

## HOW TO FILE A COMPLAINT TO THE PENNSYLVANIA HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

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The Pennsylvania Human Relations Act (PHRA) is the commonwealth’s key antidiscrimination law.<sup>1</sup> The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) enforces this state law, which prohibits discrimination in schools on the basis of race, color, ancestry, disability, religion, national origin, family status, and sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation).<sup>2</sup> The PHRA affords broad protections against racial, sex-based, and disability discrimination.

This “stepper” and the accompanying chart outline the process for filing a discrimination complaint and your role in the complaint process. You may file a complaint by completing [the education intake form](#) on the PHRC website; email it to [PHRC@pa.gov](mailto:PHRC@pa.gov) or mail it to your closest [regional office](#).

### Step 1: File a complaint with the PHRC

#### Step 2: Initial contact from PHRC

- Complaint is assigned to intake representative and assigned docket number.
- If your complaint is filed with a federal agency, staff will discuss your options.
- Mediation by PHRC may be offered (both parties must agree).

#### Step 3: Complaint will be served on respondent

- The respondent, the entity that is accused of discrimination, must be served within 30 days of docketing the complaint with the PHRC.
- The respondent has 60 days to answer the complaint after it is served. As the complainant (person filing the complaint), you are entitled to receive this response.

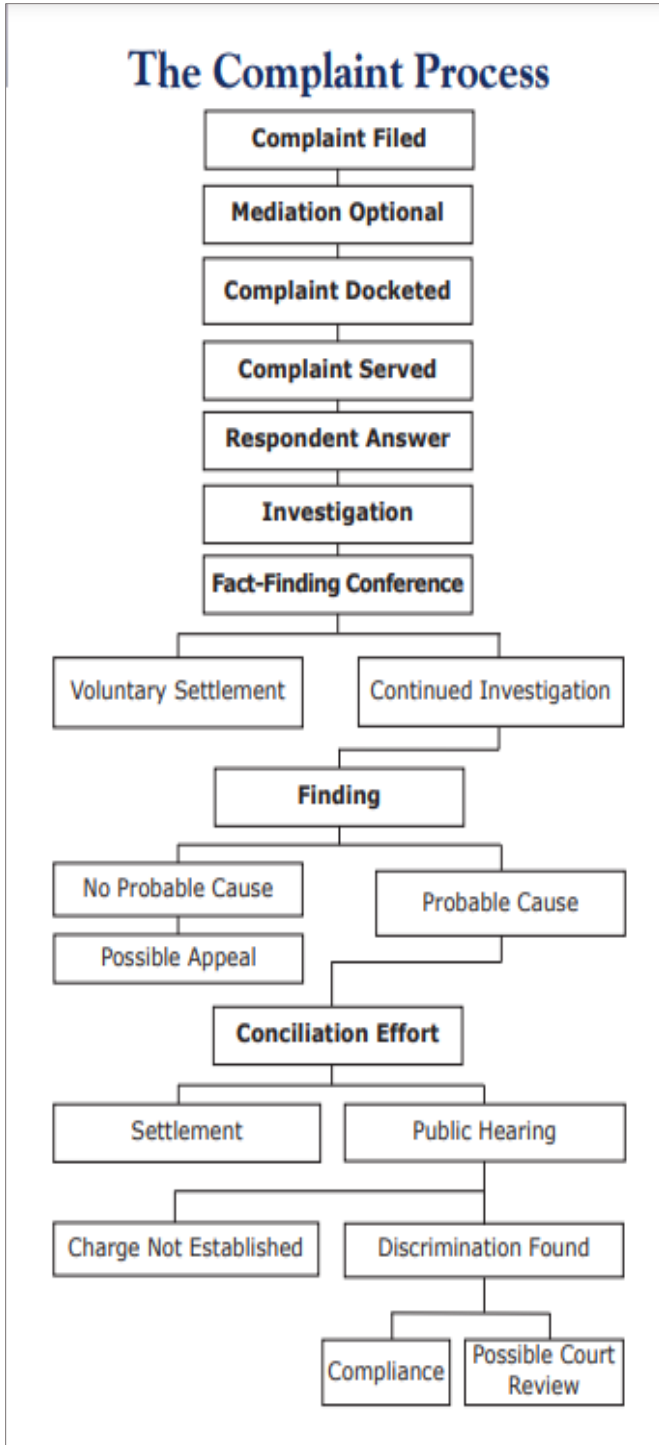
#### Step 4: Investigation by the PHRC

- Provide information, witness information, any relevant documents.
- PHRC investigator will interview complainant, respondent, witnesses, and documents.
- Fact-finding conference may be offered.

#### Step 5: Results of the PHRC’s investigation

Two outcomes are possible:

- No probable cause – PHRC did not find sufficient evidence of discrimination.
  - Notified by mail of PHRC’s decision; informed of rights to appeal the “no probable cause” determination.
- Probable cause – PHRC did find sufficient evidence of discrimination. If probable cause is found:
  - Conciliation/settlement: PHRC will ask respondent to stop illegal conduct; provide appropriate remedies (payment damages, policy changes); or
  - Proceed to public hearing.



Language translation and services for visual and hearing disabilities are available upon request to those needing assistance filing a complaint.

To learn more about students’ rights to be free from race and sex-based discrimination, see [The Right to Be Free from Racism at School](#) and [The Rights of LGBTQ+ and Nonbinary Students](#).

**Timeline:** If your complaint has not been dismissed or resolved in one year after it was filed, you may consider filing in court.

To learn more about this process, consult the PHRC website: [www.phrc.pa.gov/Complaints/Pages/How-to-File-a-Complaint.aspx](http://www.phrc.pa.gov/Complaints/Pages/How-to-File-a-Complaint.aspx).

<sup>1</sup> Pennsylvania Human Relations Act, 43 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 953 et. seq.  
<sup>2</sup> 43 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 954(l).