

Stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination



Alberta Human Rights
and Citizenship Commission

INFORMATION SHEET

Stereotyping

Stereotyping is defined as creating an oversimplified, false or generalized portrayal of a group of people. Stereotyping does not allow for exceptions or individual differences.

Examples of this are statements such as:

- Black people are good dancers.
- Chinese people are bad drivers.
- Italians are passionate.
- Women are emotional.
- Men are insensitive.

Stereotyping is inaccurate and often derogatory. It prejudices a person's ability, skills and personality based on unfair assumptions about racial, physical or cultural traits. To be fair, an individual should be judged on his or her merit regardless of race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical and/or mental disability, marital status, family status, source of income, age, ancestry, place of origin or sexual orientation.

Stereotyping can often lead to prejudice.

Prejudice

Prejudice is defined as an opinion or judgement, frequently unfavourable, based on irrelevant considerations, inadequate knowledge or inaccurate stereotyping.

Often learned at an early age, prejudice is irrational and not based on reality. Prejudicial behaviour causes pain and discomfort, impedes productivity in school and in the workplace and denies Albertans who are the recipients of such behaviour the right to live, work and play with dignity and respect.

Sometimes people are not aware of their own prejudices because they do not know their assumptions are based on inaccurate information. Consequently, they are also unaware that their prejudicial behaviour causes others pain.

Prejudice is dangerous because it often leads to discriminatory acts which are prohibited under the *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act*.

Discrimination

Discrimination is defined as unjust practice or behaviour, whether intentional or not, based on race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical and/or mental disability, marital status, family status, source of income, age, ancestry, place of origin or sexual orientation and which has a negative effect on any individual or group.

Discriminatory behaviour often leads to harassment and has a negative social and economic impact. It also leads to unequal treatment, which in turn, creates problems within schools, the workplace and communities.

The Alberta *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act* prohibits discrimination in the following **areas**:

- notices, signs, public statements, publications and other representations
- the provision of public accommodation, goods and services and facilities
- membership in trade unions, employers' organizations, or occupational associations
- employment practices
- job ads or applications
- tenancy

Discrimination in the above areas is prohibited by the *Act* on the following **grounds**:

- race
- religious beliefs
- colour
- gender
- age (defined as over 18 years and not covered in areas of tenancy and provision of goods, services and accommodation)
- marital status
- family status
- place of origin
- ancestry
- physical or mental disability
- source of income
- sexual orientation

Exceptions

There are some exceptions accepted under the *Act*. For example, an action is not considered discriminatory if it is **reasonable** and **justifiable** under the circumstances. Some examples of reasonable and justifiable actions are:

- Higher insurance fees are charged for young drivers.
- Separate schools may require teachers to follow a specific faith practice.

Programs may be operated to try and improve the conditions of a disadvantaged individual or group, such as encouraging minority language groups to become more fluent in English or to employ individuals in non-traditional roles (for example, native police officers, female fire fighters).

Another exception which is accepted under the *Act* is known as a **bona fide occupational requirement** or **BFOR**. For example, safety regulations for operating machinery may require employees to meet certain standards in order to work in that job.

The Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission offers education and information presentations in an effort to combat stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination in our communities. 

Contact the Commission

For more information, please contact the **Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission**. We are an independent commission of the Government of Alberta. Our mandate is to foster equality and reduce discrimination. We provide public information and education programs, and help Albertans resolve human rights complaints.

Northern Regional Office

800 Standard Life Centre

10405 Jasper Avenue

Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4R7

(780) 427-7661 Confidential Inquiry Line

(780) 427-6013 Fax

Southern Regional Office

Suite 310, 525 – 11 Avenue SW

Calgary, Alberta T2R 0C9

(403) 297-6571 Confidential Inquiry Line

(403) 297-6567 Fax

To call toll-free within Alberta, dial 310-0000 and then enter the area code and phone number.

For province-wide free access from a cellular phone, enter *310 (for Rogers-AT&T) or #310 (for Telus).

TTY service for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing

(780) 427-1597 Edmonton

(403) 297-5639 Calgary

1-800-232-7215 Toll-free within Alberta

E-mail humanrights@gov.ab.ca

Web site www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca

Please note: A complaint must be made to the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission within one year after the alleged incident.

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