

PROCESSING CIVIL RIGHTS REQUESTS AND COMPLAINTS



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APPLICATION:

The purpose of this Guideline is to implement *PO06-101 Civil Rights Request And Complaint Management* and establish a process to respond to, investigate, and track concerns or complaints.

This process does not apply to complaints filed with other state or federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL), the U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), the Washington State Office of the Attorney General, and the Washington State Human Rights Commission (WSHRC). See the Policy for handling those situations.

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of this Guideline is to ensure all civil rights requests and complaints are handled promptly and thoroughly.

GUIDANCE:

Part 1 - Submitting, Intake, and Tracking of Requests, Concerns, and Complaints

Upon receipt of a request, concern, or complaint, Department staff will:

1. Assign a tracking number.
2. Log the request, concern, or complaint into the tracking system.
3. Notify the requester in writing within 5 business days that the request, concern, or complaint was received.

Part 2 - Handling Civil Rights Requests

1. Coordinate civil rights requests with the appropriate Division, Region, Office, or Program.
2. Facilitate an interactive dialogue with the requester to understand the request and the accommodation needs.
3. Provide a written response approving or denying the request to the requester within 14 business days of the original receipt of the request.
 - a. If additional information is needed, proceed to step 6.
4. Provide accommodations in accordance with state and federal laws.

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5. If the request is denied, provide the requester a written response for the reason for the denial.
6. If additional information to process the request is needed, provide an initial response with a request for the required information within 14 business days.
7. If the request cannot be approved or denied in 14 business days due to the complexity of the request, provide the requester with information on when a request will be addressed fully.
 - a. Provide a status update to the requester every 30 business days until the request can be approved or denied.
8. When a request cannot be approved, an equally effective alternative accommodation may be offered.

Part 3 - Handling, Investigating, and Making Recommendations Regarding Complaints

1. Address concerns and complaints within 90 business days of the Department receiving the concern or complaint, unless there are extenuating circumstances.
2. If the Department decides not to investigate concerns or complaints or decides to terminate an investigation, it must follow the criteria outlined in the Policy.
3. At the conclusion of an investigation, make one of the following determinations:
 - a. There is insufficient evidence to make a determination;
 - b. The concern or complaint is substantiated as having merit; or
 - c. The concern or complaint has no merit or cannot be substantiated.
4. When the Department determines a concern or complaint is substantiated, staff investigating the matter will issue a written recommendation, including action that can be initiated to resolve the substantiated concern or complaint, to the appropriate Appointing Authority and the Chief Operating Officer, or their designee.
5. If a concern or complaint arises in which a Department employee violated Department policy or state or federal law, refer the matter to Human Resources.

Records Management

All written complaints received, notes, and responses must be retained and managed as a record of civil rights complaints according to approved retention schedules, as per *PO06-007 Records Management* and *PO06-650 Responding to and Managing Public Disclosure Requests* policies. In all cases, records will be retained for at least six years after the end of the calendar year in which the request was fully resolved.

Approval Date: February 21, 2025
Month-Day-Year

Approved By: /S/
Kathryn W. Taylor
Chief Operating Officer

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DEFINITIONS:

See *PO06-101 Civil Rights Request And Complaint Management*

REFERENCES & CITATIONS:

See *PO06-101 Civil Rights Request And Complaint Management*

DOCUMENT BACKGROUND:

This Guideline was created to implement *PO06-101 Civil Rights Request And Complaint Management*.

REVISION HISTORY:

Date	Comments/ Summary of changes
2/21/2025	New.