Complaints Procedures

These discrimination complaint procedures outline the process used by Oak City Cares, Inc. (OCC) to process complaints of alleged discrimination filed under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related nondiscrimination laws that are applicable to Oak City Cares, Inc. programs, services, and activities. Complaints will be investigated by the appropriate authority. Upon completion of an investigation, the complainant will be informed of all avenues of appeal. Every effort will be made to obtain early resolution of complaints at the lowest level possible by informal means.

FILING OF COMPLAINTS

1. **Applicability** – These procedures apply to the beneficiaries of our programs, activities, and services, such as the members of the public and any consultants/contractors we hire.
2. **Eligibility** – Any person or class of persons who believes that he/she has been subjected to discrimination or retaliation prohibited by any of the Civil Rights authorities based upon race, color, sex, age, national origin, creed (religion) or disability, may file a written complaint. The law prohibits intimidation or retaliation of any sort. The complaint may be filed by the affected individual or a representative and must be in writing.
3. **Time Limits and Filing Options** – A complaint must be filed no later than 180 calendar days after the following:
   - The date of the alleged act of discrimination; or
   - The date when the person(s) became aware of the alleged discrimination; or
   - Where there has been a continuing course of conduct, the date on which that conduct was discontinued or the latest instance of the conduct.

   Complaints may be submitted to the following entities:
   - **Oak City Cares, Inc.** Kathy Johnson, Executive Director & Title VI Coordinator, 1430 S. Wilmington Street, (984)-344-9605, kathy.johnson@oakcitycares.org
   - **North Carolina Department of Transportation**, Office of Civil Rights, External Civil Rights Section, 1511 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1511; 984-236-1200
   - **US Department of Transportation**, Departmental Office of Civil Rights, External Civil Rights Programs Division, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20590; 202-366-4070

     Federal Transit Administration, Office of Civil Rights, ATTN: Title VI Program Coordinator, East Bldg. 5th Floor – TCR, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20590
   - **US Department of Justice**, Special Litigation Section, Civil Rights Division, 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20530, 202-514-6255 or toll free 877-218-5228
4. **Format for Complaints –** Complaints shall be in **writing** and **signed** by the complainant(s) or a representative and include the complainant's name, address, and telephone number. Complaints received by fax or e-mail will be acknowledged and processed. Allegations received by telephone or in person will be reduced to writing, may be recorded and will be provided to the complainant for confirmation or revision before processing. Complaints will be accepted in other languages, including Braille.
5. **Discrimination Complaint Form –** The Discrimination Complaint Form is consistent with the FTA Certifications & Assurances, "Nondiscrimination Assurance."
6. **Complaint Basis –** Allegations must be based on issues involving race, color, national origin, sex, age, creed (religion) or disability. The term "basis" refers to the complainant's membership in a protected group category.

Protected Categories	Definition	Examples	Applicable Statutes and Regulations
			FTA
Race	An individual belonging to one of the accepted racial groups; or the perception, based usually on physical characteristics that a person is a member of a racial group	Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, White	Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; 49 CFR Part 21; 49 U.S.C. 5332(b); FTA Circular 4702.1B
Color	Color of skin, including shade of skin within a racial group	Black, White, brown, yellow, etc.	
National Origin	Place of birth. Citizenship is not a factor. Discrimination based on language or a person's accent is also covered.	Mexican, Cuban, Japanese, Vietnamese, Chinese	
Sex	Gender	Women and Men	49 U.S.C. 5332(b); Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972
Age	Persons of any age	21 year old person	Age Discrimination Act of 1975
Disability	Physical or mental impairment, permanent or temporary, or perceived.	Blind, alcoholic, para-amputee, epileptic, diabetic, arthritic	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
Creed	Religion.	Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Atheist	49 U.S.C. 5332(b)

Complaint Processing

1. When a complaint is received, an Acknowledgment Letter and a Complainant Consent/Release Form will be mailed to the complainant within ten (10) business days by registered mail.
2. We will consult with the NCDOT Title VI Program to determine the acceptability and jurisdiction of all complaints received. (Note: If NCDOT will investigate, the Title VI Program will be responsible for the remainder of this process. We will record the transfer of responsibility in our complaints log).
3. Additional information will be requested if the complaint is incomplete. The complainant will be provided 15 business days to submit any requested information and the signed Consent Release form. Failure to do so may be considered good cause for a determination of no investigative merit.
4. Upon receipt of the requested information and determination of jurisdiction, we will notify the complainant and respondent of whether the complaint has enough merit to warrant investigation.
5. If the complaint is investigated, the notification shall state the grounds of our jurisdiction, while informing the parties that their full cooperation will be required in gathering additional information and assisting the investigator.
6. If the complaint does not warrant investigation, the notification to the complainant shall specifically state the reason for the decision.

Complaint Log

1. When a complaint is received, the complaint will be entered into the Discrimination Complaints Log with other pertinent information and assigned a **Case Number.** (Note: All complaints must be logged).
2. The complaints log will be submitted to the NCDOT's Civil Rights office during Title VI compliance reviews. (Note: NCDOT may also be request the complaints log during pre-grant approval processes).
3. The **Log Year(s)** since the last submittal will be entered (e.g., 2015-2018, 2017-2018, FFY 2018, or 2018) and the complaints log will be signed before submitting the log to NCDOT.
4. When reporting **no complaints**, check the **No Complaints or Lawsuits** box and sign the log.

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