

# Protecting Your Rights

The New York State Division of Human Rights is dedicated to eliminating discrimination, remedying injustice, and promoting equal opportunity, access, and dignity.

Each year, the Division investigates and adjudicates thousands of discrimination complaints and engages with New Yorkers across the state to share information about their rights and protections under the law.

And the Division's work shows that New York State will make violators of the law pay. Each year, the Division awards millions of dollars in compensation to people who experienced discrimination.

Specific remedies available through the discrimination complaint process include payment of lost wages and benefits, refunded rent, reinstatement of an employee, changes in policies and practices, and more.

## Retaliation is Illegal.

It is illegal to retaliate against someone for filing a complaint of discrimination or for opposing discriminatory practices. Retaliation claims can be filed as separate and independent complaints.

# Report Discrimination

If you believe you have experienced discrimination, you can report it to us. If it is under our authority, we will investigate.

Reporting discrimination to the Division of Human Rights is free, and you do not need an attorney to submit a report or file a complaint.

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The easiest way to report discrimination is to **call**:

**844-NYS-DHRI**  
**(844-697-3471)**

A trained representative will help you with your report.

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You can also report discrimination online at [dhr.ny.gov](https://dhr.ny.gov) or by scanning the QR code below:



Learn more and stay connected:  
[dhr.ny.gov](https://dhr.ny.gov) | [@NYSHumanRights](https://twitter.com/NYSHumanRights)



Division of  
Human Rights



Protecting Your Rights:  
**An Overview of the  
New York State  
Human Rights Law**



## The Human Rights Law: Who Is Covered?

The New York State Human Rights Law is one of the strongest anti-discrimination laws in the country. It prohibits discrimination in settings that New Yorkers encounter often, including:

- Employment and internships;
- Housing, including renting or buying;
- Places open to the public, like stores, restaurants, hospitals, and hotels; and
- Public and private schools, except religious schools and some for-profit schools.

The Human Rights Law makes it illegal to discriminate against people based on:

- Age
- Race or color
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity or expression
- Marital status
- Pregnancy-related condition
- Lawful source of income (in housing)
- Predisposing genetic characteristics
- Sealed conviction or youthful offense
- Religion
- Sex
- Military status
- National origin
- Citizenship or immigration status
- Familial status
- Domestic violence victim status
- Favorably resolved arrest record

## What Happens When You File a Discrimination Report?

If you believe you have experienced discrimination, you can report it to us. If it is under our authority, we will investigate.

**Reporting discrimination to the Division is easy: call us at 844-NYS-DHR1 (844-697-3471) or report online at [dhr.ny.gov/report](https://dhr.ny.gov/report).**

After you file a report, we will review it to make sure it is covered by the Human Rights Law. If it is, we will help you file a formal complaint and our investigative process will begin.

Remember, we receive thousands of complaints every year, and it takes time for each claim of discrimination to receive the full and fair investigation it deserves.

### The Investigation

Once a complaint is filed, an investigator will be assigned to investigate the complaint. The investigator's role is to determine the facts of the case. The investigator cannot give you legal advice or act as your attorney.

After the investigation, the Division will determine if there is "probable cause" that unlawful discrimination occurred in your case. Probable cause means that there is enough reliable evidence to believe that discrimination occurred.

If the Division finds probable cause, the complaint will move on to the next stage of DHR's process: a public hearing.

### The Public Hearing

A public hearing is similar to a court trial. An Administrative Law Judge will conduct the hearing based on the allegations in your complaint, and both sides will be able to present evidence to support their positions.

Before the public hearing happens, there will be several opportunities to resolve your complaint through a settlement agreement.

You do not need an attorney to participate in a public hearing. You can hire your own attorney if you would like, but DHR will provide a representative to present the case in support of the complaint if you do not have your own attorney. This service is free.

After the hearing, the Administrative Law Judge will make a recommendation to the Commissioner of the Division about how the judge thinks the case should be resolved.

### The Final Order

The Commissioner then reviews the judge's recommendations and issues a Final Order. If the Commissioner's Order finds that discrimination occurred, the order will require the respondent to provide remedies. Remedies may include financial compensation, changes in policies, job reinstatement; back pay; and a variety of other remedies.

### Appeals

Both parties can appeal the Commissioner's Final Order in New York State Supreme Court within 60 days of the order's issuance.