



U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division

Confronting Discrimination in Hotels, Restaurants, Bars, and Other Places of Public Accommodation

Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000a *et seq.*

"Title II" prohibits places of public accommodation from discriminating against people because of their race, color, religion, or national origin. The Housing and Civil Enforcement Section of the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division can investigate reports of harassment or discrimination within these spaces.

What is a place of public accommodation? What is not a place of public accommodation?

Public accommodations are privately-owned spaces that serve and are open to the general public. They may be owned by private companies or individuals but are intended for public use. These are examples of public accommodations:

- Hotels, inns, motels, or other establishments for temporary guests
- Restaurants, cafeterias, or other spaces where people can buy food to eat on site
- Gas stations
- Movie theaters, concert halls, sports stadiums, or other places of entertainment

On the other hand, these are *not* places of public accommodation:

- Most retail stores (that do not sell food on the premises)
- Churches, synagogues, mosques, and other religious buildings
- Private clubs that require memberships to join

What does discrimination in a place of public accommodation look like?

Discrimination is a broad term. Here are a few examples of what discrimination in a public accommodation might look like:

- Citing vague concerns about the coronavirus, a restaurant refuses to serve an Asian-American family or places the family far away from other customers in the restaurant. Or, that restaurant requests that the family members wear masks without asking anyone else in the restaurant to cover their faces.
- A bar turns away a Sikh patron because the individual is wearing a turban. The bar tells the Sikh patron that the only types of headwear it allows are baseball caps and hats.
- Two Asian-American customers walk into a bar and are forced to wait an hour for service while White customers are served right away.



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- A hotel charges Black guests higher rates for the same rooms than White guests.
- A club refuses entry to Black customers by stating that there is a strict dress code but allows similarly-dressed White patrons to enter.
- A food stand employee at a sports stadium refuses to serve Chinese-American customers because of concerns about the coronavirus.

Under Title II, you cannot be treated differently in a place of public accommodation because of your **race**, **color**, **religion**, or **national origin**. You have the right to fully and equally enjoy everything that a place of public accommodation provides to the public.

What can the Department of Justice do about the way I was treated?

The Department of Justice can investigate possible violations of Title II if it believes there may be a “pattern or practice” of discrimination in a place of public accommodation. A “pattern or practice” generally means there is more than a single incident of discrimination; for example, a policy of discrimination or frequent incidents of discrimination could constitute a “pattern or practice.” The Department cannot investigate all Title II complaints it receives.

If the Department files a lawsuit under Title II, it can ask a court to order the place of public accommodation to stop discriminating against you and others. The Department cannot obtain monetary damages for you or others who may have been harmed by the discrimination.

Where can I report violations of Title II?

If you believe you may have been discriminated against or harassed at a place of public accommodation because of your **race**, **color**, **religion**, or **national origin**, you can report it to the Department of Justice.

Visit the Civil Rights Division website to submit a report online:

<https://civilrights.justice.gov/>

(available in English, Spanish, Chinese Simplified, Chinese Traditional, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Korean)

Or call the Civil Rights Division:

Tel.: (202) 514-3847

Toll-free: (855) 856-1247

TDD: (202) 514-0716