

Procedures

1. Any individual, group of individuals, or entity that believes they have been subjected to discrimination prohibited by Title VI nondiscrimination provisions may file a written complaint with Columbia County's Title VI Administrator. A formal complaint must be filed within 180 calendar days of the alleged occurrence or when the alleged discrimination became known to the complainant. The complaint must meet the following requirements.
 - A. Complaint shall be in writing and signed by the complainant(s).
 - B. Include the date of the alleged act of discrimination, date when the complainant(s) became aware of the alleged discrimination; or the date on which that conduct was discontinued or the latest instance of the conduct).
 - C. Present a detailed description of the issues, including names and job titles of those individuals perceived as parties in the complained-of incident.
 - D. Allegations received by fax or e-mail will be acknowledged and processed, once the identity(ies) of the complainant(s) and the intent to proceed with the complaint have been established. The complainant is required to mail a signed, original copy of the fax or e-mail transmittal for Columbia County to be able to process it.
 - E. Allegations received by telephone will be reduced to writing and provided to complainant for confirmation or revision before processing. A complaint form will be forwarded to the complainant for him/her to complete, sign, and return to Columbia County for processing.

2. Upon receipt of the complaint, the Title VI Administrator will determine its jurisdiction, acceptability, and need for additional information, as well as investigate the merit of the complaint. In appropriate situations, Columbia County may request GDOT's office of Equal Employment Opportunity to conduct the investigation. In the event that GDOT handles the investigation, GDOT will follow its adopted procedures for investigating discrimination complaints per GDOT's current Title VI Plan.

3. In order to be accepted, a complaint must meet the following criteria:
 - A. The complaint must be filed within 180 calendar days of the alleged occurrence or when the alleged discrimination became known to the complainant.
 - B. The allegation(s) must involve a covered basis such as race, religion, color, national origin, or gender.

- C. The allegation(s) must involve a program or activity of a Federal-aid recipient, sub-recipient, or contractor.
 - D. The complainant(s) must accept reasonable resolution based on Columbia County's administrative authority (reasonability to be determined by Columbia County).
4. A complaint may be dismissed for the following reasons:
- A. The complainant requests the withdrawal of the complaint.
 - B. The complainant fails to respond to repeated requests for additional information needed to process the complaint.
 - C. The complainant cannot be located after reasonable attempts.
5. Once Columbia County decides to accept the complaint for investigation, the complainant will be notified in writing of such determination within five (5) calendar days. The complaint will receive a case number and will then be logged into Columbia County's records identifying its basis and alleged harm, and the race, religion, color, national origin, and gender of the complainant.
6. In cases where Columbia County assumes the investigation of the complaint, Columbia County will provide the respondent with the opportunity to respond to the allegations in writing. The respondent will have ten (10) calendar days from the date of Columbia County's written notification of acceptance of the complaint to furnish his/her response to the allegations.
7. Within sixty (60) calendar days of the acceptance of the complaint, Columbia County's Title VI Administrator (or GDOT investigator) will prepare an investigative report. The report shall include a narrative description of the incident, identification of persons interviewed, findings, and recommendations for disposition. Only reasonably qualified and trained investigators should conduct the investigations.
8. The investigative report and its findings will be sent to the Columbia County Attorney for review. The County Attorney may discuss the report and its recommendations with the Administrator and other staff as appropriate. The report will be modified as needed and made final for its release to the complainant and respondent.
9. Once the investigative report becomes final, briefings will be scheduled with the complainant and respondent within fifteen (15) calendar days. Both the complainant and the respondent shall receive a copy of the investigative report during the briefings and will be notified of their respective rights.

10. A copy of the complaint and the final investigative report will be forwarded to the GDOT office of EEO within sixty (60) days of the completion of the briefings.
11. If the complainant or respondent is not satisfied with the results of the investigation of alleged discriminatory practice(s), he/she shall be advised of his/her rights to appeal Columbia County's decision to GDOT, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT), the United States Department of Justice (USDOJ), or other entity as appropriate. The complainant has one hundred eighty (180) calendar days after Columbia County's briefing to appeal. Reconsideration of Columbia County's determination will not be available unless new, relevant facts, not previously considered, are brought to light.
12. A Complaints Log shall be maintained annually by Columbia County. The Complaints Log shall contain at a minimum the following information for each complaint filed:
 - a. The name of the complainant.
 - b. Contact information for the complainant including address.
 - c. The date of the complaint.
 - d. The basis of the complaint.
 - e. The disposition of the complaint.
13. Columbia County shall not be permitted to investigate a complaint against itself.