

What do I need to know about civil rights and diversity?

Extension is a part of the land-grant system and a state university that receives federal funding in addition to state and local funds. Because we receive federal funds, we are required to demonstrate compliance with federal laws that prohibit discrimination. Any group, club, agency, organization or entity that we partner with in providing services with must also be inclusive and not discriminate.

Our charge

The Director of Extension is committed to ensuring compliance with the intent of nondiscrimination regulations and procedures.

- Purdue CES is under legal obligation to ensure that as an organization, it does not discriminate or condone in any way, discriminatory practices. Additionally, Purdue Extension is under legal obligation to ensure that any group, club, agency, organization or entity that we partner with in providing services does not discriminate or condone in any way, discriminatory practices.
- Every employee of Purdue Extension is obligated and responsible to ensure full compliance with the requirements.

Background

Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights is the legal basis for having a diverse workforce and services that are open to all; however, diversity is something that we do because it is the right thing to do, not just because it is encouraged by law. Historically, there have been groups who have been purposefully excluded from social institutions including education, employment, politics, and the judicial system. This is why Civil Rights Laws were enacted and finally enforced by the government.

Civil rights laws vs. diversity are a delicate balance. Civil Rights Laws make it illegal to discriminate or segregate based on a person's race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, disability or status as a veteran. Diversity recognizes that individuals bring a variety of skills, and experiences based on who they are. By understanding those different from us, we become stronger, more productive, and more aware of how to better serve people in a non-dominant culture.

How we program

Our federal programs are open to all individuals. When we program, we do not discriminate. Non-discrimination is more than just saying "everyone can come to our programs." It means that when we conduct our business of Extension, we do it in a way that does not favor one protected class over another. In other words, we strive to make all possible participants feel included by recognizing their differences in what we say and how we say it. For example:

- **Promotion** – Our promotional materials may say that all are welcome, but we may not portray that message. If the reader only sees pictures of one race or they do not show an effort to include people that have previously not been included, then the readers/listeners may not feel that they are actually welcome. We need to ensure that everyone would feel comfortable at our programs.

- **Prayer** –If we have organized a program that includes a meal and a Christian prayer is given at the beginning, then we are sending the message that only one religion is important or recognized. Offering a moment of reflection before a meal is an appropriate way to handle this situation.
- **Gender Awards** – When awards and recognition are based on the individual's achievements – such as their 4-H record, we cannot separate the awards by male/female such as a 4-H Queen and King, or Top 4-H Boy and Top 4-H Girl. Those individuals that may have had higher scores than one of the "top" winners are being passed over even though they scored better according to the criteria that was being used to select the top individuals.

It is extremely important to understand that everyone's rights are important – and the way we conduct our business so no one individual or group feel alienated is equally important.

In addition to Extension's compliance with Civil Rights Laws, any agency, organization, club, group or other entity that wishes to enter into or continue in a relationship with Purdue Extension and its employees for services must agree to abide by the federal, state and local laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, disability or status as a veteran. This means that any programs, seminars, training, workshops, talks and grants written are open to all people.

Questions

Who are the protected classes?

- **Women** were denied the right to vote for many years, tracked into specific occupations when hired, and when hired, not earning equal pay for equal work.
- **African Americans** were enslaved for two centuries and then, when freed, had very little protection of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendment rights. It was not until the late 1950s that Black Codes began to crumble.
- **Latinos/Hispanics, Asian American/Pacific Islanders, Native Americans** have also been discounted as people and been denied civil rights in a myriad of ways, including having land taken, being interned during WWII, used for cheap labor, and being viewed as second-class citizens.
- **Immigrants** who came to the United States were often not paid wages that were equal to those of non-immigrants. For many years, immigrants were also prohibited from certain jobs and housing.
- **People with disabilities** have also historically been overlooked in society and denied employment opportunities, as well as access to housing, education, and participation in public events.
- **Age** is a protected class, because patterns of discrimination have been discovered against people age 40 and above.
- **Freedom of religion** is protected under the First Amendment but there have been cases where those who do not practice the religion of the majority group have been deprived of opportunities.
- **Those who serve in the armed forces** were added as a protected classification because of the controversy surrounding the Vietnam War. Vietnam veterans were often not well received upon return to the United States and experienced discrimination because of their military service.

Who are Non-traditional or underserved or underrepresented audiences?

Depending upon the country, non-traditional audience members may include people of color, like new immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries or African Americans, Asian Americans, or people with disabilities who have not historically been a focus of programming. Non-traditional audiences may also include people of different religions and cultures, like Anabaptist and Amish who have recently moved into the area or who have

not previously participated in Extension programs. They may also include members considered protected classes under the Equal Employment Opportunity Laws and Civil Rights Legislation.

Why is our organization reviewed for compliance on Civil Rights Laws?

As a partner which receives federal funding in addition to state funds, we are required to demonstrate how we comply with federal laws. CSREES has requested that each state Extension Service develop an internal Civil Rights compliance process. In addition to an internal process, our CSREES partners will also perform state audits.

How do we get organizations like Extension Homemakers, 4-H and producer groups to follow the same guidelines that we do for prayer and inclusiveness?

It is our role to let them know that Purdue Extension is legally required to abide by federal and state non-discrimination laws and practices, and that we are legally directed that any groups, individuals, organizations, etc. that we work with on an ongoing basis must also abide by the same non-discrimination laws and policies. Additionally, we are required to certify that those entities do not discriminate. If a group chooses to not demonstrate compliance on a daily basis, then we are directed to not work with that group on an ongoing basis.

It is in our best interest to:

1. Educate our staff and volunteers regarding what it means to be in compliance: prayers, gender, etc.
2. Provide our educators and volunteers with "tools" they could use in approaching these sensitive issues with the groups we work with.
3. Provide our educators and volunteers with examples they could suggest to groups that would help them maintain their own beliefs, yet be in compliance.

It is the policy of the Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service that all persons have equal opportunity and access to its educational programs, services, activities, and facilities without regard to race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, disability or status as a veteran.

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