

Civil Rights in Federally Funded Nutrition Programs

An Overview

This quick reference document may be used by frontline staff and volunteers (servers, bus drivers, etc.) to familiarize themselves with the basic Civil Rights requirements/concepts. It is not a comprehensive treatment and is not a substitute for the required annual Civil Rights training.



The goals of Civil Rights:

- Eliminate barriers that prevent/deter people from receiving benefits.
- Provide equitable treatment in the delivery of programs/services to all applicants, participants, and beneficiaries.
- Ensure all applicants/participants understand their rights and responsibilities.
- Show respect and dignity to all.

Protected Bases:

In the federally funded nutrition programs, it is unlawful to discriminate based on:

- Race
- Color
- National origin
- Sex
- Age
- Disability

What is Discrimination:

The treatment or consideration of, or making a distinction in favor or against, a person based on the group, class, or category to which the person belongs. Discrimination may be either intentional, by neglect, or by the actions or lack of actions based on membership in one of the protected groups. Examples of unlawful discrimination include:

- Giving one group or type of participants larger or extra helpings of food
- Separating genders
- Failing to provide children with a dietary disability accommodating meals
- Failing to provide program information to all potential program applicants



Accommodating Individuals with Disabilities:

- Disability definition: a physical or mental impairment that **substantially limits** one or more **major life activities**
- **Reasonable accommodations** must be made for participants with a disability.
 - A change/alteration in policies, practices, and/or procedures to accommodate a disability
 - Duty to negotiate over modification (This means simply saying “no” is almost never appropriate)
 - Providing appropriate modifications is the primary objective
 - Made on a case-by-case basis

Limited English Proficiency (LEP):

- Must take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to programs and activities by persons with limited English proficiency.

Don't Forget:

- Always provide excellent customer service regardless of race, age, color, sex, national origin, or disability.
- Always demonstrate a commitment to providing solutions when conflicts arise by seeking to listen and understand; demonstrate empathy and discovering needs; identifying barriers to a resolution and overcoming those barriers.

*Make sure you understand from your supervisor USDA's civil rights compliant process.

This document does not serve as a replacement for the annual civil rights training requirements. It serves as a supplemental Civil Rights tool to the [Civil Rights Technical Assistance for FNS Programs During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) document released by USDA on April 9, 2020.

