

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO EQUAL ACCESS AND EQUAL SERVICE

"...to promote the equal treatment of all individuals; to prohibit discrimination in Orange County based upon race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, familial status, and veteran status (protected categories); to protect residents' lawful interests and their personal dignity... and to prevent public and domestic strife, crime, and unrest within Orange County."

You Have the Right to Equal Access and Equal Service in Public Accommodations

Equal access to, and equal service in, public accommodations is a right protected by federal and local laws. The Orange County Civil Rights Ordinance prohibits discrimination in public accommodations based on:

- race
- color
- religion
- sex
- national origin
- age
- disability
- familial status (families with children)
- veteran status

The Ordinance protects an individual's basic right of fair and equal treatment by businesses and facilities that are open to the public. In addition to requiring that entrance be accessible, and admission be non-discriminatory, the Ordinance also covers service and the right to enjoy any activities that are made available to the public on an equal basis.

What Are Some Examples of Public Accommodations?

Almost all establishments that offer their goods, services or facilities to the general public, including, but not limited to, the following:

- restaurant, cafeteria or bar
- movie theater, sports arena, or stadium
- grocery store, laundromat, bank, gas station, shopping center, or hospital
- professional office, including any situated in private residences
- nursery, elementary, secondary, undergraduate, or postgraduate private school or other place of education
- day care or senior citizen center

What Types of Places and Facilities Are Not Covered?

- those portions of private residences used exclusively as a residence
- a private club or other establishment not in fact open to the public

Are There Limits to My Right to Go to These Places?

Yes. Along with the right to go to public places comes the responsibility to act in a manner that does not infringe upon other persons' rights. In addition, the owner is allowed to establish requirements, such as a dress code, admission fee, and prohibition of concealed weapons, as long as these rules are applied equally to all customers and clients.

How Do You Recognize Public Accommodations Discrimination?

Discrimination in public accommodations can be very subtle. Often people may suspect they have been discriminated against, but are not sure they can prove it. If this happens to you, contact Orange County Housing, Human Rights and Community Development Department, our Human Rights Division staff will conduct an objective investigation to determine whether discrimination has occurred. Call our staff to discuss these and any other questions you may have:

Q: If I have been waiting to be served for a long time and other people who came in after I did are being served, should I accuse the waitperson of discrimination?

A: No. It would be appropriate to ask why you have not been served. You could, if necessary, take your concern to management. But don't automatically assume that it is discrimination. It could be that other patrons had reservations or that there was an innocent mistake made.

Q: Are there barrier removal requirements for existing facilities?

A: Yes. Barrier removal must be accomplished when it is "readily achievable" to do so. Examples include ramping steps, installation of grab bars where routine reinforcement of the walls is required, or the lowering of telephones.

How Are Complaints Processed?

The Housing, Human Rights and Community Development Department is the county agency that enforces the Orange County Civil Rights Ordinance. If you think your rights have been violated, you should contact the Office. All public accommodation complaints must be filed within one (1) year of the date of the incident and the incident must have taken place in Orange County, North Carolina. There is no charge for services.

All inquiries and complaints are kept confidential during the investigation. The Ordinance prohibits anyone from taking any action against a person because that person has filed a complaint, opposed any action made unlawful by the Ordinance, or was a witness who testified on behalf of a person filing a complaint.

How Do I Contact the Human Relations Commission?

**Orange County
Housing, Human Rights and Community Development Department
Post Office Box 8181
300 West Tryon Street
Hillsborough, NC 27278
919-245-2487
www.co.orange.nc.us/department**