

Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs

LOB #87:

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH - HUMAN RIGHTS DIVISION

Purpose

As part of its affirmative efforts to eliminate discrimination through enforcement of the Fairfax County Human Rights Ordinance and ensure equal opportunity within Fairfax County, the Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs (OHREP's) conducts outreach and provides education services to the public.

Description

OHREP has established a robust education and outreach program to ensure that those who live, work, and visit Fairfax County are aware of the rights afforded to them and those who employ others, operate businesses within the county, or serve as housing providers, are aware of their responsibilities under the Fairfax County Human Rights Ordinance. In that regard, OHREP continues to build a broad network of outreach partners and participates in a variety of outreach activities. OHREP has conducted 200 outreach events since 2012. A summary of the different types of outreach activities is described below.

Presentations

Since 2012, agency staff has conducted, facilitated and participated in approximately 65 presentations about discrimination. Our fair housing presentations were designed to educate residents; vulnerable populations; housing providers; representatives from the private, non-profit and public sectors working in the housing field; and others in the community about fair housing laws and related issues. Presentations were also made to those involved with employment matters. Information about the role of the agency in fair housing enforcement, and the educational services and outreach activities available were also provided.

Specific activities included providing and facilitating training and workshops about fair housing laws to housing providers and other professionals operating in real estate and related markets; housing counselors working with residents in transitional housing to obtain permanent residences; local civic organization concerned with issues of discrimination; participants at workshops organized by local non-profits that provide members of the minority community with information on rental and home ownership opportunities; builders, developers, architects, code inspectors, and other professionals and individuals impacted by or concerned with fair housing accessibility requirements and related issues; members of local minority business groups; representatives of various County Boards and Commissions who represent a variety of populations and groups who have an interest in or concerns about fair housing and related matters; and members of the Virginia Bar Association. OHREP also facilitated training provided to job seekers, employment and labor law attorneys, service providers who serve clients seeking employment opportunities and other such groups on equal employment laws and the enforcement activities of the agency.

To further promote the resources and services available and to increase awareness about the agency, staff members participated in 59 resource fairs held throughout the County since 2012. Agency staff members managed booths, interacted with attendees, distributed brochures and other informational materials, and answered questions. Resource Fairs are a core element of OHREP's outreach and engagement efforts. OHREP has used resource fairs as a means to gain direct access to those in the community that are most likely to require the agency's services and to meet those individuals in their own communities. OHREP has provided resource information at Community Days and multicultural celebrations, Back to School Fairs, Job Fairs, Fair Housing Expos, Health Fairs and at religious gatherings and services.

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Brochures/Publications

A key component of OHREP's outreach efforts are providing printed materials that provide an overview of the Human Rights Ordinance and the services the office provides. OHREP provides such materials in eight languages (English, Amharic, Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese). OHREP makes available three main brochures, a general brochure providing a broad overview of all of the areas in which OHREP receives and investigates complaints, a Fair Housing brochure focused on housing discrimination and an Employment Discrimination brochure that provides an overview of discrimination in employment.

OHREP has partnered and worked closely with The Equal Rights Center to develop three new fair housing publications designed to educate and empower individuals about their fair housing rights, and to promote self-advocacy in the County. The publications included: A disability toolkit, "Fair Housing: Know Your Rights, Fairfax County Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs Reasonable Accommodations and Modifications Self-Advocacy Toolkit;" an informational sheet, "Fair Housing for People with Disabilities;" and a brochure "Harassment Free Housing It's Your Right." One thousand copies of each publication were printed and distributed to a variety of County agencies, non-profit groups, organizations that work closely and interact with communities and individuals who might benefit from the information, and other venues.

All brochures are available for download on OHREP's website.

In addition to distributing brochures at resource fairs, training sessions and workshops, meetings and other venues, OHREP regularly responded to requests for brochures for distribution in a variety of languages from a wide range of organizations, agencies, schools, and centers located in the County. Examples included but were not limited to requests from a local housing authority, a community group serving the Hispanic community, a parent liaison for a local high school, and an Islamic center. Brochures were also provided for distribution at several planned homebuyer education classes conducted on behalf of the Virginia Housing Development Authority.

Fair Housing Display/Proclamation/Annual Fair Housing Month Forum

As part of efforts to educate the public on fair housing laws and to further promote the role of the agency and the services and resources available, each year OHREP staff members organize and participate in a number of fair housing month activities in April. Undertakings included erecting a fair housing display in the main lobby of the Fairfax OHREP.

Other activities sponsored by the agency during Fair Housing Month included OHREP's Annual Fair Housing Forum. In 2013 and 2014, the event was offered in collaboration with Northern Virginia Association of Realtors (NVAR) and the Equal Rights Center (ERC). Both organizations worked with the agency to promote the event and NVAR sponsored the prizes for the high-school winners of the fair housing Art/Poster and Essay contests held by the Student Human Rights Commission that are awarded at the event. The annual fair housing month event includes a fair housing training session in the morning, and a luncheon program and keynote address. Officials from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development were in attendance and addressed the audience about current enforcement activities and emerging issues. Over 160 individuals attended the event each year, approximately 120 of whom also attended the morning fair housing training sessions.

Media

The agency collaborated with Channel 16 to produce a short Public Service Announcement (PSA) on fair housing and group homes. The PSA broadcasts regularly and is available for viewing anytime with video on demand and via OHREP's website. In addition, the station continues to broadcast several public service announcements, interviews, and other programs designed to educate the public, housing providers, housing seekers, real-estate professionals, housing counselors, and others about fair housing laws and related issues, produced in cooperation with OHREP. The broadcasts include:

- PSA: Fair Housing. The program includes information about the protected classes covered under Fairfax County fair housing law, describes fair housing protections accorded all citizens, and gives examples.

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- PSA: Human Rights Commission. A public service announcement about the role and resources available through the agency, including information about fair housing laws, as well as the complaint and enforcement processes, education and outreach, and other services and resources offered.
- An interview titled “Fair Housing for Seniors with Disabilities” featuring a member of the Human Rights Commission, the Deputy Director and a Fair Housing Specialist.
- Know Your Rights “*Vea Conozca Sus Derechos.*” An interview conducted entirely in Spanish with one of the agency’s Fair Housing Specialists. The HUD Regional Director for the agency also participated in the interview.
- “No Place Like Home: The Foreclosure Crisis and Predatory Loans.”

In addition to the above, the agency’s director provided interviews, including a segment on Channel 16’s Rotary Times TV Program.

In 2014 OHREP was awarded a federal grant to partner with El Tiempo Latino, the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan area’s leading Spanish-language newspaper, in an effort to increase awareness and knowledge about fair housing discrimination within the Hispanic community. As part of the partnership, OHREP worked with El Tiempo Latino to create four (4) print advertisements on fair housing which were published and disseminated in El Tiempo Latino’s printed newspaper. A total of twenty nine (29) print advertisements ran from June 6, 2014, through May 28, 2015. The advertisements were also included as rotating links on El Tiempo Latino’s website from June 2014 through May 2015. In addition to the advertisements, OHREP worked with El Tiempo Latino to create two (2) public service announcement videos, both in English and Spanish, which ran on El Tiempo Latino’s website from November 8, 2014 through May 2015. Links for the Spanish version of the PSA’s are as follows:

Yo Soy el Condado de Fairfax:

<http://eltiempolatino.com/videos/2014/nov/08/2784/>

La Renta Perfecta

<http://eltiempolatino.com/videos/2014/nov/08/2783/>

El Tiempo Latino also conducted an interview (in Spanish) on OHREP and its Fair Housing activities which aired as a video link on El Tiempo Latino’s website on November 23, 2014, and was included in *Asi Es Mi Gente*, a program that is broadcast by CentroAmerica TV, Saturdays at 5pm Eastern time (Channels: DirectTV 428, Xfinity 661, Comcast 588, Dish Latino 832, Verizon 1703, Cox 432) on November 29, 2014.

OHREP and its fair housing enforcement efforts were also featured in an article in El Tiempo Latino’s December 5, 2014, print edition, on its Facebook page during December 2014 and on its website.

As a result of the partnership, El Tiempo Latino also distributed OHREP’s General and Fair Housing Brochures at its kiosk during the Peruvian Festival on July 27, 2014, the Bolivian Festival on August 31, 2014, and the Salvadorian Festival on September 14, 2014.

In June 2014, OHREP began running fair housing ads in both English and Spanish on Fairfax Connector, Fairfax County’s local transit bus service. These ads continue to run throughout 2015.

Fairfax County Human Rights Commission Awards Ceremony

Annually, the Human Rights Commission holds an awards ceremony to recognize those who have made significant strides to advance human rights within Fairfax County throughout the year. While honoring the efforts of others, the event also serves as another opportunity to develop new partnerships and further enhance existing relationships with individuals and organizations whose missions and activities are closely aligned with those of the agency. It also serves to provide greater exposure to the issues of discrimination and the work of the agency.

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Other Outreach Activities/Meetings

As part of OHREP's efforts to establish relationships and opportunities to conduct outreach and promote equal opportunity, agency staff continued to meet with community leaders and representatives from organizations serving minority populations, participated on committees, and attended neighborhood meetings throughout the community. OHREP staff members also facilitated and attended the Human Rights Commission's Fair Housing Taskforce meetings. The taskforce generally convenes on a quarterly basis. Members include stakeholders from the housing industry; representatives from community associations, non-profit groups and the public sector; and County residents. The meetings ensure that regular contact and working arrangements are created and maintained with those with an interest in fair housing and provides a forum for discussion and clarification of the fair housing needs of various communities and organizations operating in the County that is helpful to the work of OHREP and the Commissioners. In addition, agency representatives participated in the Fairfax Building for All Committee (BFAC) meetings, which meet monthly. BFAC comprises a coalition of County agencies and groups concerned with accessibility issues both in terms of new renovations and new construction. The group has a wide range of networks and has been helpful in assisting the agency with its efforts to provide information, promote workshops, disseminate information on fair housing accessibility requirements, and related issues to professionals in the housing and building industry.

OHREP also participated in service provider partnership meetings and community dialogues held in the Culmore community, one of the most diverse communities in Fairfax County. Through its participation in the partnership, OHREP is able to ensure that other service providers serving this community understand discrimination and how to assist clients that may be in need of OHREP's services. Ongoing participation also provides an opportunity to interact with and learn directly from community members their self-identified needs and to explore and share how OHREP can be a resource.

OHREP also hosted Heritage Month Proclamations to recognize and celebrate the contributions of various ethnic groups to the Fairfax community.

Fairfax County Student Human Rights Commission

The Fairfax County Student Human Rights Commission is the region's first commission comprised entirely of high school students with the mission of:

- Promoting dialogues on diversity among youth;
- Fostering a greater understanding and appreciation of differences;
- Creating exposure to human and civil rights laws, such as the Fairfax County Human Rights Ordinance and the Fair Housing Act; and
- Encouraging leadership and active participation in government.

OHREP, in partnership with Fairfax County Public Schools, launched the Student Human Rights Commission (SHRC) program over 6 years ago, and the program continues to grow year after year. Each school year, the SHRC meets on a bimonthly basis and hosts events, plans activities, and facilitates campaigns at their schools in support of its mission.

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Benefits

OHREP is committed to providing training, technical assistance, outreach and education programs to assist employers, employees, housing providers, and stakeholder groups understand and prevent discrimination. Education and outreach is also designed to inform individuals of their rights to live and work in a community free of discrimination. An informed public via education and outreach is a critical component to developing strategies to combat discrimination. Further, strong community partnerships aid in the effort of ensuring equal opportunity within Fairfax County.

OHREP's work with the Student Human Rights Commission promotes diversity, equal opportunity, community engagement and active participation in government among the youth within Fairfax County. OHREP must institute an affirmative human rights program of positive efforts to eliminate discrimination through education and outreach. The Human Rights Ordinance (Chapter 11, Article 1 and Article 2 of the Fairfax County Code, as amended).

As one of only 90 Fairfax Employment Practice Agencies and one of 89 Fair Housing Assistance Programs (signifying the Fairfax County Human Rights Ordinance is substantially equivalent to the Federal Fair Housing Act), OHREP has contractual obligations with its federal partners, the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the U. S Department of Housing and Urban Development to conduct education and outreach in Housing discrimination and Employment discrimination. Fairfax County has been designated as a Fair Housing Assistance Program, which positively affects the federal funds Fairfax County receives under the Community Development Block Grant program.

Trends and Challenges

As Fairfax County continues to gain population and diversify, the greater the need for additional education and outreach. New and creative methods for engaging our more insulated and new immigrant communities will need to be developed. The use of social media as a means of providing information and communicating with the public has become essential. OHREP will have to work on developing a greater social media presence as part of its outreach efforts. Additionally, as OHREP's current outreach achievements demonstrate, partnerships with community groups, nonprofit service providers, housing industry professionals and other such organizations is essential to spreading the message that discrimination in Fairfax County will not be tolerated. OHREP will have to maintain and build upon its current network of outreach partners to reach a broader spectrum of the population.

Enforcement data shows that complaints filed on the basis of disability are on the rise and is the number one basis of discrimination in housing complaints. Increased outreach with a focus in this area is needed to address this trend. The data also shows that outreach efforts will also need to focus on insulated communities in order for members to receive information, learn about their civil rights, and pursue enforcement of their civil liberties. These efforts will continue to increase the demand on OHREP's budget and staff time.

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Resources

Category	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Adopted
LOB #87: Education and Outreach - Human Rights Division			
FUNDING			
<u>Expenditures:</u>			
Compensation	\$40,905	\$43,236	\$47,652
Operating Expenses	25,015	27,552	23,785
Total Expenditures	\$65,920	\$70,788	\$71,437
General Fund Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0
Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund	\$65,920	\$70,788	\$71,437
POSITIONS			
Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)			
<u>Positions:</u>			
Regular	1 / 0.5	1 / 0.5	1 / 0.5
Total Positions	1 / 0.5	1 / 0.5	1 / 0.5

Metrics

Metric Indicator	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Estimate	FY 2017 Estimate
Outreach activities/meetings	49	38	59	45	45
Number of participants/attendees	1,570	2,538	2,004	2,000	2,000

LOB METRIC INDICATOR – OUTREACH ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS

The number of outreach activities/meeting has increased from 38 (FY 2014 Actual) to 59 (FY 2015 Actual). As the staff has been able to make inroads with new and different cultural communities in the County, the office has been able to schedule and staff more outreach events and cultural fairs. These efforts are focused on providing educational information to members of these communities as well as responding to inquiries about the role of OHREP. As people become more educated about their rights through the outreach events, they are learning to protect those rights by contacting OHREP and exploring their options if they feel they have been discriminated against. In addition, OHREP routinely provides outreach and education to the business community in an effort to reduce instances and/or allegations of discrimination.

LOB METRIC INDICATOR – NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS/ATTENDEES

Actual number of participants/attendees at outreach events in which the Agency participated.