



News for Immediate Release

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New Mediation Program to Resolve Employment Discrimination Disputes Faster, Save Time and Money for All Parties

Harrisburg – The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission today launched a mediation program to resolve employment discrimination complaints within a short timeframe. Trained, neutral mediators will guide the process, which aims to produce settlements agreeable to both parties.

“With mediation, everyone gets relief faster,” Commission Chairman Gerry Robinson said. “People who believe they have been wronged, as well as employers facing complaints will get conflicts resolved faster, avoiding lengthy investigations, costly hearings and potential court filings.”

There is no cost to those who choose mediation as a way of resolving their disputes, and they do not need to hire an attorney. The process is confidential.

“Mediation will help our overburdened investigators better manage their caseloads and be able to serve more people.” Robinson said. “It will also help relieve our overburdened court system by decreasing the number of unresolved complaints that end up in court.

“Ultimately, workers will get back to work quicker and employers can focus on building their businesses.

“Most importantly, discriminatory workplace practices end and are prevented in the future, which is our goal as a commission. Pennsylvania’s taxpayers win on all fronts.”

The commission will offer mediation as an option to anyone who files an employment discrimination complaint. Exceptions are for complaints filed against state agencies and a few other limited instances. The process is confidential.

Cases will be handled by state attorneys who are trained, certified mediators. They have been given specialized training by the commission in Pennsylvania equal opportunity law.

A successfully mediated case will end in a confidential settlement that satisfies both parties.

If a settlement has not been reached within 10 days, the case will be investigated through normal commission procedures.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, or EEOC, has used mediation to resolve employment discrimination complaints for over 20 years. Virtually every state's Fair Employment Practice Agency has a mediation program in place.

The PHRC Mediation Program was developed as part of the governor's innovation initiative. Since its inception, the Governor's Innovation Office has worked with state agencies on efforts to reduce costs, increase efficiency and improve services. These initiatives have resulted in more than \$170 million in savings and productivity gains. For more information about innovation in state government, visit www.innovation.pa.gov.

More information about mediation, and how to file discrimination complaints in Pennsylvania, is available in English and Spanish at www.phrc.state.pa.us.

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