



MILITARY STATUS DISCRIMINATION

Chicago has amended its Human Rights Ordinance and Fair Housing Ordinance to prohibit discrimination targeting current and former members of the military in all areas under the Commission's jurisdiction: employment, public accommodations, credit transactions, bonding, and housing. The amendments apply to actions taken on or after March 16, 2016.

Who is protected by the military status amendment? This protection extends to any individual who is on active duty, or in any reserve component of any branch of any state or Federal armed forces, or a veteran thereof. Former members of the military who are discriminated against on the basis of his/her military discharge status are also protected.

Examples of military status discrimination may include –

- Name-calling or badmouthing a co-worker or subordinate employee about his military service
- Rejecting an employment application from a disabled veteran because the employer assumes that veteran might take too much time off work for medical reasons and increase the employer's medical insurance premiums
- Denying service to a uniformed military service member based on the business owner's objection to military involvement
- Rejecting a rental application from a veteran because the landlord assumes such a tenant may manifest violent episodes of post-traumatic stress disorder
- Refusing to accept rent payments from a service member who may be trying to pay her rent with her G.I. Bill's housing allowance

Employers may be held responsible for discriminatory conduct of supervisors and other agents. Discrimination against current and former members of the military may also violate state or federal laws prohibiting discrimination.

Penalties for violations of the Human Rights Ordinance include—

- Fines of \$100 to \$1,000 per incident, paid to the City
- Damages and attorney fees, paid to the complaining party
- An injunction ordering specific actions to eliminate discriminatory practices
- Business license discipline

Anyone who has experienced discrimination in the City of Chicago may file a discrimination complaint at the Commission on Human Relations. The Commission investigates and rules on each discrimination complaint through a neutral process which allows each side the opportunity to support their positions.

For more information, see www.cityofchicago.org/humanrelations.