

Discrimination

Know Your Rights About Discrimination

Advancing Human Rights and Justice for All in Maryland since 1911



MARYLAND
LEGAL AID

Maryland Legal Aid: Who We Are

Maryland Legal Aid is a non-profit law firm dedicated to providing high-quality legal advocacy to protect and advance human rights for Maryland's most vulnerable low-income individuals, families, and communities.

Know Your Rights!

This brochure is for Maryland residents and contains general information about your rights, but is not meant to be legal advice. Every effort is made to keep this information current. However, the law sometimes changes. If you need information about your specific situation, or if you have a pending legal case, you should seek counsel from Maryland Legal Aid or another legal resource.

What is Discrimination?

Discrimination happens when a person or organization treats you differently or harasses you because you are a member of a "protected group". A protected group can be based on a person's:

- Race
- Color
- National Origin
- Sex
- Familial Status
- Sexual Orientation
- HIV Status
- Pregnancy
- Religion
- Age
- Disability
- Genetic Information
- Marital Status

Federal, state, and local laws generally protect people if they are discriminated against because of their protected group



Discrimination is illegal.

Being punished for reporting discrimination is also illegal. In certain situations, even asking questions about a person being a part of a protected group is illegal.

A person may be discriminated against by an individual, such as a landlord or supervisor, or by a group of people, such as government agencies, motels, homeless shelters, substance abuse treatment facilities, healthcare providers, or non-profit programs.

Discrimination can occur in many places such as on public transportation, in restaurants, and in office buildings. Employment discrimination* can be experienced on the job and while applying for a job if a person is asked discriminatory pre-employment questions or given certain work conditions. Discrimination can also happen during job termination if an employer doesn't pay wages to someone who is in a protected group. Discrimination at a person's place of employment may also include being sexually harassed or being retaliated against or punished for filing a complaint.

*NOTE: Maryland employment discrimination law applies to employers with 15 or more employees.

Disability Discrimination

A disability is a physical or mental condition that greatly limits a major life activity such as walking, talking, seeing, hearing, learning, or working. The disability does not need to be one that is life-long. Discrimination laws define disability differently than the Social Security Administration or the Veterans Administration.

Sex Discrimination

Sex discrimination involves treating someone differently because of that person's sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

National Origin Discrimination

National origin discrimination includes, but is not limited to, treating someone differently because that person speaks a different language, shares a different culture, wears certain articles of clothing due to their culture, or has a certain ancestry or race. National origin discrimination sometimes overlaps with race or religion discrimination.

Discrimination under the ADA

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) gives federal civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities similar to

Examples of Discrimination

those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications.

Are people living with HIV/AIDS protected by the ADA?

Yes. Under the ADA, people living with HIV/AIDS are protected by the law, whether or not they have symptoms or have physical impairments that substantially limit one or more major life activities or major bodily functions.

People who are discriminated against because others think they have HIV/AIDS are also protected. For example, a person who was fired on the basis of a rumor that they have HIV/AIDS, even if they do not, is protected by the law.

The ADA also protects people who are discriminated against because they have a known association or relationship with an individual who has HIV/AIDS. For example, the ADA would protect a person who does not have HIV/AIDS and who was denied a job because their roommate has HIV/AIDS.

You may have experienced discrimination if you belong to a protected group, and someone:

- Refuses to rent or sell you housing
- Tells you housing is not available when it really is available
- Only shows you apartments or homes in certain neighborhoods
- Sets different rules for buying or renting property for you than for others
- Denies you services (including healthcare) or provides those services to you in a different way than others
- Refuses to hire or promote you, fires you, or treats you differently than other employees or applicants
- Refuses to let you use a public or common bathroom
- Refuses you a reasonable accommodation related to your disability (e.g., a wheelchair ramp)

Reasonable Accommodation

If you have a disability or belong to certain protected groups, you have the right to ask for a “reasonable accommodation.” A reasonable accommodation is asking for something to be changed to make your life easier. Generally, to ask for a reasonable accommodation, you need to share your disability or your protected group. Asking for a reasonable accommodation is your decision alone. No one can force you to give this personal information. Being denied a reasonable accommodation without a proper explanation is illegal.

Examples of reasonable accommodation requests include:

1. Asking your employer to make your job wheelchair accessible
2. Asking your landlord to install a grab bar in the bathroom tub
3. Asking that a service animal be allowed in your home or job
4. Asking for reading materials in Braille or large print
5. Asking for a different work schedule
6. Asking to attend a meeting by telephone instead of in-person

If you think you have been discriminated against:

1. You can file a complaint with a government agency within 180 days:

- A.** Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD)
Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO)
Philadelphia Regional Office of FHEO
The Wanamaker Building
100 Penn Square East, 12th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19107
Phone: 215-861-7646
Toll-free: 888-799-2085 or 800-669-9777
TTY: 215-656-3540 or 800-927-9275
Email: ComplaintsOffice03@hud.gov
Website: https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp
- B.** Maryland Commission on Civil Rights
6 Saint Paul Street, Suite 900
Baltimore, MD 21202-1631
Phone: 410-767-8600
Toll-free: 800-637-6247
TTY: 800-735-2258
Email: mccr@maryland.gov
Website: <https://mccr.maryland.gov/>

C. Equal Employment Opportunities

Commission (EEOC)

Baltimore Field Office

GH Fallon Federal Building

31 Hopkins Plaza, Suite 1432

Baltimore, MD 21201

Phone: 800-669-4000

TTY: 800-669-6820

ASL Video: 844-234-5122

www.eeoc.gov

Some cities and counties have additional protections or programs to help with discrimination complaints. Check with your local city or county government for more resources.

2. You can contact an attorney:

Maryland Legal Aid may be able to help you. See the list of Maryland Legal Aid offices on the back of this booklet and contact the office that serves the county in which you live.

Maryland Legal Aid Offices

Anne Arundel County

229 Hanover Street
Annapolis, MD 21401
(410) 972-2700
(800) 666-8330

Baltimore City

500 E. Lexington Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

Telephone Intake Lines:

(410) 951-7750
(866) MD LAW 4U
(or 866-635-2948)

Business Line:

(410) 951-7777
(800) 999-8904

Baltimore County

215 Washington Avenue
Suite 305
Towson, MD 21204
(410) 427-1800
(877) 878-5920

Lower Eastern Shore

Dorchester, Somerset,
Wicomico, Worcester
111 High Street
Salisbury, MD 21801
(410) 546-5511
(800) 444-4099

Metropolitan Maryland

Howard, Prince George's
8401 Corporate Drive
Suite 200
Landover, MD 20785
(301) 560-2100
(888) 215-5316

Howard County

3451 Court House Drive
2nd Floor
Ellicott City, MD 21043
(410) 480-1057

Midwestern Maryland

Carroll, Frederick, Washington
22 S. Market Street
Suite 11
Frederick, MD 21701
(301) 694-7414
(800) 679-8813

Montgomery County

600 Jefferson Plaza
Suite 430
Rockville, MD 20852
(240) 314-0373
(855) 880-9487

Northeastern Maryland

Cecil, Harford
103 S. Hickory Avenue
Bel Air, MD 21014
(410) 836-8202
(800) 444-9529

Southern Maryland

Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's
15045 Burnt Store Road
P.O. Box 249
Hughesville, MD 20637
(301) 932-6661
(877) 310-1810

Upper Eastern Shore

Caroline, Kent,
Queen Anne's, Talbot
106 N. Washington Street
Suite 101
Easton, MD 21601
(410) 763-9676
(800) 477-2543

Western Maryland

Allegany, Garrett
110 Greene Street
Cumberland, MD 21502
(301) 777-7474
(866) 389-5243

Statewide

Community

Lawyering Initiative

(443) 451-2805

Farmworker Program

(800) 444-4099

Foreclosure Legal

Assistance Project

(888) 213-3320

Long-Term Care

Assistance Project

(866) 635-2948

Maryland Senior

Legal Helpline

(866) 635-2948

Veterans' Hotline

(443) 863-4040

TTY Users: Call Maryland Relay, Dial 7-1-1

Visit www.peoples-law.org for self-help legal information and community resources.

For more information visit www.mdlab.org.