



## **CITY OF VALPARAISO HUMAN RIGHTS ORDINANCE**

### *Frequently Asked Questions*

#### **What is the Human Rights Ordinance (HRO)?**

- It is a local civil rights law that offers all of Valparaiso's citizens a local and accessible option for pursuing a remedy should they experience discrimination where they shop, eat, work, learn or reside.

#### **Why was the HRO enacted?**

- The City of Valparaiso strives to maintain and encourage a civic environment that is welcoming and inclusive to all people. Valparaiso stands for the principles of freedom and equal opportunity. The HRO established a meaningful process that offers the opportunity for the City to investigate inappropriate acts and to foster conversation, understanding and reconciliation between parties.

#### **How did the HRO become enacted?**

- The Human Relations Council (HRC) was established in 2011 to advise the mayor on issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. The HRC spearheaded the efforts to enact the HRO and voted to recommend passage of the HRO to the Valparaiso City Council. The Council passed the HRO which the mayor signed into law on May 25, 2016. There is further information on the HRC on the City website: <https://www.ci.valparaiso.in.us/1310/Human-Relations-Council>

#### **How is the HRO enforced?**

- The Valparaiso City Council established the Investigation and Reconciliation Committee (IRC) to ensure that discrimination claims are investigated and decided upon in a timely manner. The IRC consists of five (5) Valparaiso residents who decide each case by a majority decision.

#### **How do you file a complaint?**

- A complaint may be filed at no cost with the City's Clerk - Treasurer Office. The complaint must be filed within sixty (60) days of the alleged HRO violation.



Copies of the complaint are available at the Clerk - Treasurer Office at 166 Lincolnway or online at the City website: <https://www.ci.valparaiso.in.us/DocumentCenter/view/5735>

**What are the potential outcomes for a case filed under the HRO?**

- For each properly filed complaint, the IRC Committee meets and decides each case by a majority decision. The Ordinance seeks to resolve disputes between parties by offering mediation services. The IRC may also assess fines up to \$500 against the offending party.

**Are there any exceptions to the protections of the HRO?**

- Yes, there are certain exceptions which the protections of the HRO do not apply to. For example, there are religious exceptions for churches and associations organized for primarily religious purposes. There are also exceptions for age discrimination in regards to housing that is established and operated primarily for senior citizens.

**Where can I find further information about the HRO?**

- The Human Rights Ordinance is available in its entirety on the City of Valparaiso website: <https://www.ci.valparaiso.in.us/DocumentCenter/view/5505>