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SUBJECT

Discrimination Complaint Handling Procedures

Cites / References / Attachments

WIA Title I: Section 188 Minnesota Statute 363A.12

DEED Complaint Form

WIA Title I Discrimination Complaint Form WIA Title I Discrimination Complaint Log

Tennessen Warning Notice/Use of Data/WIA Title I-B Equal Opportunity Information

WIA Equal Opportunity Policy Manual, Chapter 8.2, Program Complaint Policy and Procedures

Notice to the Public - Equal Opportunity is the Law in the following languages:

• (Note: Posters for all languages are in 11"x17" tabloid size.).

<u>Arabic, English, Cambodian, Croatian, Hmong, Laotian, Oromo, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese</u>

Effective Date: July 1, 2005

Updated: July 1, 2013 (State update)

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REQUIRED ACTION

ACTION: As a workforce Investment Act (WIA) title I-B Program Provider, SBETC must adhere to

the guidelines regarding WIA title I-B discrimination Complaints.

WHO: SBETC staff and Sub-grantees.

WHEN: Immediately updates to WIA Equal Opportunity Policy Manual Nondiscrimination and

Equal Opportunity Provisions Complaint Processing Procedures (29 CFR 37.7 through

37.89)

Summary

This Policy identifies SBETC's compliance with Element 8 of the Methods of Administration which requires that recipients of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I funds develop, publish, and maintain a written policy setting forth the *discrimination* complaint resolution procedures prescribed by the regulations, including the means by which the complaint processing procedures are made available to individuals with disabilities.

Federal and State Requirements

Section 188 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, political affiliation or belief, and for beneficiaries only, citizenship as a lawfully admitted immigrant authorized to work in the United States, or participation in any WIA Title I financially assisted program or activity (29 CFR 37.1).

Minnesota State Law prohibits discrimination on the WIA basis above and also on the basis of creed, marital status, status in regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, sexual orientation, or genetic information (Minn. Stat. 363A.08).

Policy

It is the policy of SBETC to assure nondiscrimination and equal opportunity (EO) in the operation and administration of all programs, services, benefits, and activities. The WIA Title I Discrimination Complaint Processing Procedures below implement SBETC nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of WIA section 188 and its implementing regulations.

Applies to

- 1. All recipients must comply with the complaint procedures (29 CFR 37.77). A recipient is any entity to which financial assistance under WIA Title I is extended, either directly from the USDOL or through the Governor or another recipient. Recipients include, but are not limited to:
 - State-level agencies that administer or are financed in whole or in part with WIA Title I funds
 - State Employment Security Agencies (Unemployment Insurance (UI))
 - State and Local Workforce Investment Boards
 - Local WIA (LWIA) grant recipients
 - One-Stop Operators
 - Providers of services, and benefits, or training funded, or authorized under WIA, including eligible training providers
 - On-the-Job-Training (OJT) employers
 - Job Corps contractors and center operators, excluding the operators of federally operated Job Corps centers
 - Job Corps national training contractors
 - Outreach and admissions agencies, including Job Corps contractors that perform these functions
 - Placement agencies, including Job Corps contractors that perform these functions
 - One-Stop partners to the extent that they participate in the One-Stop delivery system
- 2. Any person who believes that he or she, or any specific class of individuals, has been or is being subjected to discrimination prohibited by WIA may file a written complaint, either by him/herself or through a representative with the recipient or the Department of Labor (DOL) Civil Rights Center (CRC). Examples of who may file:
 - Applicant/registrant for aid, benefits, services or training
 - Eligible applicants/registrants
 - Participants
 - Employees
 - Applicants for employment
 - Service providers or eligible service providers (the organization involved is one which may be attributed a racial, national origin, or other characteristic entitled to protection under WIA)

Complaint Types

• The majority of WIA complaints can be determined to be either a:

- o Discrimination Complaint, which is processed according to WIA/CRC regulations, or
- Program Complaint, which is processed according to the Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration's (ETA) regulations. NOTE: Information on program complaints is linked below.
- A complaint of discrimination may be filed as:
 - Individual Complaint filing by one individual alleging that he or she has been or is being subjected to discrimination;
 - Class Action Complaint filing by one or more individuals alleging discrimination not only against themselves, but also against a group of similarly situated individuals (must have the signed consent of all individuals in the complaint);
 - Third party Complaint filing by a group or individual alleging discrimination against another group or individual (must have the signed consent of all individuals involved).

Timing of Complaint

Any individual who believes that he/she has been discriminated against has the right to file a complaint. The complaint must be submitted in writing within one hundred eighty (180) days of the alleged violation. Extension of the one hundred eighty (180) days filing time may be granted by the Director of the CRC for good cause shown by the complainant.

WIA Jurisdiction

- Establishing jurisdiction under WIA:
 - o The respondent (agency/service provider) is a WIA recipient as defined in 29 CFR 37.4;
 - The complaint has been filed within the required 180-day time period, or the Director of CRC has granted an extension waiver; and
 - o The complaint issue (basis) is covered under section 188 of WIA Title I.
- Handling jurisdiction (29 CFR 37.85 (c)(1)(2)(d)):
 - O Dual Jurisdiction When the complaint alleges discrimination on a basis that is prohibited by WIA Title I and a Civil Rights Act enforced by a federal grant-making agency other than the DOL, such as the Department of Education (DOE), then CRC and the grant-making agency have dual jurisdiction over the complaint. When dual jurisdiction occurs, the CRC Director or the WIA Title I program provider will refer the complaint for processing to the grant-making agency responsible for the implementation.
 - Sole Jurisdiction Where the complaint alleges discrimination on a basis that is prohibited by WIA section 188 but not by any civil rights laws enforced by a federal grant-making agency, then the CRC has sole jurisdiction over the complaint. In this case, the CRC or the recipient will retain the complaint and process it according to 29 CFR Part 37.
- Determining type of jurisdiction:
 - Identify the alleged action of discrimination;
 - Identify the entity (program or activity) in which the alleged discriminatory decision/action occurred;
 - Identify the primary source of federal financial assistance of the entity against which the complaint is filed;
 - Establish whether the basis of the alleged discrimination involves one or more of the protected bases such as race, sex, national origin, color, disability or age, religion, or political affiliation;
 - Establish whether the allegation(s), if true, would violate WIA Title I section 188 or any of the following: Title VI; Title IX; Section 504; The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended; or the Age Discrimination in Employment Act.
- Determination of no Jurisdiction:
 - o If the WIA Title I program provider determines it has no jurisdiction over a complaint, it must immediately send the complainant a written "Notice of Lack of Jurisdiction." The WIA Title I program provider must include in the document the reason(s) for the determination and a

notice that the complainant has a right to file a complaint with the CRC within 30 days of receiving the Notice of Lack of Jurisdiction.

- Non-WIA Title I Complaint:
 - If a complaint is determined to be a non-WIA Title I complaint, such as a non-prohibited basis, the complaint is processed by the procedures approved by the non-WIA Title I funding authority (20 CFR Subpart F, 667.600(a)(b)).

Responsibilities of Workforce Service Area (WSA) EOO

- Ensuring the complaint processing procedures are implemented.
- Ensuring complainants are provided notice of their rights, including the rights to representation, to present evidence, to question information provided by others who present evidence, and to file with the CRC when they are not satisfied with an agency's decision.
- Ensuring complainants are provided a copy of this "Discrimination Complaint Policy and Procedures."
- If the complainant chooses ADR, making certain the arrangements for ADR are completed in a timely fashion, including sufficient time to complete an investigation if ADR is unsuccessful.
- Ensuring that staff who interact with the public are aware of and properly implement the complaint procedures.
- Ensuring that persons, organizations, and agencies have notice that they may not discharge or retaliate in any manner against any person because that person filed a complaint, instituted any proceeding related to the Act, testified, or is about to testify, in any proceeding or investigation, or has provided information or assisted in an investigation.

Discrimination Complaint Procedures

- 1. Verbal Discrimination Complaint
 - An applicant/participant's first attempt at resolution of a discrimination issue should be to make
 a verbal complaint at the local level, SBETC. An oral attempt at resolution should take place
 prior to filing a written complaint. Note: if a complainant bypasses the local level and files a
 complaint of discrimination with the DEED WDD EOO, the complaint may be referred back to
 the local level.
 - Upon receipt of a verbal discrimination complaint, the SBETC Executive Director will meet with
 the complainant so that, if possible, an appropriate resolution can be achieved. NOTE: the
 complainant is encouraged to attend the meeting, but the complainant's failure to do so should
 not preclude the complainant's right to request a hearing on the subject.
 - The complainant must be advised of his or her rights, including the right to representation, to
 present evidence, to question others who present evidence, and to file a complaint with the
 CRC when not satisfied with the agency's decision.
 - If the complaint is mutually *resolved* at the verbal level, the Executive Director (EOO) will prepare a brief report for the file stating the issues and resolution. The matter will then be considered closed.
 - If the complaint is *unresolved* at the verbal level, the Executive Director (EOO) will review the submitted allegation. If the complaint has apparent merit that the allegation, if true, would violate a WIA prohibited basis, the complainant must be directed to submit a written complaint in order for the complaint to proceed to the next step.

2. Written Discrimination Complaint

- The complainant may file a written discrimination complaint with the:
 - WIA Title I local program provider SBETC;
 - o DEED WDD EOO; or
 - o Director, Civil Rights Center
- The complainant may file directly with DEED's EOO, however, in most cases, the complaint will be referred to the local level for a decision prior to accepting it at the state level.

- Should the complainant opt to file directly with the CRC, staff shall assist the complainant, if requested, in completing the Complaint Form. For those individuals not requesting assistance, staff shall provide the necessary complaint forms, addresses, etc.
- DEED's Complaint Form may be used when filing a complaint with the local level program provider, DEED, or the CRC. However, a complainant is not required to use the written discrimination complaint form as long as he or she provides all necessary information.
- The written complaint must be signed, dated, and contain:
 - Complainant name/address and phone number or other means of contact;
 - o Individual/entity the complainant alleges is responsible for the discrimination;
 - o A written statement of the allegations in sufficient detail to determine whether:
 - The complaint is covered as applicable under CRC or another jurisdiction. If other proceedings have commenced or have been concluded, include the dates, authorities, and other pertinent information;
 - The complaint is timely filed;
 - The complaint has apparent merit ("apparent merit" signifies that the allegation of discrimination, if proven to be true, would violate WIA regulations. Note: there is no apparent merit if the allegation of discrimination does not reference a basis prohibited under WIA Title I section 188).
- In the event the complainant is unable to put the complaint in writing, an alternative method of obtaining written documentation from the complainant must be pursued and may include assistance by agency staff or the complainant's representative.
- All complaints, concerns, or issues alleging discrimination must be reported to the DEED WDD EOO.
- The DEED WDD EOO must promptly notify the CRC when any administrative enforcement actions
 or lawsuits are filed against it alleging discrimination.
- 3. Local SBETC EOO Review/Investigation
- Upon receipt of a written complaint an initial, written notice must be provided to the complainant that contains:
 - a) Acknowledgment that the recipient has received the complaint;
 - b) Notice that the complainant has the right to be represented in the complaint process;
 - c) A written statement of the issue(s) that includes:
 - i. A list of the issues raised in the complaint, and
 - ii. For each such issue, a statement whether the recipient will accept the issue for investigation or reject the issue, and the reason(s) for each rejection, such as lack of jurisdiction, untimely, or no basis for discrimination.
 - An "impartial decision-maker" is required to investigate and process complaints. The person
 investigating the case must not be the person who has allegedly committed the adverse action
 against the complainant.
 - Upon receipt of a written complaint, notice must be provided to the complainant that he/she, as a means of resolving the complaint, has the right to choose between:
 - A. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), or
 - B. Investigative track.
 - i. Provide statement that if complainant chooses the investigatory process, the complainant is entitled to a decision, or Notice of Final Action, within ninety (90) days after initial receipt of the written complaint. If the local level fails to provide a Notice of Final Action within the ninety (90) days, the complainant may contact the DEED WDD EOO.

A. If the complainant's choice is **ADR**:

o the EOO will:

- Choose an impartial mediator who is a neutral and impartial third party, acceptable to both parties, and will assist the parties in resolving their dispute.
- Determine the location of the ADR:
- Schedule the date and time of ADR;
- Notify both parties of the ADR location, time, and date;
- Develop a consent form to be signed by all parties at initiation of the ADR process affirming that the contents of the mediation will be kept confidential and that both parties agree not to involve the mediator in any litigation; and
- Document the agreed upon resolution.

o ADR results:

- If a resolution/settlement is achieved through ADR, the mediator will prepare a settlement agreement that includes a description of how the parties resolved the issue. This agreement becomes the "Documentation/Notice of Final Action." The parties will be asked to sign the agreement and a copy of the signed agreement will be given to the parties. The agreement must contain the: names of the parties; date of agreement; any time limits; and terms of agreement. NOTE: There should be no other written record or other recording made of the meeting, except as required on the complaint log.
- In the event the settlement agreement is *breached*, the non-breaching party may file a complaint directly with the CRC within 30 days of the date on which the non-breaching party learns of the alleged breach. If the CRC Director determines that the agreement has been breached, the complainant may file a complaint with CRC based upon his/her original allegation(s), and the Director will waive the time deadline for filing such a complaint.
- If no satisfactory resolution is attained through ADR:
 - SBETC must issue a written notice to the complainant that includes: a clear concise statement of the issues and the length of time, manner, and place (address) in which an appeal against this decision may be filed.
 - ii. The complainant may, within ninety (90) days of the initial filing of the written complaint at the WIA Title I program provider level, request the WIA Title I program provider EOO to resume the investigatory process.
 - 1. Time permitting, the EOO at the local level will, within ninety (90) days of the initial filing of the written complaint, conduct the investigation and issue a decision.
 - 2. If time will not allow the investigation to be completed at the local level, a complaint may (a) be filed with the DEED WDD EOO to conduct the investigation or (b) be filed directly with the CRC.
 - iii. The complainant may file a complaint with the CRC Director.

B. If the complainant's choice is the **investigatory process**:

- The SBETC EOO will begin the investigation.
 - o The investigator is required to:
 - Prepare and maintain a complete file on the case.
 - Acknowledge complaint by sending a letter to the complainant and correspond with complainant as required.
 - Provide notice to all parties who have a legitimate interest in the complaint.

- Keep identity of every complainant confidential to the greatest extent possible (29 CRF 37.37(b)(2)). An individual whose identity must be disclosed must be protected from retaliation (29 CFR 37.41).
- Perform an investigation.
- Make decision as to the substance of the allegation and suggest remedial action if necessary.
- Decisions should be made strictly on the basis of evidence gathered.
- Provide a Notice of Final Action to the complainant within ninety (90) days of the date on which the complaint was filed.
- The EOO can and should attempt to negotiate a resolution of the issue at any time prior to the conclusion of the investigation.
- The EOO will gather details from the complainant and the respondent regarding specific background and action(s) surrounding the allegation, and take statements from those individuals identified by the complainant and the respondent.
- The complainant and the respondent will be given an opportunity to question the information of others who present evidence.
- The EOO will review the initial findings orally with the complainant. This will allow the complainant to provide additional information or clarification.
- The EOO must issue a written Notice of Final Action (decision), transmitted to the complainant, within forty (40) days of the date on which the complaint was filed. This 40-day requirement is intended to allow for an appeal to the DEED EOO, and if appealed, provide the DEED EEO forty (40) days to review, investigate, and issue its Written Notice of Final Action (resolution) within the regulatory ninety (90) days of the date on which the complaint was filed.
- The Notice of Final Action must contain:
 - a. A clear and concise statement of the issues.
 - b. For each issue raised in the complaint, a statement of either:
 - The recipient's decision on the issue and an explanation of the reasons underlying the decision based on the material and the applicable section of WIA Title I section 188 and/or its regulations, or
 - ii. A description of the way the parties resolved the issue.
 - c. Findings of fact based strictly on the evidence gathered during the investigation.
 - d. Conclusion(s) based on the findings of fact.
 - e. Notification that the complainant has a right to appeal to the DEED EEO within ten (10) days of the date the decision was issued at the local level if he/she is dissatisfied with the final action. This notification must also indicate how and where to appeal the decision and that the appeal must be in writing.
 - f. Notification that the complainant has a right to appeal to the CRC within thirty (30) days of the date the local level decision was issued if he/she is dissatisfied with the final action. This notification must also indicate how and where to appeal the decision to the CRC.
- Throughout the investigation, the EOO should attempt to resolve the complaint. The methods available to resolve the complaint must include alternative dispute resolution (ADR) which includes:
 - a. ADR is a confidential process that encourages open communication and allows disputes to be resolved in a less adversarial manner.
 - b. The local level EOO will provide information and mediation resources regarding ADR to parties requesting this method of resolving discrimination complaints.
 - c. The choice whether to use ADR or the investigation process rests with the complainant. *NOTE*: If the complainant chooses ADR, DEED is still obliged to review internal processes to determine if corrective action is needed to safeguard against potential future inequities.
 - d. The complainant must inform the EOO within five (5) days of his/her choice between ADR and the investigatory process.

e. It is not mandatory that the parties come to an agreement.

4. State (DEED) EOO Decision

- A complainant may file an appeal with the DEED EOO if:
 - o The complainant is dissatisfied with the WIA Title I program provider decision, or
 - The ADR process was unsuccessful and the complainant appealed to the DEED EOO to conduct an investigation, and
 - o The complainant submits an appeal to the DEED EOO within ten (10) days of the date the decision was issued at the local level.
- WIA Title I *program provider EOO* responsibilities for the appeal process shall include, but are not limited to, providing DEED with:
 - A completed copy of the complaint file,
 - A copy of any investigative finding.
- All appeals to DEED must contain the following information:
 - o The name, address, and telephone number of the person making the complaint;
 - The name and address of the respondent (the individual/entity) against whom the complaint is made:
 - A clear and concise statement of the facts, including pertinent dates, constituting the alleged violation.

• The DEED EOO shall:

- o Promptly log and initiate a review or investigation of the complaint:
- o Provide notice to all parties of the specific charges;
- o Inform both parties of their right to present evidence;
- o Provide for an impartial decision.
- Within ninety (90) days of the date the appeal is received at the department level, perform one of the following:
 - Issue a Written Notice of Lack of Jurisdiction;
 - Refer the complainant to another federal grant-making agency for investigation where there is dual jurisdiction; or
 - Issue a Written Notice of Final Action (resolution).
- Copies of the DEED EOO's resolution shall be sent to the complainant and to the WIA Title I
 program provider. This resolution will contain a synopsis of the facts, reasons for the decision,
 and remedy if applicable.

5. Complaint to Director, Civil Rights Center (CRC)

- The complainant or his/her representative may file a complaint with the Director of the CRC within thirty (30) days *if*:
 - DEED issues a Written Notice of Lack of Jurisdiction. In this case, the 30 days is counted from the date of receipt of the notice.
 - o DEED issues and the complainant is not satisfied with, the decision in the Written Notice of Final Action. In this case, the 30 days is counted from the date of receipt of the notice.
 - DEED fails to issue a Written Notice of Lack of Jurisdiction, a Written Notice of Final Action, or a referral to another federal grant-making agency for investigation in case of dual jurisdiction, by the end of 90 days (this is the combined time allowed at both the local and state levels) after receipt of the complaint. In this case, the 30 days to file an appeal with the CRC is counted at the end of the initial 90-day period.
 - An ADR process fails to produce an agreement. In this case, the thirty (30) days is counted from the date on which the ADR process terminates.
 - o A party to an agreement breaches the agreement. In this case, the thirty (30) days is counted from the date the complainant learns of the alleged breach.
- The complaint filed with the CRC should contain:
 - o The full name, address, and telephone number of the person making the complaint.

- o The full name, address, and telephone number of the respondent against whom the complaint is made.
- A clear and concise statement of the facts, including pertinent dates, constituting the alleged violation.
- Where known, the provisions of WIA Title I, regulations, grant, or other agreements under WIA Title I believed to have been violated.
- A statement disclosing whether proceedings before any federal, state, or local authority involving the subject of the complaint have been commenced or concluded, and if so, the date of such commencement or conclusion, and the name and address of the authority.
- A statement of the date the complaint was filed with DEED and the date on which DEED should have issued a decision.
- A complaint will be considered to have been filed when the CRC receives from the complainant a
 written statement sufficiently precise to evaluate the jurisdiction of the complaint.
- Only the CRC Director may extend the complainant's thirty (30) day complaint timeframe and an extension will only be allowed if the complainant shows good cause that merits the extension.

Addresses

Kathleen Zavala

Stearns-Benton Employment & Training Council (SBETC)

1542 Northway Drive

St. Cloud, MN 56303

Voice: 320-308-5334
Fax: 320-308-1717
TTY: 320-308-6434
Email: kzavala@sbetc.org

DEED EOO

Susan Tulashie, Equal Opportunity Officer Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Workforce Development Division 1st National Bank Building 332 Minnesota Street, Suite E200 St. Paul, MN 55101-1351

Voice: 651-259-7586 Fax: 651-215-3842 TTY: 651-296-3900

E-mail: Susan.Tulashie@state.mn.us; or

Director, Civil Rights Center

Director, Civil Rights Center U.S. Department of Labor 200 Constitution Avenue NW Room N-4123

Washington, DC 20210
Voice: 202-219-7026
Fax: 202-219-5658
TTY: 800-326-2577
E-mail: CRC-WIA@dol.gov

Complaint Log / Retention

- Each program provider must maintain and submit to the DEED Workforce Development Division (WDD) EOO a log of complaints alleging discrimination
- All complaints, whether processed by investigation or ADR, must be entered on DEED's "WIA Title I Discrimination Complaint Log."
- All records regarding complaints and actions taken on complaints (including logs) must be maintained by the EOO for a period of not less than six (6) years from the date of resolution of the complaint (Minnesota Statute 16C.05 subd. 5).

Notice to the Public

- Per WIA Final Rules and Regulations (29 CFR 37.20), a recipient must provide initial and continued notice that it does not discriminate on any prohibited ground.
- "Notice to the Public" posters are available at DEED's Intranet site Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity, in English as well as in: Arabic, Cambodian, Croatian, Hmong, Laotian, Oromo, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese.
- Per WIA Final Rules and Regulations (29 CFR 37.30), a notice must contain the following specific wording:

Equal Opportunity is the Law

It is against the law for this recipient of Federal financial assistance to discriminate on the following bases:

Against any individual in the United States, on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, political affiliation or belief; and

Against any beneficiary of programs financially assisted under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), on the basis of the beneficiary's citizenship/status as a lawfully admitted immigrant authorized to work in the United States, or his or her participation in any WIA Title I-financially assisted program or activity.

The recipient must not discriminate in any of the following areas:

Deciding who will be admitted, or have access, to any WIA Title I-financially assisted program or activity; or

Providing opportunities in, or treating any person with regard to, such a program or activity; or Making employment decisions in the administration of, or in connection with, such a program or activity.

What to Do If You Believe You Have Experienced Discrimination

If you think that you have been subjected to discrimination under a WIA Title I-financially assisted program or activity, you may file a complaint within 180 days from the date of the alleged violation with either:

The recipient's Equal Opportunity Officer (or the person whom the recipient has designated for this purpose); or

The Director, Civil Rights Center (CRC) U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue NW, Room N-4123, Washington, DC 20210.

If you file your complaint with the recipient, you must wait either until the recipient issues a written Notice of Final Action, or until 90 days have passed (whichever is sooner), before filing with the Civil Rights Center (see address above).

If the recipient does not give you a written Notice of Final Action within 90 days of the day on which you filed your complaint, you do not have to wait for the recipient to issue that Notice before filing a complaint with CRC. However, you must file your CRC complaint within 30 days of the 90-day deadline (in other words, within 120 days after the day on which you filed your complaint with the recipient).

If the recipient does give you a written Notice of Final Action on your complaint, but you are dissatisfied with the decision or resolution, you may file a complaint with CRC. You must file your CRC complaint within 30 days of the date on which you received the Notice of Final Action.

Alternate formats such as Braille, audio-visual and large print are available upon request.

K/F/A/Policy/Program Policies/I6.8 Discrim. Complaint State Template 2014