

Protect Yourself ... Know Your Rights

“Is it legal to ask my race on a job application?”

Employers cannot require you to list your race, religion or ethnicity on an application, though



some may ask for voluntary disclosure for reporting purposes. They cannot ask for information about disability status in writing or verbally. Our Pre-employment Inquiry Guide (find it at www.michigan.gov/mdcr) answers many questions about job applications and interviews.

“My girlfriend and I tried to go to a club, but we had to be 21 to get in. Is that age discrimination?”

State laws and local ordinances are allowed to establish limits based on age if appropriate. For example, the state’s texting ban while driving applies only to people under the age of 21.

“If I have a disability, can a school restrict my participation in activities?”

A student with a physical or mental disability cannot be denied the opportunity to participate in school events or activities, including sports, clubs and services, solely because of their disability. Schools, like all public facilities, are also required to be accessible to everyone.

“A guy I know is pressuring me to have sex. I said no, but he leaves me notes, puts his arm around me and stares at my chest. Is this sexual harassment?”

It could be. Teasing or flirting is generally not considered sexual harassment. If the conduct or comments are so severe that it creates a hostile environment for you, it may be harassment (and may violate a school’s bullying policy). You should immediately discuss this situation with your parents, a teacher or a counselor at the school so they can intervene if necessary. Unwanted sexual advances may be criminal behavior and should also be reported to local law enforcement.

“I’m on the girls’ softball team at school and the boys’ baseball diamond is a lot nicer than our field. Is that allowed?”

This could be gender discrimination under ELCRA, and may also violate a federal law called Title IX (or 9). If this is happening, you can file a complaint with MDCR.



“Am I allowed to pray at school?”

Yes. You have the right to individual prayer by your choice so long as you aren’t disrupting school activities, but a public school cannot require it. With some exceptions, students can also engage with other students in religious activities during non-class hours as long as the activity isn’t coercive or disruptive.

“My religion requires that I wear a head covering. Can my school or employer make me take it off?”

Except in a few limited instances, expressions of faith, such as wearing a hijab, yarmulke, cross or turban, are protected.

“I am being bullied at school. Classmates call me names and try to humiliate me. What can I do?”

Michigan anti-bullying law (known as Matt’s Law) was passed in 2011 and provides some protections.

All schools must have a policy prohibiting bullying. Tell your parents and then find out what your school’s policy is, and report what’s happening to the official responsible.



“Is it true that people can be fired from their jobs because they’re gay or lesbian?”

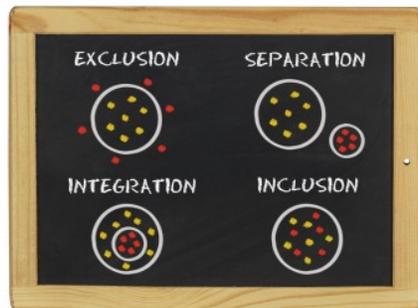
Yes. Michigan law doesn’t currently offer any protections based on sexual orientation. Some local communities have anti-discrimination ordinances that may offer protections that state law does not.

History

In 1964, Michigan became the first state to guarantee civil rights protections for all people in its constitution in the form of a Civil Rights Commission. Article 5, Section 29 calls on the Commission to ... “investigate alleged discrimination against any person because of race, religion, color or national origin in the enjoyment of the civil rights guaranteed by law and by this constitution...”

The Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) was created to carry out the work of the Civil Rights Commission. Passage of the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act (ELCRA) and the Persons with Disabilities Civil Rights Act in 1976 further clarified the specific protections guaranteed under Michigan law.

MDCR investigates discrimination complaints and works to prevent discrimination through community outreach, educational programs, and partnerships that promote voluntary compliance with civil rights laws. MDCR provides information to businesses on diversity initiatives and equal employment law.



**If you feel you have been the victim
of unlawful discrimination,
please contact the
Michigan Department of Civil Rights.**

1.800.482.3604

TTY users: 1.877.878.8464

Request help online:
www.michigan.gov/mdcr



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Understanding Civil Rights



Questions and Answers for Teenagers

