

Dear Recipient:

I write to remind you of the legal obligation under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its implementing regulations (Title VI) to provide all individuals an environment free from discrimination based on race, color, or national origin, including shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics.

Title VI, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance, extends to individuals who experience discrimination, including harassment, based on their actual or perceived: (i) shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics; or (ii) citizenship or residency in a country with a dominant religion or distinct religious identity.

Under Title VI, entities that receive federal financial assistance from USDA have a responsibility to address discrimination based on race, color, or national origin against individuals of any religion, such as Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, or Buddhist, when the discrimination: involves racial, ethnic, or ancestral slurs or stereotypes; is based on an individual's skin color, physical features, or style of dress that reflects both ethnic and religious traditions; or is based on the country or region where an individual is from or is perceived to have come from, including, for example, discrimination based on an individual's accent or name, limited English proficiency, or speaking a language other than English.

Harassing conduct can be verbal or physical and need not be directed at a particular individual. Under Title VI, harassment that creates a hostile environment means unwelcome conduct based on race, color, or national origin, including shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics, that, based on the totality of circumstances, is subjectively and objectively offensive and is so severe or pervasive that it limits or denies a person's ability to participate in or benefit from USDA-funded programs or activities. Entities must take prompt and effective action to respond to harassment that creates a hostile environment.

If OASCR finds a hostile environment based on shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics, and that the entity knew or should have known of the hostile environment, OASCR will evaluate whether the entity met its obligation under Title VI to take prompt and effective steps reasonably calculated to end the harassment, eliminate any hostile environment and its effects, and prevent harassment from recurring.

OASCR has developed a variety of resources to help educate the public on the importance of maintaining environments free from discrimination, including discrimination based on shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics, or citizenship or residency in a country with a dominant religion or religious identity. Please see a list of resources below that you might find helpful. Additional resources are available on the Shared Ancestry or Ethnic Characteristics page of OASCR's website.

OASCR is focused on ensuring equal opportunity free from discrimination for all individuals in USDA-funded programs and activities. OASCR stands ready to fulfill the promise of Title VI – to ensure every individual's right to participate without discrimination based on race, color, or national origin, including shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics. In addition to investigating

whether such discrimination has occurred and resolving investigations as needed, we are available to provide technical assistance trainings on the application of Title VI. Any entity or community interested in requesting such training may contact OASCR at [insert appropriate USDA contact information].

If you have questions or would like additional information or technical assistance, please visit our website at www.usda.gov/oascr or contact OASCR at (866) 632-9992 (toll-free). Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech disabilities may contact us through the Telecommunication Relay Service at 711 or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish). Or send an email to the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights at CR-INFO@usda.gov.

Thank you for your commitment to providing an environment free from discrimination in USDA-funded programs and activities.

Sincerely,

[Name]

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights

Resources:

- [USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Fact Sheet: Know Your Rights Under Title VI \(September 2023\)](#).
- [USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 webpage](#).
- [USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Anti-Harassment Procedure Manual \(DM 4200-003\)](#).
- [USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Religious Exemptions guidance](#).
- USDA Ethics Mobile Application ([USDA Ethics App](#)) and USDA Civil Rights Mobile Application ([USDA Civil Rights App](#)).
- [USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Filing a Program Discrimination Complaint as a USDA Customer webpage](#).

These resources are available to help educate the public on maintaining environments free from discrimination in USDA-funded programs and activities. For the most up-to-date information and additional resources, please visit the USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights website at www.usda.gov/oascr.