

§ 17.331 Complaints.

(a) Any person, individually or as a member of a class or on behalf of others, may file a complaint with DOI, alleging discrimination prohibited by the Act or these regulations based on an action occurring on or after July 1, 1979. A complaint must be filed within 180 days from the date the complainant had knowledge of the alleged act of discrimination. For good cause shown, however, DOI may extend this time limit.

(b) DOI will consider the date a complaint is filed to be the date upon which the complaint sufficiently meets the criteria for acceptance as described in paragraphs (a) and (c)(1) of this section.

(c) DOI will attempt to facilitate the filing of complaints wherever possible, including taking the following measures:

(1) Accepting as a sufficient complaint, any written statement which identifies the parties involved and the date the complainant first had knowledge of the alleged violation, describes generally the action or practice complained of, and is signed by the complainant.

(2) Freely permitting a complainant to add information to the complaint to meet the requirements of a sufficient complaint, as described in paragraphs (a) and (c)(1) of this section.

(3) Notifying the complainant and the recipient of their rights and obligations under the complaint procedure, including the right to have a representative at all stages of the complaint procedure.

(4) Notifying the complainant and the recipient (or their representatives) of their right to contact DOI for information and assistance regarding the complaint resolution process.

(d) DOI will return to the complainant any complaint outside the jurisdiction of these regulations, and will state the reason(s) why it is outside the jurisdiction of these regulations.

§ 17.332 Mediation.

(a) *Referral of complaints for mediation.* DOI will promptly refer to the FMCS all sufficient complaints that:

(1) Fall within the jurisdiction of the Act and these regulations unless the

age distinction complained of is clearly within an exception; and,

(2) Contain all information necessary for further processing.

(b) Both the complainant and the recipient shall participate in the mediation process to the extent necessary to reach an agreement or make an informed judgment that an agreement is not possible.

(c) If the complainant and the recipient reach an agreement, FMCS shall prepare a written statement of the agreement and have the complainant and the recipient sign it. The FMCS shall send the agreement to DOI. DOI, however, retains the right to monitor the recipient's compliance with the agreement.

(d) The FMCS shall protect the confidentiality of all information obtained in the course of the mediation process. No mediator shall testify in any adjudicative proceeding, produce any document, or otherwise disclose any information obtained in the course of the mediation process without prior approval of the head of the mediation agency.

(e) DOI will use the mediation process for a maximum of 60 days after receiving a complaint. Mediation ends if:

(1) 60 days elapse from the time the complaint is filed; or

(2) Prior to the end of that 60 day period, an agreement is reached; or

(3) Prior to the end of that 60 day period, the FMCS determines that an agreement cannot be reached.

(f) The FMCS shall return unresolved complaints to DOI.

§ 17.333 Investigation.

(a) *Informal investigation.* (1) DOI will investigate complaints that are unresolved after mediation or are reopened because of a violation of a mediation agreement.

(2) As part of the initial investigation, DOI will use informal fact finding methods, including joint or separate discussions with the complainant and recipient to establish the facts, and, if possible, settle the complaint on terms that are mutually agreeable to the parties. DOI may seek the assistance of any involved State agency.