

Sexual orientation



Alberta Human Rights
and Citizenship Commission

INFORMATION SHEET

Discrimination based on sexual orientation is prohibited by the *Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act*. Although it is not expressly stated in the *Act*, as of April 2, 1998, sexual orientation is “read in” to the *Act* by the Supreme Court of Canada as a protected ground of discrimination in Alberta.

This includes protection from differential treatment based on a person’s actual or presumed sexual orientation or his or her association with a person who is homosexual, heterosexual or bisexual.

- **Homosexual** (gay or lesbian) is defined as being a person who is sexually attracted to persons of his or her own sex.
- **Heterosexual** is defined as being a person who is sexually attracted only to persons of the opposite sex.
- **Bisexual** is defined as being a person who is sexually attracted to persons of both sexes.


Under the *Act*, discrimination based on sexual orientation is prohibited in all of the following **areas**:

- public statements, publications, notices, signs, symbols, emblems or other representations which indicate discrimination, or the intent to discriminate, or expose individuals or groups to hatred or contempt
- goods, services, accommodation or facilities that are customarily available to the public
- tenancy: All tenants and prospective tenants have the right to equal treatment in the rental of any commercial unit or self-contained dwelling unit.

- employment practices: refusing to hire, promote or provide equal treatment to someone because of his or her sexual orientation. Employees have the right to work in an environment free of harassment based on their sexual orientation.
- employment applications or advertisements
- membership in trade unions, employers’ organizations or occupational associations

In addition to sexual orientation, the *Act* also expressly prohibits discrimination on the **grounds** of race, religious belief, colour, gender, physical disability, mental disability, marital status, age (some restrictions apply), ancestry, place of origin, family status, and source of income. Employers, landlords, business operators and providers of services are required to reasonably accommodate the needs of individuals based on any of these grounds.

The *Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act* has paramount status in Alberta. This means that where there is a conflict with other provincial legislation, the human rights legislation prevails unless it is “expressly declared by an Act of the Legislature that it operates notwithstanding” the human rights legislation.

The Human Rights and Citizenship Commission accepts, conciliates and investigates complaints of discrimination based on any of the areas and grounds protected under the *Act*. 

Contact the Commission

For more information, please contact the **Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission**. We are an independent commission of the Government of Alberta. Our mandate is to foster equality and reduce discrimination. We provide public information and education programs, and help Albertans resolve human rights complaints.

Northern Regional Office

800 Standard Life Centre
10405 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4R7

(780) 427-7661 Confidential Inquiry Line

(780) 427-6013 Fax

Southern Regional Office

Suite 310, 525 – 11 Avenue SW
Calgary, Alberta T2R 0C9

(403) 297-6571 Confidential Inquiry Line

(403) 297-6567 Fax

To call toll-free within Alberta, dial 310-0000 and then enter the area code and phone number.

For province-wide free access from a cellular phone, enter *310 (for Rogers-AT&T) or #310 (for Telus).

TTY service for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing

(780) 427-1597 Edmonton

(403) 297-5639 Calgary

1-800-232-7215 Toll-free within Alberta

E-mail humanrights@gov.ab.ca

Web site www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca

Please note: A complaint must be made to the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission within one year after the alleged incident.

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