

Public Notification of Nondiscrimination Policies and FAQs

Our partners are sent notification of UW-Extension's nondiscrimination policy every three years. (Effective, March 2018), see guidelines at:

<https://blogs.ces.uwex.edu/civilrightsleadership/>

Our partners must confirm that they do not discriminate by sending us their nondiscrimination policy if those are available or signing an assurance of nondiscrimination. Cooperative Extension cannot assist, participate or partner with organizations that discriminate because we are a recipient of federal funding,

Find a sample notification letter and guidelines on the civil rights website.

<https://blogs.ces.uwex.edu/civilrightsleadership/>

- Principles to guide you as you make decisions about how to assure nondiscrimination
 - See partnerships through the eyes of the public. For instance, if Extension holds a program at the location of a nonprofit organization and that address and name is in the program announcement, in the eyes of the public, the organization is a partner.
 - When you sponsor an event you need to assure that featured organizations (meaning exhibitors or those giving presentations) do not discriminate.
 - You should only be a member of coalitions and councils that do not discriminate
 - If a leader or official of a partner group does not have a nondiscrimination policy, the signature on the "Assurance of Non-discrimination" is sufficient.
 - If a partner group refuses to sign the form, don't make a fast decision about not partnering in the way you had planned. Talk the situation through with a colleague in the office or with someone else from your program area or discuss it with a member of the civil rights leadership team.
- These requirements sound simple and straightforward, but you all know that they are challenging to carry out in communities where partnerships are essential to our success and where resources are precious and need to be shared.
- Carrying out the public notification activities takes judgment and finesse.
- The following FAQs below are provided to assist you.

Frequently asked questions:

1. What do you do if the organization does not have a nondiscrimination policy but the officer signs the return form certifying that the organization does not discriminate?
 - *Assuming you do not know of discrimination, you probably need to trust that it does not and partner with the organization, being clear that all activities are welcomed to all.*
2. Which partners should be sent the letter and form?
 - *All those that you want to be certain that do not discriminate and that are co-sponsors of your programs.*
3. Should the Boys Scouts be excluded from being invited to participate in our county-wide Youth Fair or any event that is sponsored and organized by 4-HYD?
 - *You should make use of the public notification, nondiscrimination letter and return form (assurance of nondiscrimination). I suggest that it be sent to all organizations along with the invitation to participate in the Youth Fair. The organizations who are sponsoring should sign the form and send their nondiscrimination policies too. It should not be surprising to partners that Extension, as a primary sponsor would expect a pledge of nondiscrimination of all groups involved.*
4. What about participation on boards or councils for other agencies such as the United Way?
 - *If you were a member of the board recommend that you send the letter to each board member and to the director/president of the Council. You also could encourage the Council to create a nondiscrimination policy.*
 - *If you are not a board member but might consult with the Council at some time in the future on some specific project or need. Rather than wait for the project to present itself, you could send the letter to the Council (as an entity, not to individual members of the board) when you send the letter to other organizations that you partner with.*
 - *There is often no absolute answer to these questions and they typically take a bit of discussion among a couple people to work out the most responsible approach.*
5. Should nondiscrimination letters be sent to partners that are publicly funded (schools, local government, government agencies, county departments)?

- *Sending it to private organizational partners is most important (and asking for their policy in return). It is understandable if you stop here, since the mailing list gets a lot longer if public partners are added.*
 - *Taking the additional step to send it to governmental and other public partners is important because we can't assume that they are implementing non-discrimination policies just because they are mandated to. They may have new staff or other reasons that civil rights responsibilities are not known. They may appreciate knowing what your efforts are with certain groups so that they can take advantage of existing relationships you have with underserved audiences in the area. These letters could be an educational opportunity to explain the activities that we do to comply with civil rights laws, to remind them that this is their job too, and to explain to your county committee what the review process entails that you may be having soon (for example).*
 - *Our civil rights responsibility is to educate others about civil rights laws, populations, and best practices in outreach. Making the effort to have these discussions with all public and private partners is important, so make sure you document it and add it to your files. The non-discrimination letter is a way to formalize the message to other public entities.*
6. If we hold meetings in facilities such as churches that perhaps prohibit certain individuals from serving as clergy, etc. but are NOT partnering with them, what do we do?
- *Holding an educational event in a church is partnering. The public sees Extension and the church connected, the church address and name is on your promotional materials for that event. The letter should go to the church before the event, notifying the church organization that Extension events are open to all. They may not have a policy or not agree to sign the letter. If that were the case, we should not be locating programs there. Our events must be open to all. Holding Extension events in churches can help us expand access and we also need to recognize that some potential participants might view churches as places that are not welcoming to all.*
7. If we are part of a coalition, are we required to have nondiscrimination policies for each business, church, agency, etc. that's represented? What if a church does discriminate? Do we resign from the coalition?
- *The letter should be sent to all in the coalition. If an entity on the coalition discriminates, you do not need to resign from the coalition, but be very careful of your involvement with the entity that excludes. You would not partner with that*

organization or be involved with an activity in which that organization's policy of exclusion influences access to services or activities.

8. Community partners work together to have displays marketing youth or health or whatever programs they offer. Some of those community partners who are there may discriminate. Do we need to identify that and not participate in those events if an organization that discriminates is present?
 - *If Extension is sponsoring the event, letters should be sent to all organizations. If the coalition you belong to sponsors, you have probably already sent the letter. You should be sure that an organization that excludes does not influence access to the event, which would exclude access to Extension resources.*
9. We used to place in all our publications – a statement of non-discrimination. Is it still suggested that we do this?
 - *Yes. I assume you mean one of the non-discrimination statements and that you put it at the bottom back or front of the newsletter for example.*
10. Does the 4-H Leaders Association, Master Gardener Association, HCE Organization need to sign one? They are already Extension entities.
 - *No. You should have the nondiscrimination statements from these organizations in your civil rights files along with documentation from other partner entities.*
11. What about county departments ... there is a county policy that governs all departments. We should just be able to obtain the county policy and send a statement out to inform them of our policy. It's a standing policy!
 - *Yes, this is good. Place the policy in the office civil rights files.*
12. Cities, villages, towns. We sometimes do work with them and sometimes we do not. They attend classes, sessions, local government programs. Most of the time they are attending classes not actual partners ... and then sometimes they sponsor some event that Extension is part of the program. They are all required to not discriminate. Can we get their policy once and put it on file send them a letter of our non-discrimination policies.
 - *Yes, get it once every three years or you could wait until you have a program that is co-sponsored.*
13. *What if the partner does have a policy excluding individuals based on conviction record or gender due to the parameters of their programs such as a youth mentoring program that excludes persons with a child*

molestation conviction or persons who are still serving probation on a felony and emergency homeless shelter program that excludes persons with a violence or drug-related conviction or that only serves women and children (no males)?

- *These are not situations of prohibited discrimination.*
- *Excluding persons with conviction records related to violation of children does not qualify as prohibited discrimination. This is why UW-Extension does criminal background checks for potential employees and volunteers.*
- *Not allowing those convicted of violence or illegal drug use is a precaution to assure safety, as is the women only criteria. Also the physical facility may not allow privacy for both men and women.*

14. Our Master Gardener Association has a local church on the list that does not allow those who are LGBTQ+ to attend. Is it allowable for the Master Gardener group to do volunteer hours at the church if they do not discriminate against the people helping with the activity?

- *The church should receive the nondiscrimination letter with the return form and see what you get back. If you do not get a response, follow up and ask for the form and policy statement.*
- *If the church discriminates and those working on the activity are from the church, you cannot assure an open activity. Even if the church does not offer volunteers for the activities, the federal policy states that we cannot participate with, partner with or assist organizations that discriminate against people in protected categories.*

15. Do we need a nondiscrimination letter to provide a program to a private entity such as a religious group, for example a church is having a retreat for its membership and want the educator to do goal planning with them.

- *This is more of a question as to whether or not we do exclusive events for a private group such as a church or a religious entity. It's necessary to confirm that they do not discriminate; in this situation they are not a partner, they are a program recipient so a partner letter would not need to be sent. Suggest asking them to provide a non-nondiscrimination policy before agreeing to programming.*
- *The question remains, should you do just for them or provide the program in such a way that you take responsibility for opening it up to other groups to participate. Inviting others doesn't seem logical in this situation, at their retreat. You can do the session for just them if you do similar programming for other groups regardless of religious, cultural, or political affiliation, etc. (ex.*

Nonprofit boards, government officials, minority service org., etc.) unless there is reason to suspect the group or entity practices illegal or unlawful discrimination. If you suspect can ask them to provide their organization's mission, purpose or other policies for review.

- *We cannot discriminate based on religion and withhold programming for an event that is limited to church members as long as the church doesn't discriminate as to who is allowed into their membership.*

16. Do we need to send a nondiscrimination letter to volunteers from local business and agencies who are teaching or facilitating a pre-determined Extension curriculum at an Extension led event (example local business owner at a financial reality fair)?

- *In this scenario, the exhibitors are volunteering as individuals from the community. While they do not need to have their business sign the partner letter for this one example, Extension employees must still seek assurance that the volunteer will follow nondiscrimination guidelines and behaviors and work to protect vulnerable populations from harm. Therefore, the Extension colleague should be sure to include non-discrimination language in the volunteer invite, registration, and education and/or training materials.*