



Name: _____ Agency number: _____



Civil Rights Training for Volunteers to Assist with FNS Programs

___ Goals of civil rights: Provide knowledge of rights and responsibilities, ensure fairness and equality of treatment, eliminate barriers and provide dignity and respect for all.

___ When do civil rights rules apply? Civil Rights rules apply any time there is any federal financial assistance. Federal financial assistance is receiving anything of value from the federal government – not just cash. It can include commodities, training, equipment, and other goods and services.

___ Legal Prohibitions: Discrimination is prohibited on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, sex, and disability in special nutrition programs funded by the USDA, Food and Nutrition Service. (The Food Stamp Program and Food Distribution Program on the Indian Reservations also prohibit discrimination based on religion and political beliefs in addition to the basis listed above.)

___ Protected classes: Any person or group of people who have characteristics for which discrimination is prohibited based on law, regulation, or executive order. Protected classes in The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) & Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) are race, color, national origin, age, sex, and disability.

___ Types of discrimination: Disparate treatment (intentional), disparate impact (neutral ruled impacts disproportionately on a group), reprisal/retaliation against complainant or his/her family/associates or others involved in complaint process or exercising Civil Rights.

___ Exceptions: Congress can establish a program that is intended for certain groups of people, and it is not discrimination to exclude those who do not meet eligibility requirements. For example, Congress can set age limits, and this is not age discrimination or disability discrimination for those who do not meet the age limits.

___ Maintain confidentiality: It is not appropriate to talk about who is receiving benefits and to make remarks about them. Never share information with other regardless of an expression of good intentions. Refer all requests for information to the managers. What happens at the site stays at the site. The exception, of course, is any illegal or inappropriate behavior that should be reported to state or federal officials.

___ Sexual harassment is prohibited: Do not engage in or tolerate unwanted or unwelcome sexual behavior including jokes, touching, requests for sexual favors, etc. Report any violations to management or to state/federal officials.

___ FBO's: Regulations Protect Faith Based Organizations

- Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) and Community Based Organizations have equal footing.
- Prohibits discrimination against an organization on the bases of religion, religious belief or character in the distribution of funds.
- Clarifies that FBOs can use space in the facilities without removing religious art or symbols.

___ Law Protects Beneficiaries: No organization that received direct assistance from the USDA can discriminate against a beneficiary or prospective beneficiary on the bases of religion or religious belief. FBOs retain their independence and carry out their mission, as long as USDA funds (or activities) do not support worship, religious instruction or proselytization.

___ Required Training: All who work with Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) funded programs must be trained. First line workers (including volunteers) and supervisors must receive annual training. There are flexibilities in how training is provided. The use of a computer, group meeting, or providing reading materials are all acceptable forms of training.

___ Required training subjects include:

- Collection and use of data

- Effective public notification systems
- Reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities
- Language assistance
- Complaint procedures
- Compliance review techniques
- Resolution of non-compliance
- Conflict resolution
- Customer service

___ Collection and use of data:

- Data collected about beneficiaries should be kept secure and confidential
- Outreach efforts can be targeted

___ Public notification: Display the USDA “And Justice for All...” non-discrimination poster in a place where it can be seen by all who visit the premises.

___ Conduct outreach to ensure that potentially eligible persons and households are aware of the program and have information on how to apply.

___ Non-discrimination statement: Include the USDA non-discrimination statement on all materials that mention USDA funded programs and make sure the statement is also on websites that mention USDA programs.

___ Reasonable accommodations: Make sure people with disabilities are accommodated. Sites should be accessible to people with all types of disabilities (e.g. mobility, sight, hearing, or others), or alternate means of service delivery should be advertised and provided.

___ Language assistance: Provide other language assistance to persons with limited English proficiency (LEP) who could not gain meaningful access to the program without other language assistance. Assistance must always be provided to LEP households, but the level or type of assistance may vary based on circumstances. Children who are minors should not be used as interpreters. Volunteers may be used, but make sure they understand interpreter ethics—particularly confidentiality! See www.lep.gov for more information.

___ Everyone has the right to file a discrimination complaint. Never discourage anyone from filing a complaint or voicing concerns of discrimination. Cooperate with State and Federal reviewers. They are required to conduct periodic compliance reviews to help insure that program and civil rights rules are being obeyed.

___ If there is non-compliance, correction of problems and voluntary compliance is sought. Failure to abide by civil rights rules can lead to loss of Federal financial assistance.

___ Advise people who allege discrimination about how to file a complaint. They may write to: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800)795-3272 or (202)720-6382 (TTY). In the Midwest region they may also write to Regional Director, Civil Rights/EEO, 77 W. Jackson Blvd., FL 20, Chicago, IL 60604-3591 or call (312)353-3353. Almost all complaints are referred to the Chicago office for investigation and are actually investigated by staff from FNS field offices located in the state where the complaint originated.

___ If conflict occurs, remain calm. Call for assistance immediately if you feel threatened. Consider mediation or a third person to help resolve the situation.

___ Follow the platinum rule: treat people the way they would like to be treated, and be aware of what that is.

Staff/Volunteer Signature: _____ Date: _____

