DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL RIGHTS

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The Michigan Civil Rights Commission was created by the Michigan Constitution of 1963 to carry out the guarantees against discrimination articulated in Article I, Section 2. As further stated in Article V, Section 29, the state constitution directs the commission to investigate alleged discrimination against any person because of religion, race, color, or national origin and to "secure the equal protection of such civil rights without such discrimination." Public Acts 453 and 220 of 1976 and subsequent amendments have added sex, age, marital status, height, weight, arrest record, genetic disposition, and physical and mental disabilities to the original 4 protected categories.

The Michigan Department of Civil Rights was established in 1965 to provide a staff complement to the policy-making responsibilities of the commission. In 1991, the department was expanded further. During that year, the Michigan Women's Commission was transferred from the Department of Management and Budget to this agency by executive order. In April 2011, the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission, the Hispanic/Latino Commission, the Arab and Chaldean American Commission, and the Commission for Disability Concerns Division on Deaf and Hard of Hearing were moved to MCDR, also through executive order.

The Department of Civil Rights enforces the state's protections against illegal discrimination primarily by investigating discrimination complaints. The department also works to prevent discrimination through programs that promote voluntary compliance with civil rights laws and provides information and services to businesses on diversity initiatives, equal employment law, and procurement opportunities. Staff and allies also work to prevent discrimination through statewide initiatives on bullying, through efforts to improve living and working conditions of migrant and seasonal farmworkers, and through the nascent Michigan Leadership Collaborative on Civil and Human Rights.

The department has offices in Marquette, Grand Rapids, Flint, Detroit, and Lansing. A complaint may be filed at any of the department's offices, if the alleged discrimination has occurred within the past 180 days.