



# Department of Justice

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## **THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT'S CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION ISSUES NON-DISCRIMINATION PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS' RESPONSE TO THE EBOLA VIRUS**

WASHINGTON – The Justice Department's Civil Rights Division issued non-discrimination principles today to guide federal, state and local governments' response to the Ebola virus. The division also issued guidance for protecting civil rights while responding to the Ebola virus and a reference guide on what legal protections may apply.

As the global response to the Ebola virus continues, it is important to remain vigilant in ensuring that the civil rights of all people are respected. Both science and the law must lead our efforts to ensure that unfounded fear and/or prejudice do not limit access to housing, education, benefits, services, and employment on account of race, color, national origin, citizenship status, disability or any other protected status. In addition, access to accurate health information is critical to providing all people with the ability to make informed decisions about whether or how the virus might affect them, their families and the community at large.

The non-discrimination principles are:

***1. Ensure that there is no bullying, harassment or other unlawful discrimination directed at people who are or are perceived to be from an African country, of African descent or against people who have the Ebola virus or are perceived as having the virus.*** As in all emergencies, the Ebola virus may affect people of different races, ethnicities, nationalities, immigration statuses and disability statuses. Harassment and other forms of unlawful discrimination are not only illegal, but may discourage affected persons from coming forward to seek treatment or information. In considering whether there is any significant risk of a person being infected with Ebola, it is essential to determine whether the individual has been in direct contact with the bodily fluids of someone who has exhibited Ebola symptoms within the past 21 days. Policies that are overbroad or that are motivated by fear rather than facts may lead to unlawful discrimination. The United States will vigorously enforce laws prohibiting discrimination and unlawful harassment.

***2. Provide information in languages other than English.*** Timely and accurate dissemination of public information is crucial for a successful response to any threat to public health. Large numbers of people do not read or understand English. Yet it is important for all members of the community to have access to pertinent public information, including information on how Ebola is contracted and the symptoms of Ebola. Messages directed at the residents in

states and localities should be provided in the languages spoken by people with limited English proficiency in those areas, and should be written as clearly as possible. More information about ensuring language access can be found at [www.lep.gov](http://www.lep.gov). Multi-lingual brochures on language access rights can be found at <http://www.lep.gov/dojbrochures.html>.

**3. Provide access to information and services to people with disabilities.** Many traditional notification methods are not accessible to or usable by people with disabilities. For instance, individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing cannot hear radio, sirens or other aural alerts. Individuals who are blind or have impaired vision cannot read standard printed materials. Individuals with cognitive disabilities may not understand complex language. Health care providers and other involved entities must reach out to individuals with disabilities in formats that are accessible to them. For more information on access for individuals with disabilities, please see [www.ADA.gov](http://www.ADA.gov).

The Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, together with other agencies throughout the federal government, will continue to monitor all civil rights issues related to Ebola. The division will continue to work with our federal agencies to ensure that civil rights protections are integrated into emergency planning and response efforts.

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