



## Comprehensive Civil Rights Plan, Policies & Procedures

### Rio Grande County Department of Social Services

1015 6<sup>th</sup> Street Del Norte, CO 81132

Voice: 719-657-3381

FAX: 719-657-2991

TTY users place calls through CO Relay Service: 1-800-659-2656

#### **Contact Person**

Civil Rights: Greg Parra, Rio Grande County DSS Interim Director

ADA: Greg Parra, Rio Grande County DSS Interim Director

This plan is available in the public reception area of the Department of Social Services, located at 1015 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Del Norte, CO 81132, and online at [www.riograndecounty.org](http://www.riograndecounty.org).

#### **Americans with Disabilities Act Advisory**

This information is available in accessible formats to individuals with disabilities and for information about equal access to services by contacting **Greg Parra** at the contact information above.

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## **PURPOSE:**

As a recipient of Federal Financial Assistance, Rio Grande County Department of Social Services is responsible for providing core services to assist and support Colorado's most vulnerable individuals and families so they can meet their basic needs and be treated with respect and dignity. Rio Grande County Department of Social Services has a civil rights plan, which includes policies and procedures, to ensure that all eligible individuals receive equal access to program services and information. Its programs are operated in a nondiscriminatory way, without regard to race, color, ethnic or national origin, ancestry, age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion, political beliefs, creed, or disability and public assistance status. In medical programs, sex includes sex stereotypes and gender identity under any health program or activity receiving federal funds.

The civil rights plan also serves as a source of information for Rio Grande County Department of Social Services staff and the general public. The plan sets out the Agency's civil rights administrative policies and procedures, identifying key contacts within the Agency and linking the reader to applicable state and federal civil rights laws and resources.

## **LEGAL AUTHORITIES:**

1. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (race, color, national origin)
2. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (disability)
3. Section 508 Amendment of the Rehabilitation act of 1973 (disability)
4. Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; state and local government services (disability)
5. Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (age)
6. Section 1557 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (added sex discrimination in health care programs)
7. Nondiscrimination Provisions of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 (Federal Block Grants)
  - Community Services Block Grant (race, color, national origin, sex) Remaining Block Grants (race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, religion)
  - Social Services Block Grant
  - Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant
  - Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness Block Grant
  - Preventive Health and Social Services Block Grant
  - Community Mental Health Services Block Grant
  - Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant
8. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (sex)
9. Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, religion)
10. Food Stamp Act of 1977 (As Amended Through P.L. 108-269, 2004)
11. Nondiscrimination Compliance Requirements in the Food Stamp Program, Food and Nutrition Service, US Department of Agriculture
12. Bilingual Requirements in the Food Stamp Program, Food and Nutrition Service, US Department of Agriculture

13. FNS Instruction 113-1, Civil Rights Compliance and Enforcement - Nutrition Programs and Activities, Food and Nutrition Service, US Department of Agriculture (2005)
14. Equal Opportunity for Religious Organizations in USDA Regulation
15. Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act (CADA)

**CIVIL RIGHTS CONTACT PERSON:**

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services designates **Greg Parra** to serve as the agency’s Civil Rights Contact/Agency point person on civil rights matters.

Contact Person: Greg Parra  
Telephone: 719-657-3381  
Email: [greg.parra@state.co.us](mailto:greg.parra@state.co.us)

As the designated contact person, Mr. Parra meets the minimum requirements of the County’s Civil Rights Contact person (10 CCR 2505-5 1.202.7.1.a) and, as such, shall fulfill the following duties:

1. Be impartial and independent.
  - a. The individual who had a complaint filed against them shall not be the individual conducting the investigation.
  - b. Conflict-of-interest processes can be leveraged if necessary (for instance, by working with a neighboring county to conduct the investigation and following 10 CCR 2505-5 1.101.24).
  - c. The attorney for the Rio Grande County Department of Social Services can also be used to conduct investigations as necessary when designated by the Civil Rights Contact, or upon the attorney’s own initiative when there is a conflict-of-interest involving the Civil Rights Contact.
2. Act as the central point of contact for applicants, members, individuals and the Department pertaining to the county’s Civil Rights Plan and federal and state civil rights requirements.
3. Maintain up-to-date knowledge on changes in member related civil rights laws and requirements and communicate and share this information with county staff on a regular basis.
4. Act as a first point-of-contact for applicant, member, and individual civil rights complaints. Contact information for Mr. Parra is provided above.
5. Post required Civil Rights Plan and State and County Nondiscrimination Statements in conspicuous locations at designated physical locations and online.
6. Manage the county’s non-discrimination investigation procedures, conduct investigations and address issues of civil rights non-compliance through individual and systemic actions and improvements.
7. Work with the county department to provide civil rights training and consulting as required.
8. Ensure that the county provides training on their own Civil Rights Plan and on any findings resulting from a civil rights investigation, including any necessary individualized staff training and feedback.

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY:**

**Rio Grande County Department of Social Services Policy for equal opportunity in service delivery:**

It is the policy of Rio Grande County Department of Social Services to make sure that program benefits and services are made available to everyone and provided to all eligible individuals without discrimination, in compliance with civil rights laws.

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services employees, services, programs, benefits and policies will not discriminate against applicants, clients or members of the public because of race, color, ethnic or national origin, ancestry, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, creed, religion, political beliefs, disability or public assistance status. "Sex" includes sex stereotypes and gender identity under any medical or health program receiving federal financial assistance, such as Medical Assistance, CHIP programs, health clinics, insurance companies and state health insurance exchanges. Rio Grande County Department of Social Services employees, programs and policies must also allow physical and program access for people with disabilities.

This civil rights policy covers Rio Grande County Department of Social Services' full range of services, programs and benefits, including but not limited to, access to information about services, eligibility determinations and intake, admission procedures and treatment. The policy applies to the agencies and providers receiving federal and state funds under contracts, licenses and other arrangements with Rio Grande County Department of Social Services. The Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act (CADA) also applies to the work of Rio Grande County Department of Social Services and the agencies carrying out the work of Rio Grande County Department of Social Services.

Some state laws provide greater protections than federal law. In these cases, Rio Grande County Department of Social Services will follow state law.

**Program accessibility Policy for People with Disabilities:**

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services and all of its services, programs and benefits are accessible to and usable by people with disabilities, including people with hearing loss, low vision and other sensory disabilities.

To avoid disability discrimination, Rio Grande County Department of Social Services will:

- Notify the public about the rights and procedures for people with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Designate and ADA Coordinator and maintain a complaint procedure.
- Make sure that its buildings are physically accessible for people with disabilities.
- Assist individuals with disabilities to apply and qualify for benefits based on their eligibility.
- Provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services, including accessible formats, to ensure effective communication with people with disabilities.
- Provide services, programs and benefits that are accessible to and usable by qualified people with disabilities.

**Physical access includes:**

- Convenient off-street parking designated specifically for people with disabilities.
- Curb cuts and ramps between parking areas and the Rio Grande County Department of Social Services buildings.

- Level access into the first floor of Rio Grande County Social Services buildings with elevator access to all other floors.

**Reasonable Modifications to Policies, Procedures or Practices:**

*Please note: pursuant to decisions by various district courts regarding the 2024 Final Rule implementing Section 1557, entitled Nondiscrimination in Health Programs and Activities, 89 Fed. Reg. 37,522 (May 6, 2024) (“2024 Final Rule”), certain provisions regarding gender identity are stayed nationwide. Other provisions are stayed or enjoined as indicated at [www.hhs.gov/1557](http://www.hhs.gov/1557).*

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services will make reasonable modifications to its policies, procedures or practices when necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability, unless Rio Grande County Department of Social Services can demonstrate that making the modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of the services, programs or benefits.

In accordance with Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act, this document serves as Rio Grande County Department of Social Services reasonable modification procedures designed to ensure that qualified individuals with disabilities may obtain reasonable modifications when appropriate. Qualified individuals with disabilities may, at any time, request that Rio Grande County Department of Social Services reasonably modify, change, except, or adjust a rule, policy, practice, or service when necessary so that Rio Grande County Department of Social Services does not unlawfully deny the individual equal access to our programs, activities, services, and other benefits.

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services reasonable modifications for qualified individuals with disabilities may include, but are not limited to: assisting an individual perform a task; allowing an individual to perform a task with assistance, or in another way, time, or place; and modifying non-essential program requirements.

Reasonable modifications that are provided to an individual when they first contact Rio Grande County Department of Social Services should again be made available to that individual if the individual returns to Rio Grande County Department of Social Services, unless the individual confirms that they no longer require the same modification.

Contact information for **Greg Parra**, the staff member(s) responsible for coordinating the reasonable modification procedures set forth in this document is:

Greg Parra, Interim Director, Rio Grande County Department of Social Services  
1015 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Del Norte, CO 81132  
719-657-3381 (voice)  
[Greg.parra@state.co.us](mailto:Greg.parra@state.co.us)

Requests for Reasonable Modifications:

If an individual affirmatively requests a reasonable modification to access our programs, activities, services, or other benefits, staff will provide the modification to the individual if the requested modification does not result in a fundamental alteration to our program or activity.

Staff will contact **Greg Parra** using the contact information provided above in a timely manner to help determine whether Rio Grande County Department of Social Services can provide the requested reasonable modification. Staff will document the request in the individual's record.

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services accepts written and verbal requests for reasonable modifications. Individuals are not required to use the term "reasonable modification" when making a request. The individual's modification request must describe the needed modification and explain how it is related to their disability unless these things are apparent or otherwise known.

The decision to provide a specific reasonable modification to a qualified individual with a disability shall be made on a case-by-case basis in a timely manner after evaluating the relevant facts.

When Rio Grande County Department of Social Services receives a reasonable modification request, Rio Grande County Department of Social Services will immediately provide the requested modification, if feasible. If Rio Grande County Department of Social Services cannot provide the requested reasonable modification immediately upon request, and if Rio Grande County Department of Social Services receives the request in advance of the individual's need for the modification, Rio Grande County Department of Social Services will acknowledge receipt of the request in writing no later than 5 business days from receipt of the request.

When Rio Grande County Department of Social Services receives a reasonable modification request, including when Rio Grande County Department of Social Services receives the request at the point of service, Rio Grande County Department of Social Services will initiate an interactive, good faith dialogue with the requestor to assess the request. In most cases the individual with a disability will know best what type of modification will meet their needs. When the disability and type of modification needed are obvious, there is no need to have that dialogue.

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services may ask for documentation when the disability or need for modification is not obvious. If the disability is visually apparent or otherwise known, and if the requested modification does not appear related to the disability, Rio Grande County Department of Social Services may request additional information from the individual necessary to evaluate the disability-related need for the modification.

If neither the disability nor the relationship between the disability and the requested modification is clear, Rio Grande County Department of Social Services may ask the individual for proof of both. Rio Grande County Department of Social Services will review and consider, as appropriate, documentation from an individual's doctor or other medical professional, a peer support group, a non-medical service agency, or a reliable third party who is in a position to know about the individual's disability and need for the requested modification.

When additional information is necessary, Rio Grande County Department of Social Services will notify the requestor about what information is needed and offer a reasonable time for the requester to provide the information to us. If, after a reasonable period of time, the requestor fails to provide the necessary information, the decision about the request will be based upon the information available to Rio Grande County Department of Social Services. If necessary, Rio Grande County Department of Social Services will inform the requestor of the opportunity to submit another modification request with more information.

If a Rio Grande County Department of Social Services staff member is unable to immediately provide an individual with a disability their requested reasonable modification, the staff member will so advise the individual and forward the request to **Greg Parra** to evaluate whether the requested modification will fundamentally alter the nature of the program, activity, service, or other benefit at issue. If the requested modification would result in a fundamental alteration, we will provide a written explanation of how the requested modification will alter the program, activity, or service at issue. We will also decide if there is another modification that can be provided that would not result in a fundamental alteration.

For reasonable modification requests that Rio Grande County Department of Social Services staff members cannot provide immediately, including at the point of service, barring extenuating circumstances, we will make a final decision regarding our provision of the modification within 10 business days of the request, and we will communicate the decision via telephone or text, and in writing, to the requestor.

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services staff will document the outcome of our decision to grant or deny the individual the requested modification in the individual's record.

#### Observable Likely Need for Reasonable Modifications:

If an individual's disability is apparent or otherwise known, Rio Grande County Department of Social Services staff should ask the individual if they need a reasonable modification to have meaningful access to our programs, activities, services, and other benefits, and staff will initiate the interactive evaluation process described in Section 1 above.

#### Staff Training:

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services will ensure that all relevant staff are trained on the procedures for granting reasonable modifications as set forth in this document.

#### **Effective Communication and Auxiliary Aids and Services:**

*Please note: pursuant to decisions by various district courts regarding the 2024 Final Rule implementing Section 1557, entitled Nondiscrimination in Health Programs and Activities, 89 Fed. Reg. 37,522 (May 6, 2024) ("2024 Final Rule"), certain provisions regarding gender identity are stayed nationwide. Other provisions are stayed or enjoined as indicated at [www.hhs.gov/1557](http://www.hhs.gov/1557).*

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services will take appropriate steps to ensure that communications with individuals with disabilities, including persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, have low vision, or who have other sensory or manual disabilities, are as effective as communications with others. The procedures outlined below are intended to ensure Rio Grande County Department of Social Services staff effectively communicate with individuals (including companions with disabilities) regarding their medical conditions, treatment, and participation or potential participation in agency programs, activities, services, and other benefits in the same way as people without disabilities.

Auxiliary aids and services include qualified readers, writers and interpreters who convey information effectively, accurately and impartially using any necessary specialized vocabulary.



To determine what types of auxiliary aids or services are necessary, Rio Grande County Department of Social Services will give primary consideration to the requests of people requesting the auxiliary aid or services unless it would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program or benefit or cause an undue administrative or financial burden. If this happens, Rio Grande County Department of Social Services will find another equally effective auxiliary aid or service.

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services staff may obtain auxiliary aids and services by request to the Civil Rights Contact. The Civil Rights Contact (or designee) is also responsible for working with people who file complaints to make appropriate arrangements.

These procedures also apply to, among other types of communication, verbal or written communication of important information, including information contained in documents such as waivers of rights, consent to treatment forms, financial and insurance benefits forms, etc. Rio Grande County Department of Social Services shall furnish appropriate auxiliary aids and services, where they are necessary, to allow individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from our programs, activities, services, and other benefits. When auxiliary aids and services are necessary for an equal opportunity to participate and benefit, they will be provided in a timely manner without cost to the individual(s) being served. Auxiliary aids and services include, but are not limited to, qualified interpreters, large print materials, acquisition or modification of equipment or devices, or other similar services or actions.

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services is not required to take any action that would result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of the health program and activity or undue financial and administrative burdens.

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services shall take appropriate steps to ensure that staff who may have direct contact with individuals with disabilities effectively communicate with individuals with disabilities, including through the effective use of interpreters and other appropriate auxiliary aids or services.

Contact information for **Greg Parra** the staff member(s) responsible for coordinating the effective communication procedures set forth in this document is:

Greg Parra, Interim Director, Rio Grande County Department of Social Services  
1015 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Del Norte, CO 81132  
719-657-3381 (voice)  
[Greg.parra@state.co.us](mailto:Greg.parra@state.co.us)

#### Identification and Assessment of Need:

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services staff members must identify individuals with disabilities who need appropriate auxiliary aids and services to communicate with individuals with disabilities effectively. Rio Grande County Department of Social Services staff may identify individuals with disabilities through observation, inquiries to the individuals, and/or by consulting an individual's existing medical record to see whether it indicates the individual has a disability and needs auxiliary aids or services

to ensure effective communication. Individuals with disabilities may self-identify their need for effective communication via appropriate auxiliary aids and services. Staff will consult with the individual to determine what auxiliary aids and services may be necessary to communicate with them effectively.

Staff will document the individual's preferred auxiliary aid or service in the individual's record, including any auxiliary aids and services necessary to communicate with companions, and such documentation will identify the individual's or their companion's preferred auxiliary aids and services, the actual aids and services provided if different from preferred aids and services.

Provision of Auxiliary Aids and Services:

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services shall provide, free of charge, the appropriate auxiliary aids or services when necessary to afford individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to enjoy the program, activities, services, and other benefits.

For Persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing:

To ensure effective communication with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing Rio Grande County Department of Social Services has a contract with an interpreter service to ensure that communications with individuals with disabilities are as effective as communications with others.

For persons who are deaf/hard of hearing and who use sign language as their primary means of communication, when an interpreter is necessary to provide an equal opportunity to participate in or enjoy our program, activities, services, and other benefits, Rio Grande County Department of Social Services will provide one. Rio Grande County Department of Social Services utilizes an interpreter service, which provides qualified interpreters who, via a video remote interpreting service (VRI) or an on-site appearance, can interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially, both receptively and expressively, using any necessary specialized vocabulary.

The contact information for the interpreter service provider(s) is:

LanguageLine Solutions:

(800) 752-6096

[www.language.com](http://www.language.com)

TTY users place calls through CO Relay Service: 1-800-659-2656

Staff will document the use of the interpreter service used to effectively communicate with the individual in the individual's record. If the individual returns, staff will not require the individual to repeat the request or recall the auxiliary aid and/or service previously utilized. Instead, staff will confirm with the individual whether the auxiliary aid and/or services previously provided are still needed.

If an individual with a disability requires an auxiliary aid or service not listed above, staff will **Greg Parra** to arrange for the provision of the necessary auxiliary aid or service.

Any auxiliary aids or services must be provided in accessible formats, in a timely manner, and in such a way as to protect the privacy and independence of the individual with a disability. Staff will document the use of the appropriate auxiliary aids and services used to effectively communicate with the individual in the individual's record.

Some persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may prefer or request to use an adult that accompanies them to communicate with Rio Grande County Department of Social Services. Rio Grande County Department of Social Services may rely upon the adult that accompanies the individuals with a disability to communicate with the individual only after we have effectively communicated to the individual that we are willing to provide them appropriate auxiliary aids and services, including an interpreter, free of charge. Additionally, Rio Grande County Department of Social Services will not rely on an adult accompanying an individual with a disability to interpret or facilitate communication except:

- (a) In an emergency involving an imminent threat to the safety or welfare of an individual or the public where there is no interpreter available (for example, directly following a natural disaster such as an earthquake); or
- (b) Where the individual with a disability specifically requests that the accompanying adult interpret or facilitate communication, the accompanying adult agrees to provide such assistance, and reliance on that adult for such assistance is appropriate under the circumstances.

Staff will document that we permitted an accompanying adult to effectively communicate with the individual in the individual's record. Auxiliary aids and/or service that are provided to an individual when they first contact Rio Grande County Department of Social Services should again be made available to that individual if the individual returns to Rio Grande County Department of Social Services, unless the individual confirms that they no longer require the auxiliary aid and/or service.

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services will not rely on a minor child to interpret or facilitate communication, except in an emergency involving an imminent threat to the safety or welfare of an individual or the public where there is no interpreter available (for example, directly following a serious car accident where, due to the nature of the injuries sustained by an individual with a disability, critical care is a priority). Staff will document the use of a minor child to effectively communicate with the individual in the individual's record.

If it would be inappropriate to rely on the adult accompanying an individual with a disability for any of these reasons, staff will arrange alternative auxiliary aids and services, including interpreter services, free of charge.

#### For Persons Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision:

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services staff will ask for the individual's preferred communication method(s).

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services staff will assist individuals who are blind or have low vision fill out forms when necessary to afford those individuals an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from our programs, activities, services, and other benefits.

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services staff will provide written documents and materials to an individual who is blind or has low vision in a timely manner in an appropriate alternate format, including converting written documents, such as materials concerning treatment, benefits, services, waivers of rights, and consent to treatment forms, to large print, Braille, audio recordings, and/or to an electronic format,

when necessary to afford persons an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from our programs, activities, services, and other benefits unless it would be a fundamental alteration or undue burden. These alternately formatted documents may be obtained by contacting **Greg Parra**.

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services staff are available to communicate the information contained in important written documents, including materials concerning treatment, benefits, services, waivers of rights, and consent to treatment forms by reading aloud and explaining these forms to persons who are blind or have low vision when necessary to ensure effective communication.

Staff will document the alternate format used to effectively communicate with the individual in the individual's record. Auxiliary aid and/or service that are provided to an individual when they first contact Rio Grande County Department of Social Services should again be made available to that individual if the individual returns to Rio Grande County Department of Social Services, unless the individual confirms that they no longer require the auxiliary aid and/or service.

For Persons with Speech Disabilities:

To ensure an individual with speech impairments or disabilities has an equal opportunity to participate in our program, activities, services, and other benefits, staff will confirm which auxiliary aids and services the individual prefers and then provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services, if available, to the individual in a timely manner.

Staff will document the alternate format used to effectively communicate with the individual in the individual's record.

Auxiliary aid and/or service that are provided to an individual when they first contact Rio Grande County Department of Social Services should again be made available to that individual if the individual returns to Rio Grande County Department of Social Services, unless the individual confirms that they no longer require the auxiliary aid and/or service.

For Persons With Other Types of Disabilities:

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services staff will provide each individual with a disability with necessary auxiliary aids and services sufficient to afford an equal opportunity to participate in our programs, activities, services, and other benefits. Staff will give primary consideration to the request of the individual with a disability in determining which auxiliary aids and services to provide and will provide the necessary auxiliary aids and services to the individual in a timely manner.

If an individual with a disability requires an auxiliary aid or service that is not readily available, staff shall contact **Greg Parra** to arrange for the timely provision of the necessary auxiliary aid or service. Staff will document the auxiliary aids and services used to effectively communicate with the individual in the individual's record. Auxiliary aid and/or service that are provided to an individual when they first contact Rio Grande County Department of Social Services should again be made available to that individual if the individual returns to Rio Grande County Department of Social Services, unless the individual confirms that they no longer require the auxiliary aid and/or service.

### **Training on County Civil Rights Plan:**

All Rio Grande County Department of Social Services staff shall receive training regarding the County Civil Rights Plan as required per 10 CCR 1505-5 1.020.7.1.a. Such training shall be offered annually to all county staff that have contact with applicants and members or county staff who supervise those who have direct contact with applicants/members. 100% of all county staff shall complete the annual training, with documentation on completions maintained by the county. To demonstrate compliance, the county shall provide, to HCPF, OCR, or any other enforcing agency, upon request, records of the training given the county staff and the supporting documentation.

### **Contractors, Vendor and Partner Compliance with Civil Rights Provisions:**

The County will assure that any contractors, vendors, partners or other parties that do business on behalf of the county, paid using federal and state medical assistance funds, or who have contacts with applicants or members comply with state and federal civil rights laws. The County will notify HCPF, OCR, or any other enforcing agency, if alerted to discriminatory activity within three (3) calendar days.

### **COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCEDURE:**

You have the right to equal access to services, if you are an applicant, client or member of the public trying to gain access to Social services program information or benefits. Rio Grande County Department of Social Services has a civil rights complaint procedure that provides prompt and thorough resolution of civil rights complaints.

Civil rights complaints allege discrimination. You have a right to file a civil rights complaint if you believe you have been discriminated against because of your race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, creed, religion, political beliefs, disability or public assistance status. Sex includes sex stereotypes and gender identity discrimination that occurs in medical or health programs, insurance companies and state health insurance exchanges.

It is against the law for anyone who works for or contracts with Rio Grande County Department of Social Services to retaliate against a person who files a complaint or who cooperates in the investigation of a civil rights complaint.

To file a complaint, ask for the Agency's equal opportunity policy, complaint resolution procedure and complaint form. Use the contact information below to file a complaint. You can also review the law and regulations that outlaw discrimination in the Civil Rights Contact's office.

Greg Parra, Interim Director, Rio Grande County Department of Social Services  
1015 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Del Norte, CO 81132  
719-657-3381 (voice)  
[Greg.parra@state.co.us](mailto:Greg.parra@state.co.us)

If the complaint is against the civil rights contact person, a conflict of interest process will be leveraged if necessary.

**Arrangements for People with Disabilities:**

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services will make appropriate arrangements to ensure the people with disabilities are provided reasonable modifications or effective communications, if needed, to participate in the complaint process. Reasonable modifications or effective communications include, but are not limited to, providing interpreters for people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, providing taped cassettes and accessible formats for people who are blind or have low vision, providing language services for individuals whose first language is not English, and assuring a physically accessible location for complaint proceedings.

**Retaliation and Coercion Strictly Prohibited:**

No applicant, member, or individual shall be retaliated against for requesting access to or assistance from the county. No applicant, member, or individual shall be retaliated against based upon the submission of a Civil Rights or discrimination complaint, per federal and state law.

**Complaint Review Procedure:**

- Civil rights complaints must be submitted to the Civil Rights Contact within 180 days of the date the alleged discrimination occurred.
- A complaint must be in writing and contain the name and address of the person filing it. Other important contact information is telephone number, relay number and email address. The complaint must state the problem or action alleged and the relief desired. If you need assistance with your complaint, the Civil Rights Contact will help you.
- The agency must conduct an investigation of the complaint. The investigation may be formal or informal, but it must be thorough and timely.
  - Informal Reviews occur may be appropriate where the complaint does not directly affect a member's eligibility or benefits.
    - All informal reviews shall be completed within sixty (60) calendar days of receipt of the complaint.
  - Formal reviews are reserved for complaints that may affect the member or applicant's eligibility, such as a complaint that alleges a county did not allow them to apply because of their protected status.
    - All formal reviews must be completed within one hundred twenty (120) calendar days of receipt of the complaint.
    - The member or applicant has the discretion to determine whether they would like an informal or formal review of the complaint.
    - If the member or applicant does not specify, the county shall treat that investigation as a formal review.
- The member or applicant shall submit relevant information and evidence pertaining to the complaint to the Civil Rights Contact (or designee). Others who have an interest in the complaint may also submit relevant evidence about the complaint to the Civil Rights Contact (or designee).
- Within the time-frames identified above, the County agency will issue a written decision on the complaint, to the complainant and the state department.
- The County will maintain the complaint records and files for three (3) years. Rio Grande County Department of Social Services will track all complaints, outcomes and business practices changes instituted as a result of complaints. Complaints about program rules are not civil rights complaints and will be resolved through a different complaint process.

- The person filing the complaint may appeal the decision by writing to the County Commissioners within fifteen (15) days of receiving the written decision.
  - The County Commissioners will issue a written decision to the complainant and the state department, in response to the appeal, no later than 15 days after the appeal is filed.
  - This decision is final.
  - This appeal process is not the same as filing a fair hearings appeal through the CDHS or HCPF appeals processes. The person filing the complaint must be informed that he/she can file a discrimination report directly with the US Department of Health and Social Services Office for Civil Rights or the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) for the SNAP Program
- The County will track all investigations, both informal reviews and formal investigations, using a spreadsheet. The County will implement business process changes and/or trainings to address complaints received, whether founded or not on a semi-annual basis unless the severity of the situation warrants sooner. The spreadsheet along with business process changes and/or trainings will be submitted to Health Care Policy and Financing on a minimum a biannual basis, January 31 and July 31 or each year.
- If a complaint of discrimination or Civil Rights violations is investigated by the county and the investigation finds that the complaint is founded, HCPF will require the county to take all necessary steps to correct the violation. HCPF must be provided a detailed description of actions taken and modifications made within three (3) calendar days from the completion of the investigation. Upon receipt of the county's investigation findings and description of its corrective action, HCPF will work with the county on any additional required steps.
- If a complaint is investigated by the county and the investigation finds that the complaint is not founded, documentation of the complaint and the investigation shall be maintained in the county's files and included on the aforementioned spreadsheet along with any business process changes or trainings implemented by the county in response to the investigation.

**To file a complaint directly with the US Department of Health and Human Services:**

The US Department of Health and Social Services Office for Civil Rights prohibits discrimination in its programs because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex or religion. Sex includes sex stereotypes and gender identity discrimination that occurs in medical or health programs and clinics receiving federal financial assistance; these are programs such as Medicaid, CHIP programs, insurance companies and state health insurance exchanges under Title I of the Affordable Care Act. Contact the federal agency directly through their online portal at <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/>, by mail to: Centralized Case Management Operations; US Department of Health and Social Services; 200 Independence Ave, SW; Room 509F HH Bldg.; Washington, DC 20201 or via email at [OCRComplaint@hhs.gov](mailto:OCRComplaint@hhs.gov)

**To file a complaint directly with USDA:**

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and US Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, religious creed, disability, age, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA. Persons who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Services at 800-

877-8339 or 800-845-6136 (Spanish). Additionally program information may be made in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#) (AD-3207) found online at [USDA Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, send an email to [CR-Info@usda.gov](mailto:CR-Info@usda.gov) or call 866-632-9992. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may use the Federal Relay Service 800-877-8339 or 800-845-6136 (Spanish). The form should be submitted by one of the following methods:

1. Mail to USDA; Director, Center for Civil Rights Enforcement; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington DC 20250-9410
2. Fax to 202-690-7442
3. Email to [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

**To file a complaint directly with the State of Colorado:**

The person filing the complaint must also be informed of the right to file a discrimination complaint directly to the State of Colorado. Complaints can be made through any of the following channels:

Utilize the Department’s Civil Rights complaint processes by submitting the [Discrimination Complaint Form](#) or by contacting [hcpf504ada@state.co.us](mailto:hcpf504ada@state.co.us).

Utilize the Colorado Civil Rights Division complaint process by completing [the CaseConnect Civil Rights Form](#) or contacting [dora\\_ccrd@state.co.us](mailto:dora_ccrd@state.co.us). The Colorado Civil Rights Division (CCRD) is the State of Colorado’s authority for the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act (CADA)

Contact the Denver branch of the US Department of Health and Social Services Office of Civil Rights at 1961 Stout Street, Room 08-148; Denver CO 80294-3538; 200-368-1019 (voice); 202-619-3818 (fax); 800-537-7697 (TDD); [ocrmail@hhs.gov](mailto:ocrmail@hhs.gov) (email).

**Appeal Process:**

You have the right to appeal the outcome of the investigation if you are not satisfied with the decision. To appeal, you must send a written request to review the outcome of the investigation within 15 days of receiving the written decision. Be brief and state why you disagree with the decision, plus any additional information that may apply. Send your request to the attention of the County Commissioners, 925 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Del Norte, CO 81132. The County Commissioner will review the information and render a decision within 15 days which will be final. This appeal process is not the same as filing a fair hearings appeal through the CDHS or HCPF appeals processes.

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services is not an enforcement agency. It can investigate situations where policies prohibiting discrimination may have been violated. You are always free to file a discrimination complaint with other appropriate agencies, including enforcement agencies.



**Assistance in filing your Complaint:**

If you have questions or need help to file your complaint, the Civil Rights Contact can assist.

**Rio Grande County Department of Social Services Civil Rights Form:**

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services has developed a form to assist complainants in filing a comprehensive complaint. It is available upon request.

**CIVIL RIGHTS PLAN ADMINISTRATION:**

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services will administer its Civil Rights Plan by doing the following:

- Providing its comprehensive civil rights plan in the Agency reception area. The plan is available to applicants, clients, members of the public, employees, volunteers and contractors.
- Posting the comprehensive civil rights plan on the Agency’s website.
- Review the comprehensive civil rights plan annually with all staff.
- Conduct annual SNAP civil rights training for appropriate staff.