

**Alachua County Human Rights Board
FY19-FY20 Annual Report**

Background

The Alachua County Human Rights Ordinance, Chapter 111 of County Code, prohibits discrimination in Employment, Housing and Public Accommodations based on race, color, age, sex, national origin, religion, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression; and also familial status in housing discrimination complaints. (*Familial Status* means families with children under 18, and also covers women who are pregnant or people in the process of adopting or gaining custody of a child).

The ordinance was amended on April 23, 2019 to add additional protected categories against discrimination in housing (citizenship status, lawful source of income, veteran or service member status, victims of domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking). Public education and outreach efforts included press releases, collaborating with community housing partners/advocates, mass mail to landlords and housing providers, meeting with stakeholder groups and distribution of pamphlets and brochures at outreach events. A grace period was observed to raise awareness and facilitate compliance through education, prior to initiating formal enforcement action.

Update on Lawful Source of Income Provision

Lawful Source of Income means the lawful, verifiable income paid directly to a tenant or paid to a representative of the tenant, including but not limited to: income derived from social security, supplemental security income, child support, alimony, veteran's benefits, disability benefits, pension and retirement benefits, or any form of federal, state or local public food or housing assistance or subsidy, including assistance from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Housing Choice Voucher Program (or Section 8 vouchers) whether such income is received directly or indirectly by the renter or purchaser and includes supplemental income.

Under the Lawful Source of Income provision, landlords are prohibited from automatically refusing to accept Section 8 vouchers or steer voucher holders only to certain designated units or properties. The majority of housing complaints received after the ordinance was amended were from Section 8 voucher holders, reporting that landlords were:

- Stating that they "Do not accept Section 8"
- Refusing to show the property or allow a voucher holder to apply
- Stating that the "Section 8 units" were filled

The landlords were contacted and informed that these were unlawful discriminatory practices under the amended ordinance.

Note: Voucher holders also complained that the 3x rent-to-income qualification requirement commonly used in the local housing market was difficult for them to meet and an unreasonable barrier to housing. However, the Lawful Source of Income provision as currently written does not address this issue or make it an unlawful practice. County staff is reviewing the matter and will present recommendations for Board consideration.

Summary of Complaint Activity

The charts below show intakes by category and complaints investigated or referred to the appropriate federal, state or local agencies. Technical assistance is provided to educate clients on their rights and complaint filing options and to help resolve issues informally.

Equal Opportunity Complaint Activity – FY19 October 1, 2018 - September 30, 2019						
*Intakes:	Employment	Housing	Public Accommodations	Public Services	Small Business	Wage Theft
Total: 183	97	43	9	18	1	15 (Informal)
Complaints:	7 (Formal)	(28 regarding "Section 8")	1	2	0	19 (Formal) 88% Resolved \$17,666.21 Collected
Referrals:	6	2	0	0	0	2

*Intakes (requests for information or assistance; formal/informal complaints)

Equal Opportunity Complaint Activity – FY20 October 1, 2019 - September 30, 2020						
*Intakes:	Employment	Housing	Public Accommodations	Public Services	Small Business	Wage Theft
Total: 134	66	32 (10 regarding "Section 8")	20	8	1	7 (Informal)
Complaints:	3 (Formal)	1 (Formal) regarding "Section 8"	1	0	0	4 (Formal) 91% Resolved \$5719.53 Collected
Referrals:	5	1	1	1	0	3

*Intakes (requests for information or assistance; formal/informal complaints)

In FY19, a cause finding was issued in an employment discrimination complaint and a financial settlement was reached. In FY20, a cause finding was issued for the housing discrimination complaint; the Complainant reserved the option pursue civil action in court within 1 year of the cause finding.

Public Education and Outreach

The Equal Opportunity Office conducts public education and outreach on the Human Rights Ordinance and equal opportunity laws. The chart below shows the number of contacts from public education and outreach

activities in FY19. Additional outreach efforts include staff participating in community events and being available to patrons at various Library District branches for one-on-one visits. Please see the chart below:

FY19 Public Education/Outreach Events		
		Contacts
Annual 5 th Avenue Cultural Arts Festival		65
Fair Housing Event		39
Small Business Enterprise Outreach		36
Annual Gainesville-Alachua County Employment Law Seminar		114
Annual ADA Workshop		62
Community Information Expo @ Oaks Mall		41
Local & Regional Job Fairs		748
Total		1105

Alachua County and City of Gainesville Equal Opportunity Offices partner to present annual employment law training for private and public employers. This is one of our signature public education events held in June each year. The topics are timely and cover a broad range of employment law issues. At the 9th Annual Gainesville-Alachua County Employment Law Seminar held on June 19, 2019, topics included Recent Developments in Employment Law; Discipline, Discharge and Separation Agreements, FLSA/FLMA Update, Employee Speech in the Era of Presidential Tweets, The Story of Patricia King, Retired U.S. Army Soldier, LGBTQ Advocate. The seminar is highly rated by participants, many of whom attend every year. (In FY20, annual training and community outreach events were cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic).

The Human Rights Board is committed to the goals of the Board of County Commissioners to eliminate discriminatory practices within Alachua County in the areas of employment, housing and public accommodations through public education and outreach efforts, and enforcement of the Human Rights Ordinance.

Alachua County Human Rights Board

Aaron Kelley (Chair), Attorney

Lindsay Crouse Mitrook, (Vice-Chair), Citizen-at-Large

Jay Koester, Citizens Disability Advisory Committee Representative

Scott Schmidt, Citizen-at-Large

LeAnn Campbell, Citizen-at-Large

Kevin Smith, Citizen-at-Large (Alternate)