



U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division

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Statement by Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Eric S. Dreiband Protecting Civil Rights While Responding to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

In light of the Public Health Emergency concerning the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice is issuing this statement to ensure that victims of illegal discrimination know where to turn when their civil rights are violated.

Discrimination based on race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, and other protected classes is unlawful under several federal laws and may result in criminal or civil liability. See, e.g., <https://www.justice.gov/crt/page/file/921291/download>. Further, violent acts of hate based upon these and other protected classes violate federal hate crimes statutes. See, e.g., <https://www.justice.gov/crt/hate-crime-laws>. Discrimination may arise in many different contexts, including education, employment, health and safety, housing, and places of public accommodation.

As the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the Department will remain vigilant in enforcing civil rights laws. We must ensure that fear and prejudice do not limit access to housing, schools, benefits, services, jobs, and information, among other things, on account of race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, or other protected classes. Further, access to accurate emergency and health information is critical to providing all people with the ability to make informed decisions and protect themselves, their families, and the community at large.

It is important that we all work together to address unlawful discrimination, including violent acts or threats based upon protected classes. As in all emergencies, the COVID-19 outbreak has affected people of many different races, religions, and ethnicities, as well as those with disabilities. Unlawful discrimination may also discourage people from coming forward to seek treatment or information. **Laws prohibiting unlawful discriminatory behavior must and will be vigorously enforced.**

If you believe you are a victim of discrimination based on race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, or other protected classes, you can find information about how to file a complaint at <https://www.justice.gov/crt/how-file-complaint> and <https://www.justice.gov/crt/fcs>. Complaints of employment discrimination can be filed with the EEOC at <https://www.eeoc.gov/employees/charge.cfm>. You can also contact the Civil Rights Division at toll-free 855-856-1247 or 202-514-3827. In addition, the Division provides resources at <https://www.ada.gov> (disability-related topics) and <https://www.lep.gov> (language access information).

If you have information concerning the commission of violent acts or threats due to race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, or other protected class, please contact your

local FBI field office. You can find a list of field offices at <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices>.

The Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, together with other agencies throughout the federal government, will continue to monitor civil rights issues related to COVID-19. For more information, please see www.justice.gov/crt/fcs. More information on the federal government's response to COVID-19 is available at [The White House: Coronavirus Guidelines for America](#) and www.coronavirus.gov.

Guidance documents are not binding and lack the force and effect of law, unless expressly authorized by statute or expressly incorporated into a contract, grant, or cooperative agreement. Consistent with Executive Order 13891 and the Office of Management and Budget implementing memoranda, the Department will not cite, use, or rely on any guidance document that is not accessible through the Department's guidance portal, or similar guidance portals for other Executive Branch departments and agencies, except to establish historical facts. To the extent any guidance document sets out voluntary standards (e.g., recommended practices), compliance with those standards is voluntary, and noncompliance will not result in enforcement action. Guidance documents may be rescinded or modified in the Department's complete discretion, consistent with applicable laws.