with a full accessibility survey through the Council for Community Accessibility (CCA).
- The development director of a nonprofit outside City limits requested potential accessibility training. Agreed that it would be a possibility, although there would be some kind of cost as it is outside City limits.
- 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.
- 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.
- Mobile Integrated Health Unit was looking for information about providing ramps for a patient. Researched and worked on local options for a ramps funding program, but did not come to a resolution for 2025.
- A local theater company inquired about providing ASL interpretation at a performance. Discussed accommodation requests, financial considerations, and possible solutions.

Individual Referrals (33)

- An individual was looking for a piece of medical equipment. Directed to the Mobility Aids Lending Library.
- An individual was looking for job coaching for someone with a development disability. Suggested Stone Belt, DSI.

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- 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.
- A woman sought resources for her daughter on the use of a cane. Directed to Mobility Aids Lending Library.
- Due to the Kirkwood closure, a person with a disability was unable to be dropped off near a restaurant. Discussed the issues with the Kirkwood Closure team.
- A complaint was made regarding construction equipment parked on the sidewalk. This was an emergency water line repair that necessitated temporary closures.
- A couple needed to reapply for social security benefits for their son with a disability. Cannot assist with a federal issue.
- A 50+ Expo attendee raised accessibility concerns about Crawford. HAND is working on many concerns at Crawford, some related to accessibility and many not.
- 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.
- 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.
- A social worker called on behalf of a client with a disability seeking employment resources. Suggested SICIL and Voc Rehab.
- An individual called to complain about a lack of accessible spaces at local grocery stores and the fact that people without disability permits park in accessible spaces. Suggested carrying informative “tickets” to leave on cars that park inappropriately.
- A UReport described an inaccessible path of travel to a business. They are not required to fix the issue until they remodel.
- 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.
- A person pointed out that new curb ramps were not aligned with the street. Explained that construction was not finished.
- An individual wanted neighborhood parallel parking to be painted with white lines. The Engineering Department stated that they are not because of maintenance burden.
- A man wanted to know where accessible spaces were located near a particular restaurant. Directed him to three nearby spaces.

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- A woman with multiple disabilities and mental health challenge was seeking resources. Referred her to CCA, CFRD.
- 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.
- A woman was concerned about a historical district rule about ramps.
- A man inquired about the ADA Anniversary Celebration. Let him know that it will be held on August 2.
- Two individuals with disabilities and limited hand mobility complained that UReport was not easy to use. Spoke to those who work on it.
- An individual reported that newly installed curb ramps included a large drop. The project was not yet finished, and patches were added to even the road.
- An individual representing a friend with a disability made a complaint about Bloomington Transit. Communicated with Bloomington Transit to address the issue in the future.
- A woman who is blind was hit by a car (luckily, she was not seriously injured) in the Walnut Street post office parking lot due to a lack of an accessible path of travel. Visited to look at the problem and got direct phone numbers for her to call.
- A man in a wheelchair was having trouble with a keycard sensor and automatic door in his apartment complex; specifically, the door delay was too short and delivery people placed boxes in front of the sensor. Communicated with the apartment complex to increase the delay and put a sign up about keeping the sensor clear.
- A caregiver for a person with a disability wanted the individual's apartment complex to add accessible parking. Provided the complex with resources and fair housing guidelines and communicated with the Great Lakes ADA Center. The complex declined to add accessible parking and argued that they were not technically required to.
- A man with a disability expressed a complaint about ADA parking signage. Scheduling a time to look at his concerns.
- A man inquired about pedestrian and accessibility concerns around 10th Street and the bypass. Directed him to the Indiana Department of Transportation.
- A woman with a disability was concerned about the number of accessible spaces in public and private lots. Discussed our limited ability to enforce this in private parking and shared how the CCA advocates for more accessible spaces.
- An individual with a disability felt that a contractor repairing her home after a fire did not take her mobility issues into consideration. Suggested she talk to her insurance agent about mediating the problems and to get accommodation letters from her doctor.
- A woman in a wheelchair reported that she became stuck in a snowed-over curb cut on a damaged sidewalk on the City right-of-way and found herself in a

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dangerous situation where she needed to call the police department.

Recommended she fill out a uReport, which she did.

- A woman reported that her apartment complex had not been shoveled or salted appropriately during a snowfall, which caused a neighbor in a wheelchair to get stuck outside. She had also slipped and fallen. Recommended that she call back if this happens in a future snowfall. HAND cannot enforce shoveling on private property; however, she can file a rental complaint with them. We may also be able to approach it as an accessibility issue.

Other (1)

- 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.

HATE INCIDENT REPORT

In August 1990, the Bloomington Common Council unanimously approved an amendment to the Bloomington Human Rights Ordinance which gave the Bloomington Human Rights Commission the explicit authority to collect data and issue reports on hate incidents within our community. We accept reports from police departments, individuals, groups and the media. We also accept anonymous reports. Our goal is not to investigate these incidents, as we do not have the authority to conduct that type of investigation. Rather, our goals are to serve as a referral resource and sounding board for victims, to work with community groups to coordinate responses to hate incidents when appropriate, and to make our community more aware of the prevalence of hate incidents by updating this document on-line as we receive new reports.

Warning: This report includes offensive language, including slurs, to provide an accurate portrayal of these incidents. We present such language exactly as the reporting party presented it.

- In April 2025, a Black man reported anonymously on Reddit (R/Bloomington) that an individual had yelled “Fuck you, nigg*r” at him while he was walking near Bloomington South High School.
- In June 2025, a gay man reported to the BMCHRC that a neighbor was calling him “faggot.”
- In October and November 2025, a Jewish resident reported to the Bloomington Police Department three incidents of vandalism to an Israeli flag he was displaying outside his home. Officers reviewed footage from nearby cameras but were not able to identify a suspect; the case was closed when there were no further incidents.

STRATEGIC GOALS AND INITIATIVES

Under Bloomington Municipal Code, the Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Commission is charged with enforcing our community's anti-discrimination ordinance through investigations and working to minimize or eliminate discrimination through publications and other efforts.

In 2026, the BMCHRC will

- Review and respond to all inquiries and provide information and referrals,
- Investigate all discrimination cases within our jurisdiction brought before us,
- Attend six informational events and educate the community through publications and presentations, and
- Seek new opportunities to support and protect those most at risk of discrimination.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

2025 Human Rights Award

In 1997, the Bloomington Human Rights Commission began recognizing individuals and groups who have contributed to improving human rights in our community. In 2025, the BMCHRC was honored to recognize the Bloomington Severe Winter Emergency Shelter (B-SWERS).

B-SWERS is a collaborative effort led by a dedicated group of volunteers and local faith communities. During the 2024-2025 winter, 196 volunteers served 100 unhoused community members over the 42 coldest nights of the year, providing shelter, community, and dignity to some of Bloomington's most vulnerable neighbors.



On August 6, 2025, the Human Rights Award was presented by the BMCHRC Chair Ryne Shadday at the City Council meeting. At left, from left to right: HRC Chair Ryne Shadday and B-SWERS representatives Fran Klinger, Dan Watts, Rev. Sarah Lynne Gershon, Rev. Dan Caldwell, and Caleb Hoagland.

Presentations at Monthly Meetings

In 2025, the BMCHRC welcomed several community groups to present on their work at the Commission's monthly meeting. This included the IU Gender Diverse and Queer Clinic, Advocates for Immigrant Student Equity (Bloomington High School South), Exodus Refugee Services, Sheriff Ruben Martí and Jail Commander Kyle Gibbons, and the Stone Belt Human Rights Committee.

Staff from the BMCHRC also visited Bloomington High School South to present on the Commission's work to the UNICEF Club.

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Student Art and Essay Contest

Each year, the BMCHRC holds an art and essay contest for local students in grades K-6. In 2025, students were asked to consider the theme “How does diversity make our community stronger?”

All participants had the opportunity to have their work displayed in the City Hall Atrium in April 2025. Twelve winners in the categories Art (Grades K-2), Art (Grades 3-6), Essays (Grades 2-3), and Essays (Grades 4-6) were acknowledged in a celebration ceremony on April 24, 2025.

Below at left, commissioners, students, friends and family gather in the Atrium of City Hall for the celebration ceremony. Below at right, Mayor Thomson poses with nine of the winners.



The BMCHRC Tables at Local Events

In 2025, the BMCHRC tabled at several local events, including A Piece of Latin America: Corazón de Jaripeo, the ADA Anniversary Celebration, Bloomington PrideFest, La Fiesta del Otoño, and the Council of Neighborhood Associations.

Below at left, Commissioner Katie Bensberg poses with information and candy at the BMCHRC’s PrideFest table. Below at right, Commissioners Sharon Baker and Steve Coover share family-friendly activities and quizzes at the ADA Anniversary Celebration.



CONTACT US

Commission meetings are held on the third Mondays of the month and are open to the public. Please join us! Meetings take place in the Hooker Room (City Hall, 401 N. Morton St.) at 5:00 p.m. In 2026, the January meeting has been rescheduled due to Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Virtual attendance via Zoom is available if requested in advance (human.rights@bloomington.in.gov).

In 2026, the BMCHRC is scheduled to meet on:

- Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 5:00 p.m., in the Allison Room (City Hall).
- Monday, February 16, 2026, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).
- Monday, March 16, 2026, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).
- Monday, April 20, 2026, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).
- Monday, May 18, 2026, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).
- Monday, June 15, 2026, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).
- Monday, July 20, 2026, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).
- Monday, August 17, 2026, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).
- Monday, September 21, 2026, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).
- Monday, October 19, 2026, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).
- Monday, November 16, 2026, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).
- Monday, December 21, 2026, at 5:00 p.m., in the Hooker Room (City Hall).

For more information and to keep up with the BMCHRC, visit or contact us at:

- **Website:** bloomington.in.gov/bhrc
- **Facebook:** facebook.com/BloomingtonHumanRights
- **Newsletter Signup:** lp.constantcontactpages.com/sl/PB20Ve8
- **Email:** human.rights@bloomington.in.gov
- **Phone:** 812-349-3478

To file an initial intake for a complaint or a hate incident report, visit:

- **Initial Intake Form:** bton.in/HRCForm
- **Hate Incident Report:** tinyurl.com/BMCHRC-HateIncident