

including managers, often are not knowledgeable on how to properly communicate with individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, or have low vision. A State government also pointed out that in *Camarillo v. Carrols Corp.*, 518 F.3d 153, 157 (2d Cir. 2008) (per curiam), the Second Circuit held that a public accommodation's failure to provide employee training on effective communication with individuals with disabilities can constitute a violation of title III, specifically 42 U.S.C. 12182(b)(2)(A)(iii).

The final rule retains the operational requirements proposed in the NPRM in renumbered § 36.303(g)(9) and adds the requirement that if a movie theater is relying on open movie captioning to meet the requirements of paragraph (g)(3), it must also ensure that there is an employee available at the theater who knows how to turn on the captions. The Department declines to add a specific requirement that all personnel be trained, as it believes that it is sufficient if a movie theater has at least one knowledgeable employee on location at all times to ensure that the service is available and provided without interruption. While the Department agrees that it would be a good idea for movie theaters to implement reasonable staff training programs and periodic refresher courses, the Department declines to take these recommendations and has not included in the final rule specific logistical requirements concerning movie theater staff training.

The Department has decided to retain in the final rule the language in proposed § 36.303(g)(6)(iii) requiring movie theater staff to effectively communicate with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, or blind or have low vision, regarding the uses of, and potential problems with, the captioning and audio description devices. The Department notes, however, that communicating effectively with patrons about the availability of captioning at a movie theater would not require a movie theater to hire a sign language interpreter. Communication with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing about the availability of these services or how to use the equipment involves a short and relatively simple exchange and therefore can easily be provided through signage, instructional guides, or written notes.

Final § 36.303(g)(9) requires that whenever a public accommodation provides captioning and audio description in a movie theater auditorium exhibiting digital movies on or after January 17, 2017, at least one theater employee must be available to assist patrons seeking or using the captioning or audio description equipment. The employee must be able to quickly locate and activate the necessary equipment; operate and address problems with the equipment prior to and during the movie; turn on the open movie captions if the movie theater is relying on open movie

captions to meet its effective communication requirements; and communicate effectively with individuals with disabilities about how to use, operate, and resolve problems with the equipment.

This provision applies to movie theaters once they provide captioning and audio description for digital movies on or after the effective date of the rule, January 17, 2017. Thus, movie theaters that already show digital movies with closed movie captions and audio description must comply with this provision as soon as the rule takes effect.

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Section 36.303(g)(10) in the final rule provides that “[t]his section does not require the use of open movie captioning as a means of compliance with paragraph (g), even if providing closed movie captioning for digital movies would be an undue burden.” The NPRM proposed similar language at § 36.303(g)(2)(ii). See discussion of comments on final § 36.303(g)(6), *supra*.

[AG Order 3779–2016, 81 FR 87379, Dec. 2, 2016]

PART 37—PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATING THE INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS OR CHARGES OF EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION BASED ON DISABILITY SUBJECT TO THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT AND SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973

Sec.

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AUTHORITY: 5 U.S.C. 301; 28 U.S.C. 509, 510; 29 U.S.C. 794 (d); 42 U.S.C. 12117(b); 28 CFR 0.50(1).

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SOURCE: Order No. 1899–94, 59 FR 39904, 39908, Aug. 4, 1994, unless otherwise noted.

§ 37.1 Purpose and application.

(a) This part establishes the procedures to be followed by the Federal agencies responsible for processing and resolving complaints or charges of employment discrimination filed against recipients of Federal financial assistance when jurisdiction exists under both section 504 and title I.

(b) This part also repeats the provisions established by 28 CFR 35.171 for determining which Federal agency shall process and resolve complaints or charges of employment discrimination:

(1) That fall within the overlapping jurisdiction of titles I and II (but are not covered by section 504); and

(2) That are covered by title II, but not title I (whether or not they are also covered by section 504).

(c) This part also describes the procedures to be followed when a complaint or charge arising solely under section 504 or title I is filed with a section 504 agency or the EEOC.

(d) This part does not apply to complaints or charges against Federal contractors under section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act.

(e) This part does not create rights in any person or confer agency jurisdiction not created or conferred by the ADA or section 504 over any complaint or charge.

§ 37.2 Definitions.

As used in this part, the term:

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 or *ADA* means the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Pub. L. 101–336, 104 Stat. 327, 42 U.S.C. 12101–12213 and 47 U.S.C. 225 and 611).

Assistant Attorney General refers to the Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division, United States Department of Justice, or his or her designee.

Chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission refers to the Chairman of the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, or his or her designee.

Civil Rights Division means the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice.

Designated agency means any one of the eight agencies designated under

§ 35.190 of 28 CFR part 35 (the Department's title II regulation) to implement and enforce title II of the ADA with respect to the functional areas within their jurisdiction.

Dual-filed complaint or charge means a complaint or charge of employment discrimination that:

(1) Arises under both section 504 and title I;

(2) Has been filed with both a section 504 agency that has jurisdiction under section 504 and with the EEOC, which has jurisdiction under title I; and

(3) Alleges the same facts and raises the same issues in both filings.

Due weight shall mean, with respect to the weight a section 504 agency or the EEOC shall give to the other agency's findings and conclusions, such full and careful consideration as is appropriate, taking into account such factors as:

(1) The extent to which the underlying investigation is complete and the evidence is supportive of the findings and conclusions;

(2) The nature and results of any subsequent proceedings;

(3) The extent to which the findings, conclusions and any actions taken:

(i) Under title I are consistent with the effective enforcement of section 504; or

(ii) Under section 504 are consistent with the effective enforcement of title I; and

(4) The section 504 agency's responsibilities under section 504 or the EEOC's responsibilities under title I.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or *EEOC* refers to the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and, when appropriate, to any of its headquarters, district, area, local, or field offices.

Federal financial assistance shall have the meaning, with respect to each section 504 agency, as defined in such agency's regulations implementing section 504 for Federally-assisted programs.

Program or activity shall have the meaning defined in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Pub. L. 93–112, 87 Stat. 394, 29 U.S.C. 794), as amended.

Public entity means:

(1) Any State or local government;

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(2) Any department, agency, special purpose district, or other instrumentality of a State or States or local government; and

(3) The National Railroad Passenger Corporation, and any commuter authority (as defined in section 103(8) of the Rail Passenger Service Act, 45 U.S.C. 502(8)).

Recipient means any State, political subdivision of any State, or instrumentality of any State or political subdivision, any public or private agency, institution, organization, or other entity, or any individual, in any State, to whom Federal financial assistance is extended, directly or through another recipient, for any program, including any successor, assignee, or transferee thereof, but such term does not include any ultimate beneficiary under such program.

Section 504 means section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Pub. L. 93-112, 87 Stat. 394, 29 U.S.C. 794), as amended.

Section 504 agency means any Federal department or agency that extends Federal financial assistance to programs or activities of recipients.

Title I means title I of the ADA.

Title II means subtitle A of title II of the ADA.

§ 37.3 Exchange of information.

The EEOC, section 504 agencies, and designated agencies shall share any information relating to the employment policies and practices of a respondent that may assist each agency in carrying out its responsibilities, to the extent permissible by law. Such information shall include, but is not limited to, complaints, charges, investigative files, compliance review reports and files, affirmative action programs, and annual employment reports.

§ 37.4 Confidentiality.

(a) When a section 504 agency or a designated agency receives information obtained by the EEOC, such agency shall observe the confidentiality requirements of section 706(b) and section 709(e) of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2000e-5(b) and 2000e-8(e)), as incorporated by section 107(a) of the ADA, to the same extent as these provisions would bind the

EEOC, except when the agency receives the same information from a source independent of the EEOC. Agency questions concerning the confidentiality requirements of title I shall be directed to the Associate Legal Counsel for Legal Services, Office of Legal Counsel, the EEOC.

(b) When the EEOC receives information from a section 504 or a designated agency, the EEOC shall observe any confidentiality requirements applicable to that information.

§ 37.5 Date of receipt.

A complaint or charge of employment discrimination is deemed to be filed, for purposes of determining timeliness, on the date the complaint or charge is first received by a Federal agency with section 504 or ADA jurisdiction, regardless of whether it is subsequently transferred to another agency for processing.

§ 37.6 Processing of complaints of employment discrimination filed with an agency other than the EEOC.

(a) *Agency determination of jurisdiction.* Upon receipt of a complaint of employment discrimination, an agency other than the EEOC shall:

(1) Determine whether it has jurisdiction over the complaint under section 504 or under title II of the ADA; and

(2) Determine whether the EEOC may have jurisdiction over the complaint under title I of the ADA.

(b) *Referral to the Civil Rights Division.* If the agency determines that it does not have jurisdiction under section 504 or title II, and determines that the EEOC does not have jurisdiction under title I, the agency shall promptly refer the complaint to the Civil Rights Division. The Civil Rights Division shall determine if another Federal agency may have jurisdiction over the complaint under section 504 or title II, and, if so, shall promptly refer the complaint to a section 504 or a designated agency with jurisdiction over the complaint.

(c) *Referral to the EEOC—(1) Referral by an agency without jurisdiction.* If an agency determines that it does not have jurisdiction over a complaint of

employment discrimination under either section 504 or title II and determines that the EEOC may have jurisdiction under title I, the agency shall promptly refer the complaint to the EEOC for investigation and processing under title I of the ADA.

(2) *Referral by a section 504 agency.* (i) A section 504 agency that otherwise has jurisdiction over a complaint of employment discrimination under section 504 shall promptly refer to the EEOC, for investigation and processing under title I of the ADA, any complaint of employment discrimination that solely alleges discrimination against an individual (and that does not allege discrimination in both employment and in other practices or services of the respondent or a pattern or practice of employment discrimination), unless:

(A) The section 504 agency determines that the EEOC does not have jurisdiction over the complaint under title I; or

(B) The EEOC has jurisdiction over the complaint under title I, but the complainant, either independently, or following receipt of the notification letter required to be sent to the complainant pursuant to paragraph (c)(2)(ii) of this section, specifically requests that the complaint be investigated by the section 504 agency.

(ii) Prior to referring an individual complaint of employment discrimination to the EEOC pursuant to paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section (but not prior to making such a referral pursuant to paragraph (c)(1) of this section), a section 504 agency that otherwise has jurisdiction over the complaint shall promptly notify the complainant, in writing, of its intention to make such a referral. The notice letter shall:

(A) Inform the complainant that, unless the agency receives a written request from the complainant within twenty days of the date of the notice letter requesting that the agency retain the complaint for investigation, the agency will forward the complaint to the EEOC for investigation and processing; and

(B) Describe the basic procedural differences between an investigation under section 504 and an investigation under title I, and inform the complain-

ant of the potential for differing remedies under each statute.

(3) *Referral by a designated agency.* A designated agency that does not have section 504 jurisdiction over a complaint of employment discrimination and that has determined that the EEOC may have jurisdiction over the complaint under title I shall promptly refer the complaint to the EEOC.

(4) *Processing of complaints referred to the EEOC.* (i) A complaint referred to the EEOC in accordance with this section by an agency with jurisdiction over the complaint under section 504 shall be deemed to be a dual-filed complaint under section 504 and title I. When a section 504 agency with jurisdiction over a complaint refers the complaint to the EEOC, the section 504 agency shall defer its processing of the complaint pursuant to §—.10, pending resolution by the EEOC.

(ii) A complaint referred to the EEOC by an agency that has jurisdiction over the complaint solely under title II (and not under section 504) will be treated as a complaint filed under title I only.

(iii) Any complaint referred to the EEOC pursuant to this section shall be processed by the EEOC under its title I procedures.

(d) *Retention by the agency for investigation—*(1) *Retention by a section 504 agency.* A section 504 agency shall retain a complaint for investigation when the agency determines that it has jurisdiction over the complaint under section 504, and one or more of the following conditions are met:

(i) The EEOC does not have jurisdiction over the complaint under title I; or

(ii) The EEOC has jurisdiction over the complaint, but the complainant elects to have the section 504 agency process the complaint and the section 504 agency receives a written request from the complainant for section 504 agency processing within twenty days of the date of the notice letter required to be sent pursuant to paragraph (c)(2)(ii) of this section; or

(iii) The complaint alleges discrimination in both employment and in other practices or services of the respondent that are covered by section 504; or

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(iv) The complaint alleges a pattern or practice of employment discrimination.

(2) *Retention by a designated agency.* A designated agency that does not have jurisdiction over the complaint under section 504 shall retain a complaint for investigation when the agency determines that it has jurisdiction over the complaint under title II of the ADA and that the EEOC does not have jurisdiction over the complaint under title I.

(3) *Processing of complaints retained by an agency.* Any complaint retained for investigation and processing by an agency pursuant to paragraphs (d)(1) and (d)(2) of this section will be investigated and processed under section 504, title II, or both, as applicable, and will not be considered to be dual filed under title I.

§ 37.7 Processing of charges of employment discrimination filed with the EEOC.

(a) *EEOC determination of jurisdiction.* Upon receipt of a charge of employment discrimination, the EEOC shall:

(1) Determine whether it has jurisdiction over the charge under title I of the ADA. If it has jurisdiction, except as provided in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, the EEOC shall process the charge pursuant to title I procedures.

(2) If the EEOC determines that it does not have jurisdiction under title I, the EEOC shall promptly refer the charge to the Civil Rights Division. The Civil Rights Division shall determine if a Federal agency may have jurisdiction over the charge under section 504 or title II, and, if so, shall refer the charge to a section 504 agency or to a designated agency with jurisdiction over the complaint.

(b) *Retention by the EEOC for investigation.* (1) The EEOC shall retain a charge for investigation when it determines that it has jurisdiction over the charge under title I.

(2) *Referral to an agency.* Any charge retained by the EEOC for investigation and processing will be investigated and processed under title I only, and will not be deemed dual filed under section 504, except that ADA cause charges (as defined in 29 CFR 1601.21) that also fall within the jurisdiction of a section 504

agency and that the EEOC (or the Civil Rights Division, if such a charge is against a government, governmental agency, or political subdivision) has declined to litigate shall be referred to the appropriate section 504 agency for review of the file and any administrative or other action deemed appropriate under section 504. Such charges shall be deemed complaints, dual filed under section 504, solely for the purposes of the agency review and action described in this paragraph. The date of such dual filing shall be deemed to be the date the complaint was received by the EEOC.

§ 37.8 Processing of complaints or charges of employment discrimination filed with both the EEOC and a section 504 agency.

(a) *Procedures for handling dual-filed complaints or charges.* As between the EEOC and a section 504 agency, except as provided in paragraph (e) of this section, a complaint or charge of employment discrimination that is dual filed with both the EEOC and a section 504 agency shall be processed as follows:

(1) *EEOC processing.* The EEOC shall investigate and process the charge when the EEOC determines that it has jurisdiction over the charge under title I and the charge solely alleges employment discrimination against an individual, unless the charging party elects to have the section 504 agency process the charge and the section 504 agency receives a written request from the complainant for section 504 agency processing within twenty days of the date of the notice letter required to be sent pursuant to § 37.6(c)(2)(ii).

(2) *Section 504 agency processing.* A section 504 agency shall investigate and process the complaint when the agency determines that it has jurisdiction over the complaint under section 504, and:

(i) The complaint alleges discrimination in both employment and in other practices or services of the respondent; or

(ii) The complaint alleges a pattern or practice of discrimination in employment; or

(iii) In the case of a complaint solely alleging employment discrimination against an individual, the complainant

elects to have a section 504 agency process the complaint and the section 504 agency receives a written request from the complainant for section 504 agency processing within twenty days of the date of the notice letter required to be sent pursuant to § 37.6(c)(2)(ii).

(b) *Referral to the Civil Rights Division.* If the EEOC determines that it does not have jurisdiction under title I, and the section 504 agency determines that it does not have jurisdiction under section 504 or title II, the complaint or charge shall be promptly referred to the Civil Rights Division. The Civil Rights Division shall determine if another Federal agency may have jurisdiction over the complaint under section 504 or title II, and, if so, shall promptly refer the complaint to a section 504 or a designated agency with jurisdiction over the complaint.

(c) *Procedures for determining whether a complaint or charge has been dual filed.* The EEOC and each agency with jurisdiction to investigate and process complaints of employment discrimination under section 504 shall jointly develop procedures for determining whether complaints or charges of discrimination have been dual filed with the EEOC and with one or more other agencies.

(d) *Notification of deferral.* The agency required to process a dual-filed complaint or charge under this section shall notify the complainant or charging party and the respondent that the complaint or charge was dual filed with one or more other agencies and that such other agencies have agreed to defer processing and will take no further action except as provided in § 37.10 or § 37.11, as applicable.

(e) *Exceptions.* When special circumstances make deferral as provided in this section inappropriate, the EEOC, and an agency with investigative authority under section 504, may jointly determine to reallocate investigative responsibilities. Special circumstances include, but are not limited to, cases in which the EEOC has already commenced its investigation at the time that the agency discovers that the complaint or charge is a dual-filed complaint or charge in which the complainant has elected section 504 processing, alleged discrimination in

both employment and in other practices or services of the respondent, or alleged a pattern or practice of employment discrimination.

§ 37.9 Processing of complaints or charges of employment discrimination filed with a designated agency and either a section 504 agency, the EEOC, or both.

(a) *Designated agency processing.* A designated agency shall investigate and process a complaint that has been filed with it and with the EEOC, a section 504 agency, or both, when either of the following conditions is met:

(1) The designated agency determines that it has jurisdiction over the complaint under title II and that neither the EEOC nor a section 504 agency (other than the designated agency, if the designated agency is also a section 504 agency) has jurisdiction over the complaint; or

(2) The designated agency determines that it has jurisdiction over the complaint under section 504 and the complaint meets the requirements for processing by a section 504 agency set forth in § 37.8(a)(2).

(b) *Referral by a designated agency.* A designated agency that has jurisdiction over a complaint solely under title II (and not under section 504) shall forward a complaint that has been filed with it and with the EEOC, a section 504 agency, or both, to either the EEOC or to a section 504 agency, as follows:

(1) If the designated agency determines that the EEOC is the sole agency, other than the designated agency, with jurisdiction over the complaint, the designated agency shall forward the complaint to the EEOC for processing under title I; or

(2) If the designated agency determines that the section 504 agency is the sole agency, other than the designated agency, with jurisdiction over the complaint, the designated agency shall forward the complaint to the section 504 agency for processing under section 504; or

(3) If the designated agency determines that both the EEOC and a section 504 agency have jurisdiction over the complaint, the designated agency shall forward the complaint to the

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EEOC if it determines that the complaint solely alleges employment discrimination against an individual, or it shall forward the complaint to the section 504 agency if it determines that the complaint meets the requirements for processing by a section 504 agency set out in § 37.8(a)(2)(i) or (a)(2)(ii).

§ 37.10 Section 504 agency review of deferred complaints.

(a) *Deferral by the section 504 agency.* When a section 504 agency refers a complaint to the EEOC pursuant to § 37.6(c)(2) or when it is determined that, as between the EEOC and a section 504 agency, the EEOC is the agency that shall process a dual-filed complaint or charge under § 37.8(a)(1) or § 37.8(e), the section 504 agency shall defer further action until:

(1) The EEOC issues a no cause finding and a notice of right-to-sue pursuant to 29 CFR 1601.19; or

(2) The EEOC enters into a conciliation agreement; or

(3) The EEOC issues a cause finding and a notice of failure of conciliation pursuant to 29 CFR 1601.21, and:

(i) If the recipient is not a government, governmental agency, or political subdivision, the EEOC completes enforcement proceedings or issues a notice of right-to-sue in accordance with 29 CFR 1601.28; or

(ii) If the recipient is a government, governmental agency, or political subdivision, the EEOC refers the charge to the Civil Rights Division in accordance with 29 CFR 1601.29, and the Civil Rights Division completes enforcement proceedings or issues a notice of right-to-sue in accordance with 29 CFR 1601.28(d); or

(4) The EEOC or, when a case has been referred pursuant to 29 CFR 1601.29, the Civil Rights Division, otherwise resolves the charge.

(b) *Notification of the deferring agency.* The EEOC or the Civil Rights Division, as appropriate, shall notify the agency that has deferred processing of the charge upon resolution of any dual-filed complaint or charge.

(c) *Agency review.* After receipt of notification that the EEOC or the Civil Rights Division, as appropriate, has resolved the complaint or charge, the agency shall promptly determine what

further action by the agency is warranted. In reaching that determination, the agency shall give due weight to the findings and conclusions of the EEOC and to those of the Civil Rights Division, as applicable. If the agency proposes to take an action inconsistent with the EEOC's or the Civil Rights Division's findings and conclusions as to whether a violation has occurred, the agency shall notify in writing the Assistant Attorney General, the Chairman of the EEOC, and the head of the EEOC office that processed the complaint. In the written notification, the agency shall state the action that it proposes to take and the basis of its decision to take such action.

(d) *Provision of information.* Upon written request, the EEOC or the Civil Rights Division shall provide the section 504 agency with any materials relating to its resolution of the charge, including its findings and conclusions, investigative reports and files, and any conciliation agreement.

§ 37.11 EEOC review of deferred charges.

(a) *Deferral by the EEOC.* When it is determined that a section 504 agency is the agency that shall process a dual-filed complaint or charge under § 37.8(a)(2) or § 37.8(e), the EEOC shall defer further action until the section 504 agency takes one of the following actions:

(1) Makes a finding that a violation has not occurred;

(2) Enters into a voluntary compliance agreement;

(3) Following a finding that a violation has occurred, refers the complaint to the Civil Rights Division for judicial enforcement and the Civil Rights Division resolves the complaint;

(4) Following a finding that a violation has occurred, resolves the complaint through final administrative enforcement action; or

(5) Otherwise resolves the charge.

(b) *Notification of the EEOC.* The section 504 agency shall notify the EEOC upon resolution of any dual-filed complaint or charge.

(c) *Agency review.* After receipt of notification that the section 504 agency has resolved the complaint, the EEOC shall promptly determine what further

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action by the EEOC is warranted. In reaching that determination, the EEOC shall give due weight to the section 504 agency's findings and conclusions. If the EEOC proposes to take an action inconsistent with the section 504 agency's findings and conclusions as to whether a violation has occurred, the EEOC shall notify in writing the Assistant Attorney General, the Chairman of the EEOC, and the head of the section 504 agency that processed the complaint. In the written notification, the EEOC shall state the action that it proposes to take and the basis of its decision to take such action.

(d) *Provision of information.* Upon written request, the section 504 agency shall provide the EEOC with any materials relating to its resolution of the complaint, including its conclusions, investigative reports and files, and any voluntary compliance agreement.

§ 37.12 Standards.

In any investigation, compliance review, hearing or other proceeding, the standards used to determine whether section 504 has been violated in a complaint alleging employment discrimination shall be the standards applied under title I of the ADA and the provisions of sections 501 through 504, and 510, of the ADA, as such sections relate to employment. Section 504 agencies shall consider the regulations and appendix implementing title I of the ADA, set forth at 29 CFR part 1630, and case law arising under such regulations, in determining whether a recipient of Federal financial assistance has engaged in an unlawful employment practice.

§ 37.13 Agency specific memoranda of understanding.

When a section 504 agency amends its regulations to make them consistent with title I of the ADA, the EEOC and the individual section 504 agency may elect to enter into a memorandum of understanding providing for the investigation and processing of complaints dual filed under both section 504 and title I of the ADA by the section 504 agency.

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PART 38—PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAITH-BASED AND OTHER NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS

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APPENDIX C TO PART 38—WRITTEN NOTICE OF BENEFICIARY PROTECTIONS

AUTHORITY: 28 U.S.C. 509; 5 U.S.C. 301; E.O. 13279, 67 FR 77141, 3 CFR, 2002 Comp., p. 258; 18 U.S.C. 4001, 4042, 5040; 21 U.S.C. 871; 25 U.S.C. 3681; Pub. L. 107-273, 116 Stat. 1758; Pub. L. 109-162, 119 Stat. 2960; 34 U.S.C. 10152, 10154, 10172, 10221, 10382, 10388, 10444, 10446, 10448, 10473, 10614, 10631, 11111, 11182, 20110, 20125; E.O. 13559, 75 FR 71319, 3 CFR, 2010 Comp., p. 273; E.O. 13831, 83 FR 20715, 3 CFR, 2018 Comp., p. 806; 42 U.S.C. 2000bb *et seq.*; E.O. 14015, 86 FR 10007, 3 CFR, 2021 Comp., p. 517.

SOURCE: 85 FR 82137, Dec. 17, 2020, unless otherwise noted.

§ 38.1 Purpose.

The purpose of this part is to implement Executive Order 13279, Executive Order 13559, and Executive Order 14015.

[89 FR 15713, Mar. 4, 2024]

§ 38.2 Applicability and scope.

(a) A faith-based organization that applies for, or participates in, a social service program supported with Federal financial assistance may retain its independence and may continue to carry out its mission, including the definition, development, practice, and expression of its religious beliefs, provided that it does not use direct Federal financial assistance, whether received through a prime award or subaward, to support or engage in any explicitly religious activities, including activities that involve overt religious content such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization.

(b) The use of indirect Federal financial assistance is not subject to this restriction.

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(c) Nothing in this part restricts the Department's authority under applicable Federal law to fund activities, such as the provision of chaplaincy services, that can be directly funded by the Government consistent with the Establishment Clause.

(d) To the extent that any provision of this regulation is declared invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the Department intends for all other provisions that are capable of operating in the absence of the specific provision that has been invalidated to remain in effect.

§ 38.3 Definitions.

As used in this part:

(a) "Federal financial assistance" means assistance that non-Federal entities receive or administer in the form of grants, contracts, loans, loan guarantees, property, cooperative agreements, food commodities, direct appropriations, or other assistance, but does not include a tax credit, deduction, or exemption.

(b) "Direct Federal financial assistance" or "Federal financial assistance provided directly" refers to situations in which the Government or an intermediary (under this part) selects the provider and either purchases services from that provider (*e.g.*, via a contract) or awards funds to that provider to carry out a service (*e.g.*, via a grant or cooperative agreement). This includes recipients of subawards that receive Federal financial assistance through State administering agencies or State-administered programs. In general, Federal financial assistance shall be treated as direct, unless it meets the definition of "indirect Federal financial assistance" or "Federal financial assistance provided indirectly."

(c) "Indirect Federal financial assistance" or "Federal financial assistance provided indirectly" refers to situations where the choice of the service provider is placed in the hands of the beneficiary, and the cost of that service is paid through a voucher, certificate, or other similar means of government-funded payment. Federal financial assistance is considered "indirect" when:

(1) The government program through which the beneficiary receives the

voucher, certificate, or other similar means of government-funded payment is neutral toward religion and

(2) The service provider receives the assistance wholly as a result of a genuine and independent private choice of the beneficiary, not a choice of the Government. The availability of adequate secular alternatives is a significant factor in determining whether a program affords a genuinely independent and private choice.

(d)(1) "Intermediary" or "pass-through entity" means an entity, including a nonprofit or nongovernmental organization, acting under a contract, grant, or other agreement with the Federal Government or with a State or local government, such as a State administering agency, that accepts Federal financial assistance as a primary recipient or grantee and distributes that assistance to other organizations that, in turn, provide government-funded social services.

(2) When an intermediary, such as a State administering agency, distributes Federal financial assistance to other organizations, it replaces the Department as the awarding entity. The intermediary remains accountable for the Federal financial assistance it disburses and, accordingly, must ensure that any providers to which it disburses Federal financial assistance also comply with this part.

(e) "Department program" refers to a discretionary, formula, or block grant program administered by or from the Department.

(f) "Grantee" includes a recipient of a grant, a signatory to a cooperative agreement, or a contracting party.

(g) The "Office for Civil Rights" refers to the Office for Civil Rights of the Department's Office of Justice Programs.

(h) "Religious exercise" has the meaning given to the term in 42 U.S.C. 2000cc-5(7)(A).

[85 FR 82137, Dec. 17, 2020, as amended at 89 FR 15713, Mar. 4, 2024]

§ 38.4 Policy.

(a) Faith-based organizations are eligible, on the same basis as any other organization, to participate in any Department program for which they are

otherwise eligible. Neither the Department nor any State or local government receiving funds under any Department program shall, in the selection of service providers, discriminate for or against an organization on the basis of the organization's religious character, motives, or affiliation, or lack thereof, or on the basis of conduct that would not be considered grounds to favor or disfavor a similarly situated secular organization.

(b) Nothing in this part shall be construed to preclude the Department from making an accommodation, including for religious exercise, with respect to one or more program requirements on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the Constitution and laws of the United States.

(c) The Department shall not disqualify an organization from participating in any Department program for which it is eligible on the basis of the organization's indication that it may request an accommodation with respect to one or more program requirements, unless the organization has made clear that the accommodation is necessary to its participation and the Department has determined that it would deny the accommodation.

(d) Decisions about awards of Federal financial assistance must be free from political interference or even the appearance of such interference and must be made on the basis of merit, not on the basis of religion or a religious belief, or lack thereof.

[89 FR 15713, Mar. 4, 2024]

§ 38.5 Responsibilities.

(a) Organizations that receive direct Federal financial assistance from the Department may not engage in explicitly religious activities, including activities that involve overt religious content such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization, as part of the programs or services funded with direct Federal financial assistance from the Department. If an organization conducts such explicitly religious activities, the activities must be offered separately, in time or location, from the programs or services funded with direct Federal financial assistance from the Department, and participation must be voluntary for bene-

ficiaries of the programs or services funded with such assistance.

(b) A faith-based organization that participates in Department-funded programs or services shall retain its autonomy; right of expression; religious character; and independence from Federal, State, and local governments, and may continue to carry out its mission, including the definition, practice, and expression of its religious beliefs, provided that it does not use direct Federal financial assistance from the Department to fund any explicitly religious activities, including activities that involve overt religious content such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization. Among other things, a faith-based organization that receives Federal financial assistance from the Department may use space in its facilities without concealing, altering, or removing religious art, icons, messages, scriptures, or symbols. In addition, a faith-based organization that receives Federal financial assistance from the Department retains its authority over its internal governance, and it may retain religious terms in its name, select its board members on the basis of their acceptance of or adherence to the religious tenets of the organization, and include religious references in its mission statements and other governing documents.

(c) Any organization that participates in programs funded by Federal financial assistance from the Department shall not, in providing services supported in whole or in part with Federal financial assistance, or in their outreach activities related to such services, discriminate against a program beneficiary or prospective program beneficiary on the basis of religion, a religious belief, a refusal to hold a religious belief, or a refusal to attend or participate in a religious practice. However, an organization that receives indirect Federal financial assistance need not modify its program activities to accommodate a beneficiary who chooses to expend the indirect aid on the organization's program.

(d) No grant document, agreement, covenant, memorandum of understanding, policy, or regulation that the

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Department or a State or local government uses in administering Federal financial assistance from the Department shall require faith-based or religious organizations to provide assurances or notices where they are not required of non-faith-based organizations. Any restrictions on the use of grant funds shall apply equally to faith-based and non-faith-based organizations. All organizations, including religious ones, that participate in Department programs must carry out all eligible activities in accordance with all program requirements, including those prohibiting the use of direct Federal financial assistance from the Department to engage in explicitly religious activities, subject to any accommodations that are granted to organizations on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the Constitution and laws of the United States. No grant document, agreement, covenant, memorandum of understanding, policy, or regulation that is used by the Department or a State or local government in administering Federal financial assistance from the Department shall disqualify faith-based or religious organizations from participating in the Department's programs on the basis of the organization's religious character, motives, or affiliation, or lack thereof, or on the basis of conduct that would not be considered grounds to disqualify a similarly situated secular organization.

(e) A faith-based organization's exemption from the Federal prohibition on employment discrimination on the basis of religion, set forth in section 702(a) of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000e-1(a), is not forfeited when the organization receives direct or indirect Federal financial assistance from the Department. Some Department programs, however, contain independent statutory provisions requiring that all grantees agree not to discriminate in employment on the basis of religion. Grantees receiving Federal financial assistance from such programs should consult with the appropriate Department program office to determine the scope of any applicable requirements.

(f) If an intermediary, acting under a contract, grant, or other agreement

with the Federal Government or with a State or local government that is administering a program supported by Federal financial assistance, is given the authority under the contract, grant, or agreement to select organizations to provide services funded by the Federal Government, the intermediary must ensure the compliance of the recipient of a contract, grant, or agreement with the provisions of Executive Order 13279, as amended by Executive Order 13559, and any implementing rules or guidance. If the intermediary is a nongovernmental organization, it retains all other rights of a nongovernmental organization under the program's statutory and regulatory provisions.

(g) In general, the Department does not require that a grantee, including a faith-based organization, obtain tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code to be eligible for funding under Department programs. Many grant programs, however, do require an organization to be a "nonprofit organization" in order to be eligible for funding. Individual solicitations that require organizations to have nonprofit status will specifically so indicate in the eligibility sections of the solicitations. In addition, any solicitation that requires an organization to maintain tax-exempt status shall expressly state the statutory authority for requiring such status. Grantees should consult with the appropriate Department program office to determine the scope of any applicable requirements. In Department programs in which an applicant must show that it is a nonprofit organization, the applicant may do so by any of the following means:

(1) Proof that the Internal Revenue Service currently recognizes the applicant as an organization to which contributions are tax deductible under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code;

(2) A statement from a State taxing body or the State secretary of state certifying that:

(i) The organization is a nonprofit organization operating within the State; and

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(ii) No part of its net earnings may lawfully benefit any private shareholder or individual;

(3) A certified copy of the applicant's certificate of incorporation or similar document that clearly establishes the nonprofit status of the applicant; or

(4) Any item described in paragraphs (g)(1) through (3) of this section if that item applies to a State or national parent organization, together with a statement by the State or parent organization that the applicant is a local nonprofit affiliate.

(h) Grantees should consult with the appropriate Department program office to determine the applicability of this part in foreign countries or sovereign lands.

(i) Neither the Department nor any State or local government or other pass-through entity receiving funds under any Department program or service shall construe these provisions in such a way as to advantage or disadvantage faith-based organizations affiliated with historic or well-established religions or sects in comparison with other religions or sects.

[85 FR 82137, Dec. 17, 2020, as amended at 89 FR 15713, Mar. 4, 2024]

§ 38.6 Procedures.

(a) If a State or local government voluntarily contributes its own funds to supplement activities carried out under the applicable programs, the State or local government has the option to separate out the Federal funds or commingle them. If the funds are commingled, the provisions of this section shall apply to all of the commingled funds in the same manner, and to the same extent, as the provisions apply to the Federal funds.

(b) An organization providing social services under a program of the Department supported by Federal financial assistance must give written notice to beneficiaries and prospective beneficiaries of certain protections in a manner and form prescribed by the Office for Civil Rights, including by incorporating the notice into materials that are otherwise provided to beneficiaries. This written notice shall include language substantially similar to that in appendix C to this part. The no-

tice must include the following information:

(1) The organization may not discriminate against a beneficiary or prospective beneficiary on the basis of religion, a religious belief, a refusal to hold a religious belief, or a refusal to attend or participate in a religious practice;

(2) The organization may not require a beneficiary or prospective beneficiary to attend or participate in any explicitly religious activities that are offered by the organization, and any participation by a beneficiary in such activities must be purely voluntary;

(3) The organization must separate in time or location any privately funded explicitly religious activities from activities supported by direct Federal financial assistance; and

(4) A beneficiary or prospective beneficiary may report an organization's violation of these protections, including any denials of services or benefits by an organization, by contacting or filing a written complaint with the Office for Civil Rights or the intermediary that awarded funds to the organization.

(c) The written notice described in paragraph (b) of this section must be given to a prospective beneficiary prior to the time the prospective beneficiary enrolls in the program or receives services from the program. When the nature of the service provided or exigent circumstances make it impracticable to provide such written notice in advance of the actual service, an organization must advise beneficiaries of their protections at the earliest available opportunity.

(d) The Department may determine that the notice described in paragraph (b) of this section must inform each beneficiary or prospective beneficiary of the option to seek information from the Department, or a State agency or other entity administering the applicable program, as to whether there are any other federally funded organizations in their area that provide the kind of services available under the applicable program.

(e) Notices or announcements of award opportunities and notices of award or contracts shall include language substantially similar to that in

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appendices A and B, respectively, to this part.

[89 FR 15714, Mar. 4, 2024]

§ 38.7 Assurances.

(a) Every application submitted to the Department for direct Federal financial assistance subject to this part must contain, as a condition of its approval and the extension of any such assistance, or be accompanied by, an assurance or statement that the program is or will be conducted in compliance with this part.

(b) Every intermediary must provide for such methods of administration as are required by the Office for Civil Rights to give reasonable assurance that the intermediary will comply with this part and effectively monitor the actions of its recipients.

§ 38.8 Enforcement.

(a) The Office for Civil Rights is responsible for reviewing the practices of recipients of Federal financial assistance to determine whether they are in compliance with this part.

(b) The Office for Civil Rights is responsible for investigating any allegations of noncompliance with this part.

(c) Recipients of Federal financial assistance determined to be in violation of any provisions of this part are subject to the enforcement procedures and sanctions, up to and including suspension and termination of funds, authorized by applicable laws.

(d) An allegation of any violation or discrimination by an organization, based on this regulation, may be filed with the Office for Civil Rights or the intermediary that awarded the funds to the organization.

APPENDIX A TO PART 38—NOTICE OR ANNOUNCEMENT OF AWARD OPPORTUNITIES

(a) Faith-based organizations may apply for this award on the same basis as any other organization, as set forth at, and subject to the protections and requirements of, this part and any applicable constitutional and statutory requirements, including 42 U.S.C. 2000bb *et seq.* The Department of Justice will not, in the selection of recipients, discriminate for or against an organization on the basis of the organization's religious character, motives, or affiliation, or lack thereof,

or on the basis of conduct that would not be considered grounds to favor or disfavor a similarly situated secular organization.

(b) A faith-based organization that participates in this program will retain its independence from the Government and may continue to carry out its mission consistent with religious freedom and conscience protections in Federal law.

(c) An organization may not use direct Federal financial assistance from the Department of Justice to support or engage in any explicitly religious activities except when consistent with the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment and any other applicable requirements. An organization receiving Federal financial assistance also may not, in providing services funded by the Department of Justice, or in their outreach activities related to such services, discriminate against a program beneficiary or prospective program beneficiary on the basis of religion, a religious belief, a refusal to hold a religious belief, or a refusal to attend or participate in a religious practice.

[89 FR 15714, Mar. 4, 2024]

APPENDIX B TO PART 38—NOTICE OF AWARD OR CONTRACT

(a) A faith-based organization that participates in this program retains its independence from the Government and may continue to carry out its mission consistent with religious freedom and conscience protections in Federal law.

(b) An organization may not use direct Federal financial assistance from the Department of Justice to support or engage in any explicitly religious activities except when consistent with the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment and any other applicable requirements. An organization receiving Federal financial assistance also may not, in providing services funded by the Department of Justice, or in their outreach activities related to such services, discriminate against a program beneficiary or prospective program beneficiary on the basis of religion, a religious belief, a refusal to hold a religious belief, or a refusal to attend or participate in a religious practice.

[89 FR 15715, Mar. 4, 2024]

APPENDIX C TO PART 38—WRITTEN NOTICE OF BENEFICIARY PROTECTIONS

Name of Organization:

Name of Program:

Contact Information for Program Staff:
[provide name, phone number, and email address, if appropriate]

Because this program is supported in whole or in part by financial assistance from the Federal Government, we are required to let you know that:

(1) We may not discriminate against you on the basis of religion, a religious belief, a refusal to hold a religious belief, or a refusal to attend or participate in a religious practice;

(2) We may not require you to attend or participate in any explicitly religious activities (including activities that involve overt religious content such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization) that may be offered by our organization, and any participation by you in such activities must be purely voluntary;

(3) We must separate in time or location any privately funded explicitly religious activities (including activities that involve overt religious content such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization) from activities supported with direct Federal financial assistance;

(4) You may report violations of these protections, including any denials of services or benefits by an organization, by contacting or filing a written complaint with the Department of Justice's Office for Civil Rights, 810 7th Street NW, Washington, DC 20531, or by email to AskOCR@usdoj.gov; and

[When required by the Department, the notice must also state:] (5) If you would like to seek information about whether there are any other federally funded organizations that provide these kinds of services in your area, please use the contact information for the Department's Office for Civil Rights set forth above.

We are required to give this written notice to you before you enroll in the program or receive services from the program, unless the nature of the service provided or exigent circumstances make it impracticable for us to provide such notice before we provide the actual service. In such an instance, we must give this notice to you at the earliest available opportunity.

[89 FR 15715, Mar. 4, 2024]

PART 39—ENFORCEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF HANDICAP IN PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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39.170 Compliance procedures.

AUTHORITY: 29 U.S.C. 794.

SOURCE: Order No. 1065–84, 49 FR 35734, Sept. 11, 1984, unless otherwise noted.

§ 39.101 Purpose.

This part effectuates section 119 of the Rehabilitation, Comprehensive Services, and Developmental Disabilities Amendments of 1978, which amended section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to prohibit discrimination on the basis of handicap in programs or activities conducted by Executive agencies or the U.S. Postal Service.

§ 39.102 Application.

This part applies to all programs or activities conducted by the agency.

§ 39.103 Definitions.

For purposes of this part, the term—
Agency means the Department of Justice.

Assistant Attorney General means the Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Justice.

Auxiliary aids means services or devices that enable persons with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills to have an equal opportunity to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, programs or activities conducted by the agency. For example, auxiliary aids useful for persons with impaired vision include readers, Brailled materials, audio recordings, telecommunications devices and other similar services and devices. Auxiliary aids useful for persons with impaired hearing include telephone handset amplifiers, telephones compatible with hearing aids, telecommunication devices for deaf persons (TDD's), interpreters, notetakers, written materials, and other similar services and devices.