

CHAPTER 14-02.4 HUMAN RIGHTS

14-02.4-01. State policy against discrimination.

It is the policy of this state to prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, the presence of any mental or physical disability, status with regard to marriage or public assistance, or participation in lawful activity off the employer's premises during nonworking hours which is not in direct conflict with the essential business-related interests of the employer; to prevent and eliminate discrimination in employment relations, public accommodations, housing, state and local government services, and credit transactions; and to deter those who aid, abet, or induce discrimination or coerce others to discriminate.

14-02.4-02. Definitions.

In this chapter, unless the context or subject matter otherwise requires:

1. "Age" insofar as it refers to any prohibited unfair employment or other practice means at least forty years of age.
2. "Aggrieved person" includes any person who claims to have been injured by a discriminatory practice.
3. "Court" means the district court in the judicial district in which the alleged discriminatory practice occurred.
4. "Department" means the division of human rights within the department of labor and human rights.
5. "Disability" means a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a record of this impairment, or being regarded as having this impairment.
6. "Discriminatory practice" means an act or attempted act which because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, status with regard to marriage or public assistance, or participation in lawful activity off the employer's premises during nonworking hours which is not in direct conflict with the essential business-related interests of the employer results in the unequal treatment or separation or segregation of any persons, or denies, prevents, limits, or otherwise adversely affects, or if accomplished would deny, prevent, limit, or otherwise adversely affect, the benefit of enjoyment by any person of employment, labor union membership, public accommodations, public services, or credit transactions. The term "discriminate" includes segregate or separate and for purposes of discrimination based on sex, it includes sexual harassment. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, sexually motivated physical conduct or other verbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature when:
 - a. Submission to that conduct or communication is made a term or condition, either explicitly or implicitly, of obtaining employment, public accommodations or public services, or education;
 - b. Submission to or rejection of that conduct or communication by an individual is used as a factor in decisions affecting that individual's employment, public accommodations or public services, education, or housing; or
 - c. That conduct or communication has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's employment, public accommodations, public services, or educational environment; and in the case of employment, the employer is responsible for its acts and those of its supervisory employees if it knows or should know of the existence of the harassment and fails to take timely and appropriate action.
7. "Employee" means a person who performs services for an employer, who employs one or more individuals, for compensation, whether in the form of wages, salaries, commission, or otherwise. "Employee" does not include a person elected to public office in the state or political subdivision by the qualified voters thereof, or a person chosen by the officer to be on the officer's political staff, or an appointee on the policymaking level or an immediate adviser with respect to the exercise of the

constitutional or legal powers of the office. Provided, "employee" does include a person subject to the civil service or merit system or civil service laws of the state government, governmental agency, or a political subdivision.

8. "Employer" means a person within the state who employs one or more employees for more than one quarter of the year and a person wherever situated who employs one or more employees whose services are to be partially or wholly performed in the state.
9. "Employment agency" means a person regularly undertaking, with or without compensation, to procure employees for an employer or to procure for employees opportunity to work for an employer and includes any agent of the person.
10. "Labor organization" means a person, employee representation committee, plan in which employees participate, or other organization which exists solely or in part for the purpose of dealing with employers concerning grievances, labor disputes, wages, rates of pay, hours, or other terms or conditions of employment.
11. "National origin" means the place of birth of an individual or any of the individual's lineal ancestors.
12. "Otherwise qualified person" means a person who is capable of performing the essential functions of the particular employment in question.
13. "Person" means an individual, partnership, association, corporation, limited liability company, unincorporated organization, mutual company, joint stock company, trust, agent, legal representative, trustee, trustee in bankruptcy, receiver, labor organization, public body, public corporation, and the state and a political subdivision and agency thereof.
14. "Public accommodation" means every place, establishment, or facility of whatever kind, nature, or class that caters or offers services, facilities, or goods to the general public for a fee, charge, or gratuity. "Public accommodation" does not include a bona fide private club or other place, establishment, or facility which is by its nature distinctly private; provided, however, the distinctly private place, establishment, or facility is a "public accommodation" during the period it caters or offers services, facilities, or goods to the general public for a fee, charge, or gratuity.
15. "Public service" means a public facility, department, agency, board, or commission owned, operated, or managed by or on behalf of this state, a political subdivision thereof, or a public corporation.
16. "Readily achievable" means easily accomplishable and able to be carried out without much difficulty or expense by a person engaged in the provision of public accommodations.
17. "Reasonable accommodations" means accommodations by an employer that do not:
 - a. Unduly disrupt or interfere with the employer's normal operations;
 - b. Threaten the health or safety of the individual with a disability or others;
 - c. Contradict a business necessity of the employer; or
 - d. Impose undue hardship on the employer, based on the size of the employer's business, the type of business, the financial resources of the employer, and the estimated cost and extent of the accommodation.
18. "Sex" includes pregnancy, childbirth, and disabilities related to pregnancy or childbirth.
19. "Status with regard to public assistance" means the condition of being a recipient of federal, state, or local assistance, including medical assistance, or of being a tenant receiving federal, state, or local subsidies, including rental assistance or rent supplements.

14-02.4-03. Employer's discriminatory practices.

1. It is a discriminatory practice for an employer to fail or refuse to hire an individual; to discharge an employee; or to accord adverse or unequal treatment to an individual or employee with respect to application, hiring, training, apprenticeship, tenure, promotion, upgrading, compensation, layoff, or a term, privilege, or condition of employment, because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, status with respect to marriage or public assistance, or participation

- in lawful activity off the employer's premises during nonworking hours which is not in direct conflict with the essential business-related interests of the employer.
2. It is a discriminatory practice for an employer to fail or refuse to make reasonable accommodations for an otherwise qualified individual with a physical or mental disability, because that individual is pregnant, or because of that individual's religion. An employer is not required to provide an accommodation that would disrupt or interfere with the employer's normal business operations; threaten an individual's health or safety; contradict a business necessity of the employer; or impose an undue hardship on the employer, taking into consideration the size of the employer's business, the type of business, the financial resources of the employer, and the estimated cost and extent of the accommodation. For purposes of this subsection, "pregnant" includes pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions.
 3. This chapter does not prohibit compulsory retirement of any employee who has attained sixty-five years of age, but not seventy years of age, and who, for the two-year period immediately before retirement, is employed in a bona fide executive or high policymaking position, if the employee is entitled to an immediate nonforfeiture annual retirement benefit from a pension, profit-sharing, savings, or deferred compensation plan, or any combination of those plans, of the employer of the employee, which equal, in the aggregate, at least forty-four thousand dollars.

14-02.4-04. Employment agency's discriminatory practices.

It is a discriminatory practice for an employment agency to accord adverse or unequal treatment to a person in connection with an application for employment, referral, or request for assistance in procurement of employees because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, or status with respect to marriage or public assistance, or to accept a listing of employment on that basis.

14-02.4-05. Labor organization's discriminatory practices.

It is a discriminatory practice for a labor organization to deny full and equal membership rights to an applicant for membership or to a member; to expel, suspend, or otherwise discipline a member; or to accord adverse, unlawful, or unequal treatment to a person with respect to the person's hiring, apprenticeship, training, tenure, compensation, upgrading, layoff, or a term or condition of employment because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, or status with respect to marriage or public assistance.

14-02.4-06. Certain employment advertising deemed discriminatory.

It is a discriminatory practice for an employer, employment agency, or labor organization, or the employees, agents, or members thereof directly or indirectly to advertise or in any other manner indicate or publicize that individuals of a particular race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, or status with respect to marriage or public assistance, or who participate in lawful activity off the employer's premises during nonworking hours which activity is not in direct conflict with the essential business-related interests of the employer, are unwelcome, objectionable, not acceptable, or not solicited.

14-02.4-07. Requiring security clearance not discriminatory.

Notwithstanding sections 14-02.4-03 through 14-02.4-06, it is not a discriminatory practice for an employer to fail or refuse to hire and employ an individual for a position, for an employer to discharge an individual from a position, or for an employment agency to fail or refuse to refer an individual for employment in a position, or for a labor organization to fail or refuse to refer an individual for employment in a position if the occupancy of the position, or access to the premises upon which the duties of the position are performed, is subject to a requirement imposed in the interest of the national security of the United States under a security program administered under a statute of the United States or an executive order of the president and the individual has not fulfilled or has ceased to fulfill that requirement.

14-02.4-08. Qualification based on religion, sex, national origin, physical or mental disability, or marital status.

Notwithstanding sections 14-02.4-03 through 14-02.4-06, it is not a discriminatory practice for an employer to fail or refuse to hire and employ an individual for a position, to discharge an individual from a position, or for an employment agency to fail or refuse to refer an individual for employment in a position, or for a labor organization to fail or refuse to refer an individual for employment, on the basis of religion, sex, national origin, physical or mental disability, or marital status in those circumstances where religion, sex, national origin, physical or mental disability, or marital status is a bona fide occupational qualification reasonably necessary to the normal operation of that particular business or enterprise; nor is it a discriminatory practice for an employer to fail or refuse to hire and employ an individual for a position, or to discharge an individual from a position on the basis of that individual's participation in a lawful activity that is off the employer's premises and that takes place during nonworking hours and which is not in direct conflict with the essential business-related interests of the employer, if that participation is contrary to a bona fide occupational qualification that reasonably and rationally relates to employment activities and the responsibilities of a particular employee or group of employees, rather than to all employees of that employer.

14-02.4-08.1. Exercise of religion.

1. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a state or local government entity may not:
 - a. Substantially burden a person's exercise of religion unless applying the burden to that person's exercise of religion in a particular situation is essential to further a compelling governmental interest and is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling government interest;
 - b. Treat religious conduct more restrictively than any secular conduct of reasonably comparable risk; or
 - c. Treat religious conduct more restrictively than any comparable secular conduct because of alleged economic need or benefit.
2. A person claiming to be aggrieved by a violation of this section may assert that violation as a claim or defense in a judicial proceeding and obtain appropriate relief, including costs and reasonable attorney's fees.

14-02.4-09. Seniority, merit, or other measuring systems and ability tests not discriminatory.

Notwithstanding sections 14-02.4-03 through 14-02.4-06, it is not a discriminatory practice for an employer to apply different standards of compensation, or different terms, conditions, or privileges of employment pursuant to a bona fide seniority or merit system, or a system which measures earnings by quantity or quality of production or to employees who work in different locations provided that the differences are not the result of an intention to discriminate because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, status with respect to marriage or public assistance, or participation in lawful activity off the employer's premises during nonworking hours; or for an employer to give and to act upon the results of any professionally developed ability test; provided, that the test, its administration, or action upon the results is not designed, intended, or used to discriminate because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, status with respect to marriage or public assistance, or participation in a lawful activity off the employer's premises during nonworking hours.

14-02.4-10. Employment of individual - Exceptions - Physical examination - Investigation of medical history.

1. Sections 14-02.4-03 through 14-02.4-06 do not apply to business policies or practices relating to the employment of an individual by the individual's parent, grandparent, spouse, child, or grandchild, or in the domestic service of a person.
2. The employment of one person in place of another, standing by itself, is not evidence of a discriminatory practice.

3. After a conditional offer of employment, it is not a discriminatory practice for an employer, employment agency, or labor organization to:
 - a. Require a person to undergo physical examination for the purpose of determining the person's capability to perform the essential functions of the job with or without reasonable accommodations if every entering employee in the same job category is subjected to the examination; or
 - b. Conduct an investigation as to the person's medical history for the purpose of determining the person's capability to perform available employment if every entering employee in the same job category is subjected to the investigation.
4. Medical history obtained under this section must be collected and maintained separate from nonmedical information and must be kept confidential.

14-02.4-11. Rights of veterans.

Nothing contained in sections 14-02.4-03 through 14-02.4-06 repeals or modifies a federal, state, or local statute, regulation, or ordinance creating special rights or preference for veterans.

14-02.4-12. Discriminatory housing practices by owner or agent.

Repealed by S.L. 1999, ch. 134, § 4.

14-02.4-12.1. Discriminatory housing practices.

Repealed by S.L. 2001, ch. 145, § 14.

14-02.4-13. Discriminatory housing practice by financial institution or lender.

Repealed by S.L. 1999, ch. 134, § 4.

14-02.4-14. Public accommodations - Discriminatory practices.

1. It is a discriminatory practice for a person engaged in the provision of public accommodations to fail to provide to a person access to the use of any benefit from the services and facilities of the public accommodations; or to give adverse, unlawful, or unequal treatment to a person with respect to the availability to the services and facilities, the price or other consideration therefor, the scope and equality thereof, or the terms and conditions under which the same are made available because of the person's race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, or status with respect to marriage or public assistance.
2. If a place of public accommodation has an architectural or communication barrier, the person engaged in the provision of public accommodations shall remove the barrier, if removal is readily achievable. If a public accommodation can demonstrate that barrier removal is not readily achievable, the public accommodation shall make that person's goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations available through alternative methods, if those alternative methods are readily achievable.

14-02.4-15. Public services - Discriminatory practices.

1. It is a discriminatory practice for a person engaged in the provision of public services to fail to provide to an individual access to the use of and benefit thereof, or to give adverse or unequal treatment to an individual in connection therewith because of the individual's race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, or status with respect to marriage or public assistance.
2. Subsection 1 does not apply to:
 - a. An individual committed to the legal and physical custody of the department of corrections and rehabilitation; or
 - b. An individual confined in a correctional facility, as defined in section 12-44.1-01.

14-02.4-15.1. Discrimination in governmental contracts and programs prohibited.

A governmental entity may not discriminate against any health care institution or any private agency in any grant, contract, or program because of the institution's or agency's refusal

to permit, perform, assist, counsel, or participate in any manner in any health care service that violates the institution's or agency's written religious or moral policies.

14-02.4-15.2. Preferred pronoun - Government entity.

1. Unless otherwise required by law, a government entity may not adopt a policy requiring or prohibiting:
 - a. An employee's use of an individual's preferred pronoun when addressing or mentioning the individual in work-related communications; or
 - b. The designation of an employee's preferred pronoun in work-related communications.
2. An individual may assert a violation of this section as a claim or defense in a judicial proceeding and is entitled to recover appropriate relief, including reasonable attorney fees and court costs.

14-02.4-16. Advertising public accommodations or services - Discriminatory practices - Exceptions.

It is a discriminatory practice for a person to advertise or in any other manner indicate or publicize that the patronage of persons of a particular race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, or status with respect to marriage or public assistance is unwelcome, objectionable, not acceptable, or not solicited. This section does not prohibit a notice or advertisement banning minors from places where alcoholic beverages are being served.

14-02.4-17. Credit transactions - Discriminatory practices.

It is a discriminatory practice, except as permitted or required by the Equal Credit Opportunity Act [15 U.S.C. 1691], for a person, whether acting as an individual or for another, to deny credit, increase the charges or fees for or collateral required to secure credit, restrict the amount or use of credit extended, impose different terms or conditions with respect to the credit extended to a person, or item or service related thereto because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, or status with respect to marriage or public assistance. This section does not prohibit a party to a credit transaction from considering the credit history of a person or from taking reasonable action thereon.

14-02.4-18. Retaliation prohibited.

It is a discriminatory practice for a person to conceal unlawful discrimination or aid, abet, compel, coerce, incite, or induce another person to unlawfully discriminate in violation of this chapter, or to engage in any form of threats, retaliation, or discrimination against a person who has opposed any unlawful discriminatory practice or who, in good faith, has filed a complaint, testified, assisted, or participated in an investigation, proceeding, hearing, or litigation under this chapter.

14-02.4-19. Actions - Limitations.

1. Any person claiming to be aggrieved by a discriminatory practice with regard to public services or public accommodations in violation of this chapter may file a complaint of discriminatory practices with the department or may bring an action in the district court in the judicial district in which the unlawful practice is alleged to have been committed or in the district in which the person would have obtained public accommodations or services were it not for the alleged discriminatory act within one hundred eighty days of the alleged act of wrongdoing.
2. Any person claiming to be aggrieved by any discriminatory practice other than public services or public accommodations in violation of this chapter may file a complaint of discriminatory practice with the department or, except as limited by this section, may bring an action in the district court in the judicial district in which the unlawful practice is alleged to have been committed, in the district in which the records relevant to the practice are maintained and administered, or in the district in which the person would

- have worked or obtained credit were it not for the alleged discriminatory act within three hundred days of the alleged act of wrongdoing.
3. Except as otherwise limited by this section, if a complaint of a discriminatory practice is first filed with the department, the period of limitation for bringing an action in the district court is ninety days from the date the department dismisses the complaint or issues a written probable cause determination.
 4. If a person elects to bring an action in the district court under this chapter, any administrative action pending before the department based upon the same discriminatory acts must be dismissed immediately.
 5. A person whose collective bargaining agreement, employment contract, or public employee rights provides a process through which recourse for discriminatory acts is available must exercise that process to completion before commencing an action under this section, and if that process provides for judicial review by statutory appeal or through special proceedings, then that process must be followed to completion. The period of limitation for bringing an action in the district court if there is no statutory appeal is ninety days from the date the available process is completed or if a complaint is filed with the department, ninety days from the date the department dismisses a complaint or issues a written probable cause determination, whichever is greater. In those cases when there is no statutory appeal, a request for an administrative hearing under section 14-02.4-23 must be made within twenty days from the date the department dismisses a complaint or issues a probable cause determination, but no administrative hearing may be held until any available internal process is completed. A person found to have been subjected to a discriminatory act through an administrative process may apply to the district court for an award of reasonable attorney's fees and costs. Nothing in this subsection limits the ability of the department to receive and investigate complaints of discrimination and engage in informal conciliation.

14-02.4-20. Relief.

If the department, as the result of an administrative hearing, or the court determines that the respondent has engaged in or is engaging in a discriminatory practice, the department or the court may enjoin the respondent from engaging in the unlawful practice and order temporary or permanent injunctions, equitable relief, and backpay limited to no more than two years from the date a minimally sufficient complaint was filed with the department or the court. Neither the department nor an administrative hearing officer may order compensatory or punitive damages under this chapter. Interim earnings or amounts earnable with reasonable diligence by the person discriminated against reduce the backpay otherwise allowable. In any action or proceeding under this chapter, the court may grant the prevailing party a reasonable attorney's fee as part of the costs. If the court finds that the complainant's allegation of a discriminatory practice is false and not made in good faith, the court shall order the complainant to pay court costs and reasonable attorney's fees incurred by the respondent in responding to the allegation.

14-02.4-21. Records exempt

A complaint filed with the department under this chapter is an open record. Information obtained during an investigation conducted by the department under this chapter is exempt from section 44-04-18 before the institution of any judicial proceedings or administrative hearing relating to the complaint under this chapter or before the administrative closure of a complaint by the department. The department may disclose to the complainant or the respondent, or a representative of the complainant or the respondent, information obtained during an investigation if deemed necessary by the department for securing an appropriate resolution of a complaint. The department may disclose information obtained during an investigation to a federal agency if necessary for the processing of complaints under an agreement with the agency. Individually identifiable health information obtained during an investigation may not be disclosed by the department except to a federal agency if necessary for the processing of complaints under an agreement with the agency. Statements made or actions taken during conciliation efforts relating to a complaint under this chapter may not be disclosed by the

department, except to a federal agency if necessary for the processing of complaints under an agreement with the agency, and may not be used as evidence in a subsequent proceeding under this chapter without the written consent of the parties to the conciliation. A conciliation agreement is an open record unless the complainant and respondent agree that it is not and the department determines that disclosure is not necessary to further the purposes of this chapter. Investigative working papers are exempt from section 44-04-18.

14-02.4-22. Duties and powers of department.

1. The department shall receive and investigate complaints alleging violations of this chapter. The department shall emphasize conciliation to resolve complaints.
2. For the purpose of thoroughly investigating a complaint, the department may require the attendance of a witness and the production of a book, record, document, data, or other object at any hearing or with reference to any matter the department has the authority to investigate. If under this subsection a witness fails or refuses to appear or to produce, the department may issue a subpoena to compel the witness to appear or a subpoena duces tecum to compel the witness to appear and produce a relevant book, record, document, data, or other object.
3. If a person refuses to obey a subpoena, the district court, upon application by the department, may issue to the person an order requiring that person appear and give evidence or otherwise produce documentary evidence requested by the department regarding the matter under investigation.
4. A witness who is subpoenaed under this section and who appears at a hearing or whose deposition is taken is entitled to receive the same fees and mileage as a witness in a civil case in district court.
5. The department may adopt rules necessary to implement this chapter.
6. Within the limits of legislative appropriations, the department shall foster prevention of discrimination under this chapter through education for the public, employers, providers of public accommodations or services, and commercial lenders on the rights and responsibilities provided under this chapter and ways to respect those protected rights.
7. The department shall publish in even-numbered years a written report recommending legislative or other action to carry out the purposes of this chapter. The department shall conduct studies relating to the nature and extent of discriminatory practices in this state.

14-02.4-23. Complaints - Probable cause - Administrative hearing.

1. The department shall investigate complaints of alleged discriminatory practices. An aggrieved person may file a complaint with the department alleging the discriminatory practice. The department may file a complaint. A complaint must be in writing and in the form prescribed by the department.
2. Unless the complaint is resolved through informal negotiations, conciliation, or is otherwise administratively closed, the department shall determine from the facts whether probable cause exists to believe that a discriminatory practice has occurred with regard to one or more of the claims of the aggrieved person's complaint. If the department determines that no probable cause exists to believe that a discriminatory practice has occurred with regard to one or more of the claims of the aggrieved person's complaint, the department shall promptly dismiss all or a portion of the complaint.
3. If the department determines that probable cause exists to believe that a discriminatory practice has occurred and is unable to resolve the complaint through informal negotiations or conciliation, the department shall issue a probable cause determination and provide for an administrative hearing in the manner provided in chapter 28-32 on the complaint.
4. A probable cause determination is prima facie evidence of a violation of this chapter.
5. If a claim filed by an aggrieved person proceeds to a hearing, the aggrieved person is a party in the hearing. The aggrieved person may be accompanied, advised, and

represented throughout the proceeding by a representative chosen by the employee, including private counsel. Neither the department nor the attorney general may represent an aggrieved person at a hearing under this chapter. The attorney general, at the request of and on behalf of the department, may participate in the hearing and advocate in favor of the department's finding of probable cause.

6. If a claim filed by the department proceeds to a hearing, the department is a party in the hearing. The attorney general shall represent the department in any action or proceeding under this chapter.