

Public Accommodation Protections

You have the right to access the advantages, facilities or privileges of public accommodations free from illegal discrimination.

What is a Public Accommodation?

The term "**public accommodation, resort or amusement**" means any accommodation, resort or amusement which is **open to, accepts or solicits the patronage of the general public**, including but not limited to:

- inns, taverns, hotels, or motels;
- restaurants, buffets, barrooms, any store, park or enclosure where alcohol is sold;
- drug stores, dispensaries, clinics, hospitals;
- barber shops and beauty parlors,
- retail stores, theaters, motion picture houses, race courses, skating rinks, swimming pools;
- amusement and recreation parks, fairs, bowling alleys, gymnasiums, or shooting galleries;
- public libraries, kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, high schools, colleges and universities;
- stations, terminals, or airports;
- financial institutions;
- and all Commonwealth facilities.

Does not include any accommodations which are in their nature distinctly private.

Protected Classes

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) is empowered to investigate complaints of discrimination, on the basis of:

- race
- color
- sex
- religious creed
- ancestry
- national origin
- handicap or disability
- use of a guide or support animal because of the blindness, deafness or physical handicap of the user
- handler or trainer of support or guide animals

Under the **Pennsylvania Human Relations Act (PHRA)**, protections are available in employment, housing, public accommodations and educational institutions.

Under the **Pennsylvania Fair Educational Opportunities Act (PFEOA)**, protections are available for most post-secondary schools. Coverage may otherwise be available under the PHRA, except those schools that are fully private.

What does public accommodation discrimination look like?

- A restaurant owner refuses to serve a customer wearing religious headgear.
- A delivery service will not deliver to a largely minority neighborhood but serves surrounding non-minority neighborhoods.
- A bus driver refuses to allow a minority person on the bus.
- A municipality will not provide handicap-accessible parking to residents with disabilities.
- A university does not provide a wheelchair-accessible entrance to a classroom building.
- A "private membership" club solicits members from the general public but denies admission based on race or religion.

What do I do if I feel I have been discriminated against?

If you feel that you or your child has been the victim of discrimination, you should do the following:

- File a complaint with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission **within 180 days** of the date of the act of discrimination.
- Preserve any evidence that you may have to support your complaint (e.g., text messages, pictures, receipts, etc.)
- You have the right to obtain private legal services at your own expense, but this is not required.
- Pennsylvania law also protects you from retaliation. This means no one is allowed to take any action against you for filing a complaint, opposing unlawful activity, or helping with an investigation.

What does the PHRC do?

- Enforces the PHRA and the PFEOA
- Investigates and remedies claims of discrimination
- Holds public hearings
- Facilitates mediations
- Holds townhall meetings and community summits
- Facilitates education and outreach events and training
- Conducts social justice initiatives

Learn more about PHRC by visiting www.phrc.pa.gov

To file a complaint, call (717) 787-4410 (717-787-7279 TTY) or contact the regional office nearest you:

Harrisburg

333 Market Street, 8th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101
717-787-9780 | 717-787-7279 (TTY)

Philadelphia

110 N. 8th Street, Suite 501
Philadelphia, Pa 19107
215-560-2496 | 215-560-3599 (TTY)

Pittsburgh

301 5th Avenue, Suite 390, Piatt Place
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
412-545-5395 | 412-565-5711 (TTY)