

FILING A TITLE VI COMPLAINT

I. Introduction

The Title VI complaint procedures are intended to provide aggrieved persons an avenue to raise complaints of discrimination regarding the Village of Grass Lake programs, activities, and services, as required by statute.

II. Purpose

The purpose of the discrimination complaint procedures is to describe the process used by the Village of Grass Lake for processing complaints of discrimination under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes.

III. Roles and Responsibilities

The Title VI Coordinator has the responsibility for assuring that the discrimination complaint process and procedures adhere to FHWA's guidance.

IV. Filing a Complaint

The complainant shall make himself/herself reasonably available to the designated investigator, to ensure completion of the investigation within the timeframes set forth.

Applicability: The complaint procedures apply to the beneficiaries of Village of Grass Lake programs, activities, and services, including but not limited to: the public, contractors, sub-contractors, consultants, and other sub-recipients of federal and state funds.

Eligibility: Any person who believes that he/she has been excluded from participation in, denied benefits or services of any program or activity administered by the Village of Grass Lake or its sub-recipients, consultants, and contractors on the basis of race, color, national origin (including Limited English Proficiency), sex, age or disability may bring forth a complaint of discrimination under Title VI.

Time Limitation on Filing Complaints: Title VI complaints may be filed with the Title VI Coordinator's office. In all situations, the employees of the Village of Grass Lake must contact the Title VI Coordinator immediately upon receipt of Title VI related complaints. Within ten (10) days Village of Grass Lake will acknowledge receipt of the complaint.

Complaints must be filed within 180 days of the alleged discrimination unless the time for filing is extended by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA.)

Complaints must be in writing and must be signed by the complainant and/or the complainant's representative. The complaint must set forth as fully as possible the facts and circumstances surrounding the claimed discrimination. In cases where the complainant is unable or incapable of

providing a written statement, the complainant will be assisted in converting the verbal complaint into a written complaint. All complaints, however, must be signed by the complainant and/or by the complainant's representative.

Items that should not be considered a formal complaint: (unless the items contain a signed cover letter specifically alleging a violation of Title VI) include but are not limited to:

1. An anonymous complaint that is too vague to obtain required information.
2. Inquiries seeking advice or information.
3. Courtesy copies of court pleadings
4. Newspaper articles
5. Courtesy copies of internal grievances

V. Investigation

All complaints investigations are delegated by FHWA. Allegations of discrimination are taken very seriously and will be investigated in a timely manner. The Title VI Coordinator will gather relevant information in a fair and impartial manner and will submit the complaint to MDOT's Statewide Title VI Coordinator who will forward the complaint to FHWA.

Timeframes for Investigations

For FHWA, there is no regulatory timeframe for completing investigations. However, FHWA strives to complete all tasks within 180 days from the date of acceptance.

For State DOTs that have been delegated an investigation from FHWA, 23 CFR § 200.9(b)(3) provides that State DOTs must complete investigations within 60 days of receipt (meaning the date it receives the delegated complaint from FHWA).

FHWA Investigation Potential Outcomes

First, at any time during the investigation, either FHWA or the respondent may initiate informal negotiations to resolve the issues. The FHWA always strives to resolve Title VI complaints informally, if possible.

In the absence of such negotiations, FHWA Headquarters Office of Civil Rights (HCR) (or an investigator State DOT) will draft a Report of Investigation, which should contain all relevant data and findings, with legal conclusions and potentially include recommendations for action. FHWA is responsible for the final disposition of all complaints, including initiation and conduct of informal negotiations and the issuance of Letters of Finding (LOFs).

There are five potential outcomes for concluding an investigation:

1. The FHWA makes a finding of no violation, and the case will be closed with no further action. The FHWA will issue an LOF stating in sufficient detail the reasons for the determination of no violation.
2. If, by a preponderance of the evidence, FHWA determines the respondent has failed to comply with its Title VI requirements or threatens to fail to comply by action or inaction, then FHWA will inform the respondent and the matter will be resolved by informal means whenever possible.
 - If FHWA informally resolves the matter with the respondent by agreement, then FHWA will hold the complaint in abeyance until the respondent completes its corrective actions. If the corrective actions are completed to the FHWA's satisfaction, then the complaint will be dismissed with no further action.
 - If FHWA cannot informally resolve the matter or the respondent does not complete agreed upon corrective actions, then FHWA may issue a LOF stating that the Recipient is in noncompliance with its Title VI obligations.
3. If FHWA issues a LOF of noncompliance to the respondent, the LOF will request that the respondent provide to FHWA, within 90 days, an action plan that implements the recommendations in the LOF.
4. If FHWA approves the action plan, then the respondent will be given a reasonable amount of time to implement the plan. At the end of the implementation period, FHWA will assess whether the respondent has sufficiently corrected the deficiencies.
5. If FHWA does not approve the action plan, or the respondent is nonresponsive/uncooperative, then FHWA may seek administrative sanctions, including, but not limited to, suspension or termination of Federal funds or any other means authorized by law such as referral to USDOJ for enforcement.
 - If USDOT seeks to suspend or terminate funds, it must provide the respondent with an opportunity for a hearing on the record. If the Secretary of Transportation determines that the respondent has not complied with Title VI and voluntary compliance cannot be secured, USDOT must notify Congress before that finding goes into effect. 49 CFR §21.13(c).

All LOFs issued by FHWA are administratively final.

Retaliation:

The laws enforced by this Village prohibit retaliation or intimidation against anyone because that individual has either taken action or participated in action to secure rights protected by these laws. If you experience retaliation or intimidation separate from the discrimination alleged in this complaint please contact:

Sabrina Edgar
Village of Grass Lake
119 N. Lake St.
Grass Lake, MI 49240
Phone: 517-522-4550 x3
Fax: 517-522-8120
Email: villagemanager@villageofgrasslake.com

Reporting Requirements to an External Agency

A copy of the complaint, together with a copy of the investigation report and final decision letter will be forwarded to the MDOT, Civil Rights Program Unit within 60 days of the date the LOF was received.

Records

All records and investigative working files are maintained in a confidential area. Records are kept for three years.