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Title VI Training Shared Ancestry and Ethnic Characteristic Discrimination

Raising Awareness within OASCR and USDA

Objective:

Educate participants on Title VI protections against discrimination based on shared ancestry and ethnic characteristics, fostering a more inclusive environment.

Introduction to Title VI: What is it?

**Title VI is part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
It reads:**

No individual, on the basis of race, color, national origin, shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in, a Federally assisted program or activity. (42 U.S.C. §2000d)



Who's Protected?

Title VI protects individuals from being discriminated against based on race, color, or national origin by entities receiving federal financial assistance from USDA (e.g., state and local agencies, educational institutions, non-profits, and other non-federal entities).



Who's Protected?

Title VI's protection from race, color, or national origin discrimination also 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.





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Who's Protected?

Title VI protections also cover individuals who are or are perceived to be Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, or of another religious group.



Please note that because Title VI does not protect individuals from discrimination based only on religion, USDA refers those complaints to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), which has jurisdiction on this issue. In certain programs, USDA may process administrative complaints of discrimination based exclusively on religion if the laws that authorize those programs cover religious discrimination.



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Why is Title VI Important?

Title VI is critical. It applies to all USDA assisted programs and activities and works to ensure that the agricultural sector is free from any and all intentional discrimination.





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Understanding Shared Ancestry and Ethnic Characteristics

What is Shared Ancestry and Ethnic Characteristics?

- “Shared ancestry” and “Ethnic Characteristics” can be defined as any common heritage shared between any group of individuals that impacts their identities and experiences.
- Ethnic Characteristics include cultural practices, languages, and traditions, which vary widely among different groups.
- Recognizing this diversity is vital for effective outreach and service delivery in agriculture.



Forms of Discrimination: Examples of Shared Ancestry and Ethnic Characteristics

A Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) participant who is Jewish and who is wearing a kippah (head covering) enters a food pantry site to request a food box. The participant reports that a CSFP volunteer makes a joke about the Holocaust and denies him the food box. The State agency operating the CSFP takes no steps to address this report. This allegation could be linked to race and national origin discrimination.

***Examples are from USDA Fact Sheet**



Forms of Discrimination: Examples of Shared Ancestry and Ethnic Characteristics

An Afghan rural homeowner reports concerns of being denied upgraded highspeed broadband service. All his neighbors received upgraded service. The service provider received federal financial assistance from USDA through Rural Development. The service provider calls the homeowner a “terrorist” and takes no steps to address the homeowner’s report. This allegation could be linked to race and national origin discrimination.

***Examples are from USDA Fact Sheet**



Forms of Discrimination: Examples of Shared Ancestry and Ethnic Characteristics

A Sikh man who wears a turban (head covering) reports that he overheard a ski lodge employee mocking his accent. The employee would not allow the Sikh man to purchase lift tickets to ski for his family. The employee stated that he didn't think they would like it because where they come from no one skis. The resort received federal financial assistance from the Forest Service. The ski resort is alleged to have not taken effective action to address these reports. This allegation could be linked to race and national origin discrimination.

***Examples are from USDA Fact Sheet**



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Legal Obligations

Any individual who believes that they have been intentionally discriminated against based on shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics or any Title VI has the right to seek assistance. Through the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR) and the Center for Civil Rights Enforcement (CCRE), any individual can file a complaint.





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Have You Been Discriminated Against? Reporting Mechanisms

How does an individual file a complaint?

AD-3027		OMB Control Number: 0508-0002 Expiration Date: 05/31/2024	
U.S. Department of Agriculture USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form			
Complainant Information			
First name	Middle Initial	Last Name	
Mailing Address			
Primary Phone Number	Alternate Phone Number	Email	
Best way to reach you: <input type="checkbox"/> Mail <input type="checkbox"/> Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Other			
Representative Information			
Do you have a representative? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Do you have written authorization from representative? If so, please attach. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
First name		Last Name	
Mailing address			
Phone	Email		
Complaint Information <i>(attach additional pages and supporting documentation as needed)</i>			
1. Provide the name of the program you applied for (if known/applicable).			

Pre-Requisite Steps:

Visit our website

<https://www.usda.gov/oascr/filing-program-discrimination-complaint-usda-customer>

**Complete a Complaint form (shown to the left) and email this form to:
program.intake@usda.gov**



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What Happens Next? The Complaint Process

Step 1: Intake Stage: Obtain and sign a complaint form (as pictured to the left) or write a letter detailing the discrimination. Center for Civil Rights Enforcement determines whether the complaint meets the legal requirements to be accepted for further processing.

Step 2: Investigation Stage: After a complaint is accepted, the complaint is investigated fully.

Step 3: Adjudication Stage: CCRE reviews the investigation record and performs a legal and factual analysis of the complaint to determine whether discrimination occurred. The CCRE will then issue a Final Agency Decision which includes an analysis of the complaint. If discrimination is found to have occurred, the Office takes steps to rectify including settlement or other corrective actions.

Best Practices for Compliance

As an effort to bring awareness to the new Title VI provision, OASCR incorporated an agency wide training and an effort to increase awareness for all employees. This training will allow employees to become more familiar with Title VI, those that are protected under this the law, and how to enforce/ respond to a Title VI complaint.



The National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism

The Biden-Harris Administration National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism addresses key themes and threats according to four main pillars:

1. Increasing awareness and understanding of antisemitism, including its threat to America, and broaden appreciation of Jewish American heritage
2. Improving safety and security for Jewish communities
3. Reversing the normalization of antisemitism and countering antisemitic discrimination
4. Building cross-community solidarity and collective action against hate.



Inclusive Policies

USDA's Commitments include:

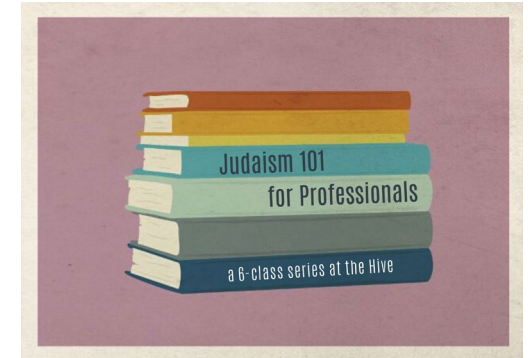
1. Providing educational opportunities for law enforcement agents of the U.S. Forest Service to learn how to identify and counter antisemitic, Islamophobic, and related forms of discrimination.

Inclusive Policies

2. Working with subject matter experts to develop and disseminate materials for rural universities on how to address specific incidents of antisemitism.

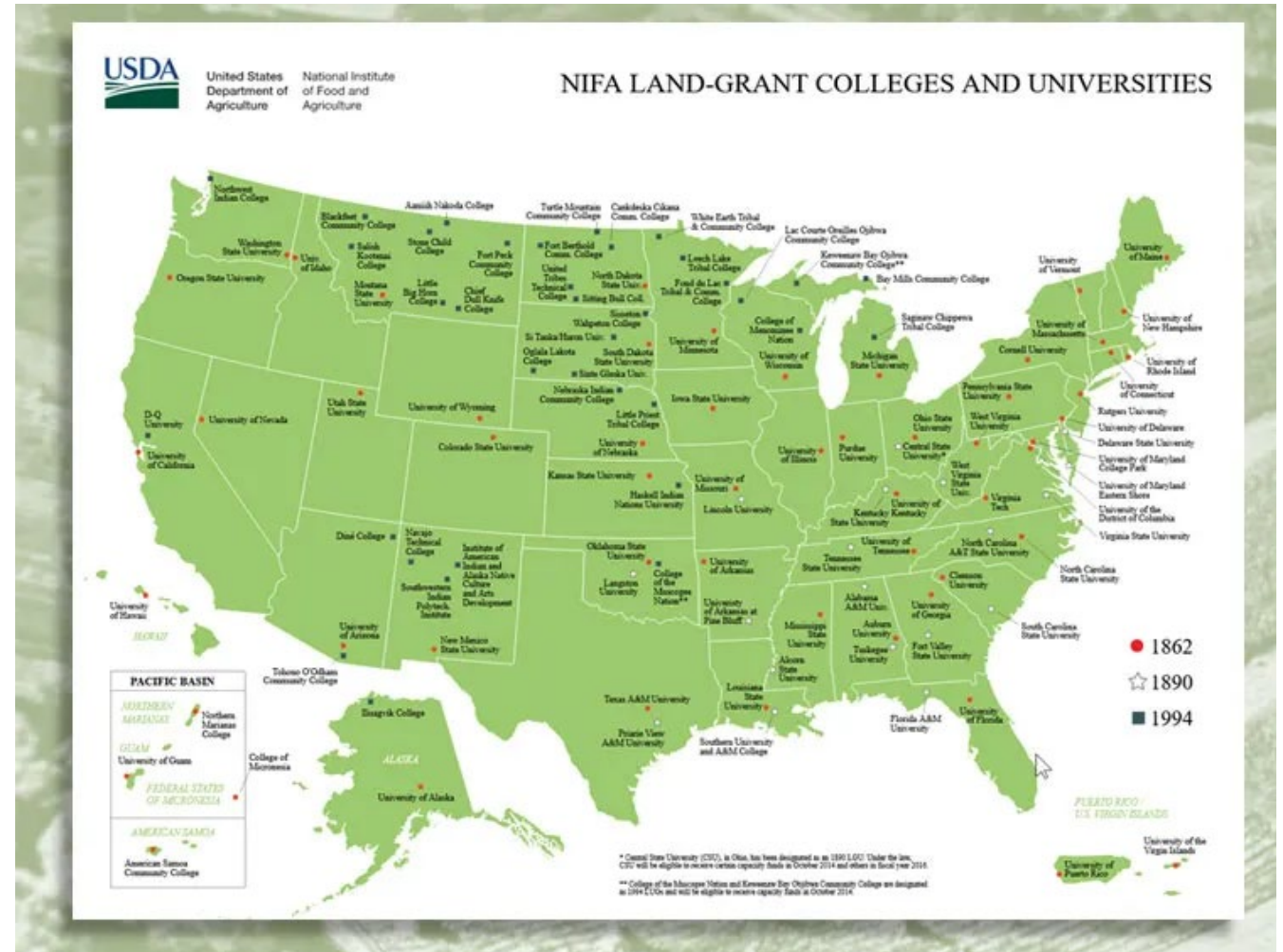
Examples:

- Creating educational opportunities on Judaism, Jewish culture and identity, and histories of antisemitism
- Ensuring that university calendars are inclusive, and accommodation policies are made known to faculty and students alike.



Inclusive Policies

3. Convening rural institutions of higher education and land-grant colleges to share promising practices to address antisemitism and other forms of hate and bias.



Inclusive Policies

4. Providing educational opportunities for 4-H, FFA, and other rural youth to learn how to identify and counter antisemitism and related for organizations of discrimination.

For more information, view the [4-H Youth page](#) or [FFA Homepage](#).





Inclusive Policies

5. Convening a dialogue with religious leaders from across rural America to assess the state of antisemitism and highlight effective strategies to counter antisemitism, centered on building solidarity across faiths.



Inclusive Policies

6. Working to ensure equal access to all USDA feeding programs for USDA customers with religious dietary needs by:

1. Increasing commercially available kosher and halal foods - expanding the number of kosher or halal-certified foods in USDA's food procurement.
2. Training schools on how to meet students' religious dietary needs.
3. Expanding outreach and technical assistance for kosher and halal meat processors.

Inclusive Policies

7. Ensuring that rural rental housing eligibility policies are inclusive of applicants from various religious backgrounds.

For example, continual review of Rural Development policies to in the Section 515 Multifamily Housing Program to ensure an inclusive environment.





Ideas for Creating an Inclusive Environment Strategies:

Diversity Training Throughout
the Workplace

Community Engagement
From All Cultures

Bring awareness to all
communities that anyone is
eligible for federal assistance
through gov. funded
programs with the protection
of Title VI

Culturally Relevant Practices
(focusing on what applicants
can grow based upon their
diet)

Culturally Directed Programs –
These programs will incentivize
different cultures to become
more involved with the USDA
(example: Kosher Farm)



Training Review

- Title VI Definition
 - Who's Protected
- Understanding Shared Ethnicity and Ethnic Characteristics
 - Examples of Discrimination
- Legal Obligations & How to File a Discrimination Complaint
 - Compliance & Inclusive Strategies



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Questions & Answers





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Resources

- [Fact Sheet: Know Your Rights Under Title VI \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov)
- [Filing a Program Discrimination Complaint as a USDA Customer | USDA](#)
- [USCODE-2010-title42-chap21-subchapV.pdf \(govinfo.gov\)](#)
(42 U.S.C. §2000d)