



Information for Business Operators LAWS PROHIBITING DISCRIMINATION IN CHICAGO

As the operator of a business in Chicago, you are subject to laws that prohibit discrimination. Chicago has its own Human Rights Ordinance and Fair Housing Ordinance. The Illinois Human Rights Act and the federal civil rights laws may also apply to your business.

The City’s primary goal is that business and property owners know about these laws so that (1) you will be able to comply, (2) you will prevent discrimination claims, and (3) your employees and clientele will be protected from discriminatory practices. The information below will help you learn more about discrimination laws:

- The Commission on Human Relations is the City department which enforces Chicago’s Human Rights and Fair Housing Ordinances. The Commission’s website at www.cityofchicago.org/humanrelations has detailed information about these and other discrimination laws. (Municipal Code Chapters 2-120, 2-160, and 5-8)
- Chicago’s discrimination ordinances apply to all employers, housing providers, and businesses in Chicago, of any size and with very few exemptions.
- Penalties for violation of Chicago’s discrimination ordinances include fines up to \$500 per occurrence. You may also be ordered to pay damages to the complainant, to pay the complainant’s attorney fees, and to take specific steps to eliminate discriminatory practices (injunctive relief).
- Discrimination is prohibited in employment, housing, public accommodations, credit transactions, and some other areas. People may file claims against you under local, state, and federal laws. Specific laws may vary, and different agencies or courts enforce each set of laws. It is important know which laws apply to you.
- Chicago’s ordinances prohibit discrimination based on these protected classes:

Race	Sex (including pregnancy & sexual harassment)	Marital Status
Color	Age (over 40)	Parental Status
Ancestry	Disability	Source of Income
National Origin	Sexual Orientation	Military Discharge Status
Religion	Gender Identity	Credit History (employment only)

- For example, you cannot refuse to hire, promote, sell, rent, or provide full access to the facilities and services of your business because of a person’s protected status. You cannot harass or subject a person to different terms and conditions of access to employment, housing, credit, or public accommodations because of any protected status.
- Receiving a City business license or permit, or passing a City inspection, does not certify your compliance with the Human Rights Ordinance or Fair Housing Ordinance. Especially as to accessibility for people with disabilities, you may need to do more than what the Building Code requires.
- If someone files a discrimination complaint against you under Chicago’s ordinances, you will be notified by mail and given an opportunity to present your defenses. The Commission follows specific legal rules and procedures for deciding whether discrimination has occurred, which may include an administrative hearing before a neutral hearing officer.

More information about the Commission on Human Relations and Chicago’s discrimination ordinances is available at www.cityofchicago.org/humanrelations.