

Section 6000

Civil Rights

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Section 6000 Civil Rights

All nutrition assistance programs and activities that receive Federal funding are protected and subject to civil rights oversight. CEs are responsible for ensuring that all qualifying persons have equal access to the SFMNP by complying with the civil rights and nondiscrimination requirements of USDA. (7 CFR §249.7)

In the USDA nutrition programs administered by TDA, there are six bases protected against discrimination. A protected basis refers to any person or group of people who have characteristics for which discrimination is prohibited based on law, regulation, or executive order. Protected bases in the USDA nutrition assistance programs administered by TDA are:

- Race;
- Color;
- National origin;
- Sex;
- Age; and
- Disability.

Reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA is also prohibited.

CEs must strictly adhere to and enforce the provisions of the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), both within the CEs administrative office and at its sites, if applicable.

Refer to USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Instruction 113-1, *Civil Rights Compliance and Enforcement – Nutrition Programs and Activities* for additional information.

6100 Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

6110 Public Notification

CEs must have a public notification system to inform applicants, participants, and potentially eligible person of the SFMNP availability, SFMNP rights and responsibilities, the policy of nondiscrimination, and the procedure for filing a complaint. CEs must make SFMNP information available to the public upon request. CEs also must be able to provide informational materials related to the SFMNP in languages other than English, if the need exists. Refer to Item 6130, *Limited English Proficiency* for additional information.

CEs must convey the message of equal opportunity in all photographic and other graphics that are used to provide information related to SFMNP. Specifically, when human likenesses are used in such materials, reasonable efforts must be made to depict an ethnic and racial balance.

6110.1 And Justice for All Posters

CEs and each contracted site must prominently display the USDA nondiscrimination poster ("And Justice For All") in a place where it may be read by participants at all times. All "And Justice for All" posters must be displayed in a specific size: 11 inches width x 17 inches height. More information about the "And Justice for Poster" may be found on USDA's web site at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cr/and-justice-all-posters>.

6110.2 Nondiscrimination Statement

CEs must provide the following nondiscrimination statement and complaint-filing procedures in all SFMNP information intended for participants:

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW

Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

In Spanish the nondiscrimination and complaint-filing procedure is:

De conformidad con la Ley Federal de Derechos Civiles y los reglamentos y políticas de derechos civiles del Departamento de Agricultura de los EE. UU. (USDA, por sus siglas en inglés), se prohíbe que el USDA, sus agencias, oficinas, empleados e instituciones que participan o administran programas del USDA discriminen sobre la base de raza, color, nacionalidad, sexo, discapacidad, edad, o en represalia o venganza por actividades previas de derechos civiles en algún programa o actividad realizados o financiados por el USDA.

Las personas con discapacidades que necesiten medios alternativos para la comunicación de la información del programa (por ejemplo, sistema Braille, letras grandes, cintas de audio, lenguaje de señas americano, etc.), deben ponerse en contacto con la agencia (estatal o local) en la que solicitaron los beneficios. Las personas sordas, con dificultades de audición o discapacidades del habla pueden comunicarse con el USDA por medio del Federal Relay Service [Servicio Federal de Retransmisión] al (800) 877-8339. Además, la información del programa se puede proporcionar en otros idiomas.

Para presentar una denuncia de discriminación, complete el [Formulario de Denuncia de Discriminación del Programa del USDA](#), (AD-3027) que está disponible en línea en: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html y en cualquier oficina del USDA, o bien escriba una carta dirigida al USDA e incluya en la carta toda la información solicitada en el formulario. Para solicitar una copia del formulario de denuncia, llame al (866) 632-9992. Haga llegar su formulario lleno o carta al USDA por:

- (1) correo: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442;
- (3) correo electrónico: program.intake@usda.gov.

Esta institución es un proveedor que ofrece igualdad de oportunidades.

The nondiscrimination statement must be printed in its entirety on all SFMNP documents that are intended for the public. SFMNP-related written materials must be provided to all participants with the nondiscrimination statement and complaint-filing procedures included. The nondiscrimination statement cannot be modified.

If the SFMNP material is too small to permit the full statement to be included, the material must, at a minimum, in print no smaller than text, state: "This institution is an equal opportunity provider."

The entire nondiscrimination statement does not have to be included on every page of a CE's SFMNP information website; at minimum the nondiscrimination statement or a link to the statement must be included on the CE's home page.

NOTE: Whenever Congressional legislation specifies or sets restrictions on program eligibility, those provisions take precedence over certain protected bases. Section 4002 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, defines the purpose of the SFMNP to provide benefits specifically to low income seniors 60 years of age or older. Therefore, any reference to age in the nondiscrimination statement as it relates to the SFMNP is subject to this qualification.

6120 Data Collection and Maintenance

CEs must determine the number of actual beneficiaries by racial and ethnic category from participants applying for and/or participating in the SFMNP on an annual basis. CEs must collect data using Form H1430, *Participant Application*, for each participant at the time of certification or recertification.

Participants must be given the opportunity to self-identify race and ethnicity and be informed that their responses to questions about their race and ethnicity will not affect consideration of their application. If the participant chooses not to self-identify race and ethnicity, the CE must record the participant's race and ethnicity based on visual observation. Participants of multiple racial categories should be categorized according to appearance of the group with which they mainly identify.

Racial and ethnic categories include the following:

Ethnicity

- (1) *Hispanic or Latino*. A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. The term “Spanish origin” can be used in addition to “Hispanic or Latino.”
- (2) *Not Hispanic or Latino*.

Race

- (1) *American Indian or Alaskan Native*. A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
- (2) *Asian*. A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- (3) *Black or African American*. A person having origins in any of the black racial group of Africa. Terms such as “Haitian” can be used in addition to “Black or African American.”
- (4) *Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander*. A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.
- (5) *White*. A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

6130 Limited English Proficiency

CEs must take “reasonable steps” to ensure meaningful access to their programs by participating persons with disabilities and for persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). People with LEP are those who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.

CEs have an obligation to reduce language barriers that can prevent meaningful access by LEP persons to important benefits, programs, information, and services of the SFMNP. CEs that fail to take reasonable steps may be discriminating on the basis of national origin. Reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access is contingent on a number of factors, including:

- The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the SFMNP;
- The frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the SFMNP;
- The nature and importance of the SFMNP to people's lives; and
- The resources available to the CE and costs.

Elements that may be helpful in designing an LEP policy or plan:

- Identifying LEP persons who need language assistance
- Identifying ways in which language assistance will be provided
- Training staff
- Providing notice to LEP persons
- Monitoring and updating LEP policy

6140 Compliance Reviews

Compliance reviews help ensure that civil rights requirements are fulfilled at each level of SFMNP administration, including the application approval process and the federal and state monitoring efforts.

TDA will determine whether the CEs and their sites comply with civil rights requirements before approval of a CE's application to participate. TDA determines compliance by examining *Application for Participation/Plan of Operation* submitted via TX-UNPS and supporting documentation. During administrative reviews, TDA will also evaluate compliance with civil rights requirements.

6200 Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

6210 Program Accessibility

The SFMNP, when viewed in its entirety, must be accessible to and usable by persons with one or more disabilities, including persons with impaired vision or hearing. CEs are not required to make every part of existing sites physically accessible to disabled persons, but must ensure that programs at those sites are accessible. Sites must offer the most integrated setting possible to enable persons with disabilities to fully benefit from the SFMNP. CEs can make the SFMNP accessible to persons with disabilities by:

- Moving to accessible buildings,
- Assigning aides to assist participants,
- Delivering services at alternate accessible sites (for facilities with 15 or fewer employees),
- Redesigning equipment,
- Changing the schedule of service hours,
- Altering existing facilities, and
- Constructing new, accessible facilities.

CEs should develop transition plans to ensure SFMNP accessibility if structural changes to buildings are necessary.

If CEs cannot provide services to a person with disabilities because a part of a site where services are provided is not accessible, they must:

- Inform the person with disabilities of alternate sites where they can receive services; and
- Pay all or part of any additional cost the person with disabilities incurs as a result of being transported to the alternate site. (There are some circumstances when CEs are not required to pay these costs. Contact your USDA Foods Specialist for additional information.)

6220 Public Notification

CEs must have a public notification system to inform applicants, participants and potential participants of the SFMNP availability, SFMNP rights and responsibilities, the policy of nondiscrimination, and the procedure for filing a complaint. The public notification system must include the following three basic elements:

1. SFMNP Availability. CEs must take specific action to inform participants of their rights and responsibilities.
2. Complaint Information. CEs must be advise participants of the right to file a complaint, how to file a complaint, and the complaint procedures.
3. Nondiscrimination Statement. CEs must ensure all information materials and sources, including websites, used to inform the public about the SFMNP contain the nondiscrimination statement located in Item 6110.2, *Nondiscrimination Statement*.

6230 Employment

CEs are prohibited from discriminating against any qualified person based on a disability. CEs must make reasonable accommodations for the known physical or mental limitations of an otherwise qualified applicant or employee with disabilities. CEs are not expected to make accommodations that impose an undue hardship on the operation of the SFMNP.

6240 Nondiscrimination Statement (Assurances)

The statement of nondiscrimination is contained in the *SFMNP Agreement*.

6250 Designation of Section 504 Coordinator

If a CE employs 15 or more people, the CE must designate one or more persons to coordinate compliance with Section 504 regulations. CEs may designate an existing employee to perform this function. (7 CFR §15b.6)

6260 Complaint/Grievance Procedures

If a CE employs 15 or more people, the CE must maintain procedures to process grievances and complaints. Procedures that are required by a program other than the SFMNP may satisfy this requirement if they comply with due process standards and provide for prompt and equitable resolution of complaints. (7 CFR §15b.6(b))

6270 Self-Evaluation of Services

CEs must evaluate the quality and availability of their services to people with disabilities, and begin to correct any inequitable policies or practices. The evaluation should be made with the assistance of people with disabilities or organizations that advocate for people with disabilities. CEs must maintain a list of interested persons with whom they consulted, a description of areas that they examined and the problems that they identified, and descriptions of modifications that they made.

CEs must retain the results of a self-evaluation study in accordance with SFMNP record-keeping requirements. Refer to Item 4700, *Program Documentation*, for additional guidance.

6300 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

6310 Introduction

The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) became effective January 26, 1992. This Act and Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 combine to prevent a wide range of discriminatory actions against disabled persons. However, the ADA does not replace Section 504. The ADA applies to all persons and is not limited solely to persons who receive federal financial participation.

The ADA comprises the following subjects:

- Non-discriminatory practices
- Reasonable accommodation

The ADA applies to the following areas:

- Services
- Employment

6320 Services

When CEs evaluate the services that they and their sites offer, CEs should consider the following questions:

- Can a person with disabilities get to a site with reasonable ease?
- If the person can reach the location, can the person enter the facility and access the specific location where services are provided?
- If the person can access the location where services are provided, is there an accessible bathroom?
- If the person can access the location where services are provided, are necessary accommodations made for the person's particular disability?

6330 Employment

In accordance with the ADA, CEs

- Cannot discriminate against a person with a disability when hiring or promoting staff if the person is otherwise qualified for the job.
- Can inquire about a person's ability to perform a job, but cannot ask whether a person has a disability nor subject a person to tests that screen out people with disabilities.
- Must provide reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities (for example, job restructuring and modification of equipment).

NOTE: CEs are not required to provide accommodations that impose an undue hardship on their businesses. CEs faced with such a request are encouraged to contact TDA for further assistance.

6400 Complaints

CEs and sites must have written grievance procedures for addressing and processing complaints. Administrative and site personnel must be able to provide documentation of the procedures and an explanation of the complaint process. If a complaint is filed with a CE or sites, the CE must forward it to TDA immediately. CEs are also required to provide the complainants with contact information for USDA for filing a civil rights complaint (see Item 6110.2, *Nondiscrimination Statement*) and explain that a complaint of violation of their civil rights may be made directly to USDA.

The CE may incorporate the SFMNP grievance procedures into existing organization-wide compliant procedures rather than develop standalone grievance procedures for the SFMNP.

6500 Training

Administrative and site personnel must be trained in all aspects of civil rights before assuming any SFMNP duty and annually thereafter. Refer to Item 11300, *TDA Civil Rights Training*.