

Civil Rights Compliance in Food Distribution Programs for Volunteers

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

- Civil Rights are “The nonpolitical rights of a citizen; the rights of personal liberty guaranteed to U.S. citizens by the 13th and 14th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution and by acts of Congress.”
- Discrimination: The act of distinguishing one person or group of persons from others, either intentionally, by neglect, or by the effect of actions or lack of actions based on their protected classes.
 - 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

- Protected classes: Any person or group of persons who have characteristics for which discrimination is prohibited bases on a law, regulations, or executive order. Protected classes in TEFAP are: race, color, national origin, age, sex, and disability.
- Federal financial assistance is anything of value received from the Federal government such as: cash grants and loans, USDA food/commodities, training, property donations, permission to use Federal property and similar items and services.
- Goal of Civil Rights Legislation:
 - Equal treatment for all eligible participants
 - Knowledge of rights and responsibilities
 - Overcome the Civil Rights barriers that people have in participating in the program
 - Volunteers must be able to serve individuals with Limited English proficiency (LEP).
 - If a volunteer is having difficulty comprehending an LEP individual, remain calm and contact your supervisor for assistance.
 - Ideally, your site will have forms and instructions in other languages that are prevalent in your specific area.
 - Volunteers may be used to translate one language to another, but confidentiality is extremely important in these situations!
 - Dignity and respect for all

- People receiving TEFAP products, have the right to file and submit a complaint. These might be based on: race, color, national origin, age, sex, and disability.
- Complaints can be verbal or written. Complaint forms are available on the food bank's website.
- Never discourage anybody to submit a complaint.
- Customer service: Making a difference treating all people with dignity and respect. Answering questions in a non-threatening voice, clearly explain rules, rights and responsibilities to everyone, find tools and techniques to improve customer service and recognize that stress can impact customer service.