



ECHO

Magazine

Amplifying Voices For Equal Opportunity

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In This Edition

A Message from the Chairman

Introducing Our Executives

Launch of ECHO: The EOC's Quarterly Magazine

Legal Department in Action: Outreach Highlights for 2025

Talking Rights, Equality and Inclusion: EOC on TV6's Morning Edition

Legal Outreach in Tobago: Monthly Visits

EOC Website Gets a Refresh

Strengthening Connections: Communications Unit Meets with Key Stakeholders

EOC Staff Trained on Office Etiquette and Registry Procedures

Legal Department in Action: Raising Awareness, Serving the Public

EOC Supports Eastern Law Association's Free Legal Aid Clinic

Intern Spotlight: Josiah Austin Joins the EOC Communications Team

Feature Column: What the EOC Does – and Why It Matters

Feature Column: Stigma in Hot Spots – Changing Perceptions, Promoting Equality

Feature Column: Men's Mental Health – Why It Matters to All of Us

Choy Felix - Editor-in-Chief / Writer

Leon Bain - Graphic Designer

Kieron McCarthy - Publishing Distributor

Welcome to the very first edition of



It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the very first edition of ECHO, the Equal Opportunity Commission's new quarterly magazine for our stakeholders.

This publication represents our commitment to sharing our work, values, and vision with you in a way that is accessible and engaging. ECHO was chosen because it reflects what we hope to achieve — to amplify the call for equality and inclusion so that it resonates throughout every community in Trinidad and Tobago.

In these pages, you will find updates on our programmes, features on the people who make the Commission what it is, and stories that highlight how equality and fairness are being put into practice. Most importantly, you will see how the work of the EOC connects with the lives of citizens and the shared goal of building a more inclusive society.

This magazine is for you, our partners, supporters, and colleagues in the journey toward equal opportunity. My hope is that each edition inspires reflection, sparks conversation, and encourages action within your own circles of influence.

On behalf of the Commission, thank you for walking this journey with us. May the pages of ECHO serve as both an update and an invitation to join us in ensuring that equality is not just spoken about, but lived.

H. R. Ian Roach

Chairman

Equal Opportunity Commission



Meet our Executives



MR. H.R. IAN ROACH
Chairman



MS. DENISE DUNCAN
Vice Chairman



MR. JOHN ARNOLD
Commissioner



MR. PETER ELIAS
Commissioner

VISION

A society which is free from discrimination and prejudice, where human rights and diversity are respected, and where there is equality of opportunity for all.

MISSION

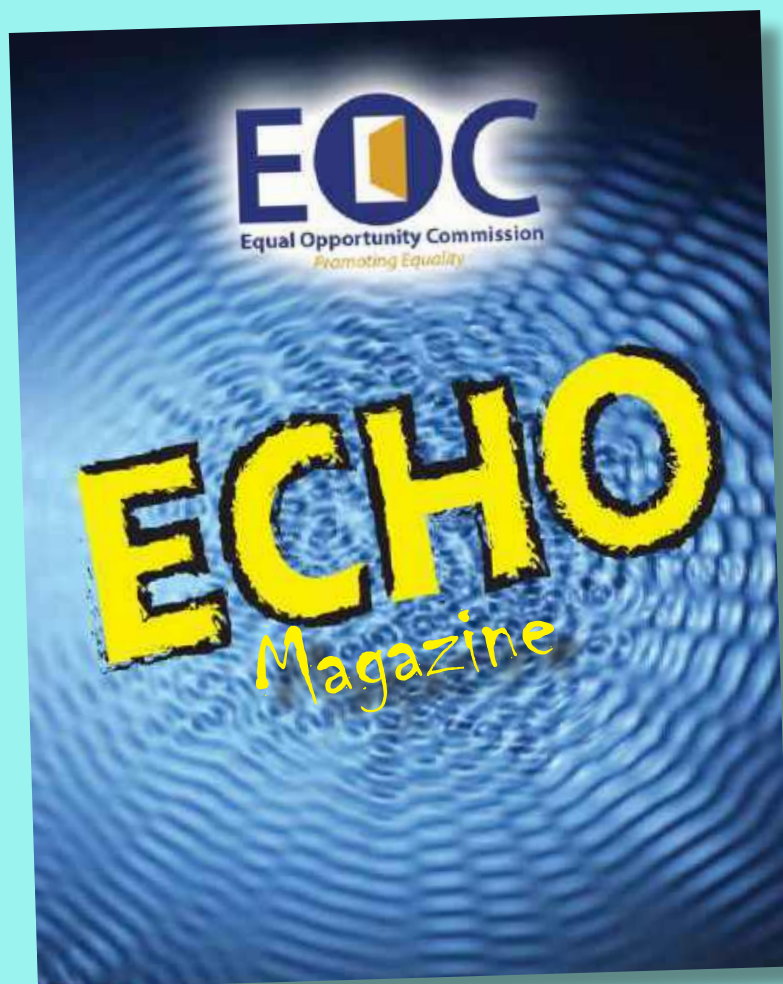
The Equal Opportunity Commission works towards the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity through advocacy, public education, research and the conciliation of complaints.



DR. KRYSTAL-JANE VERASAMMY
Commissioner

The Launch of ECHO

The EOC's Quarterly Magazine for Stakeholders



Our aim is to ensure that stakeholders are kept up to date with the Commission's work while providing practical insights that can help strengthen policies, practices, and culture in your own spaces.

The Equal Opportunity Commission is proud to launch ECHO, our new quarterly magazine designed to keep you, our valued stakeholders, informed and engaged.

The name ECHO was chosen to represent how the voices of equality and inclusion resonate across society, and how the Commission amplifies these conversations through its mandate.

Each issue of ECHO will bring you timely updates on our initiatives, highlights from recent outreach and sensitisation programmes, key developments in equality and non-discrimination, and resources to support organisations, institutions, and communities.

Our aim is to ensure that stakeholders are kept up to date with the Commission's work while providing practical insights that can help strengthen policies, practices, and culture in your own spaces.

ECHO will be delivered directly to your inbox every quarter. We look forward to sharing our progress with you and continuing this partnership in the pursuit of a fairer and more inclusive society.

Visit www.equalopportunity.gov.tt, email us at communications@eoc.gov.tt, or call 1-868-672-0928 to book a free workshop for your organisation, report discrimination or victimisation, or get support. You can also follow us on social media.

Legal Department in Action: Outreach Highlights for 2025 (So Far)

The Legal Department has hit the ground running in 2025, rolling out a packed calendar of outreach initiatives designed to inform, engage, and support communities and professionals across sectors. From educational sessions to public events and partnerships, the team continues to champion equal opportunity and human rights through active dialogue and legal awareness.

Things got started early in the year with a session on January 23rd with the Insurance Company of the West Indies (ICWI). The engagement focused on workplace rights and responsibilities, providing ICWI staff with tools to better understand and apply the principles of equal opportunity in their daily operations.

This was followed by a return to the lecture halls, with a Public Education Session at the Hugh Wooding Law School on February 14th. The session gave future legal professionals a deeper look into the EOC's mandate and the real-world application of equal opportunity laws.

On February 20th, the EOC was proud to be represented by Legal Director Haran Ramkaransingh at the Youth Inspiration TT – Justice In Action – Youth Leading Reform event. This youth-led initiative brought together change-makers to discuss reform and justice, and Haran's contribution highlighted the importance of embedding equity into any vision for progress.



The team also partnered multiple times with the Division of Health, Wellness and Social Protection to bring the EOC to Tobago on February 21st, March 21st, and May 16th. These collaborations

are focused on strengthening institutional knowledge of discrimination law and embedding fair practices for the people of Tobago.

On March 8th, Ms Cheryl Ann Peters joined the crowd at the Annual International Women's Day March, standing in support of gender equity and women's rights. Her participation underscored the EOC's continued commitment to gender justice and visibility in civic spaces.

April brought more outreach, this time in the form of a Public Education Session with PTSC on April 11th.

That partnership was renewed on May 16th, as staff across the company explored key areas of concern like workplace harassment, accessibility, and inclusive hiring practices. The department also made time for public engagement via media, with a live interview on Tobago Updates on May 12th. This platform gave the EOC an opportunity to share recent developments, explain the complaint process, and reinforce the Commission's role as a resource for all.

The Legal Department's steady presence at events like these reflects a clear focus: building stronger relationships with communities, institutions, and future leaders. With more initiatives in the pipeline for the second half of the year, the team remains committed to ensuring equal opportunity is more than just a principle—it's a lived reality.

EOC on TV6: Talking Rights, Equality, and Inclusion



The Equal Opportunity Commission made a bright and early appearance on TV6's Morning Edition on Monday 19th May 2025, reaching viewers across the country with an important message: know your rights.

Legal Officers Lorelei Liselle Wong and Adele Ramgoolam represented the Commission in the 7:00am segment with TV6 morning host Marlan Hopkinson, where they discussed the EOC's role in promoting equality, the basics of equal opportunity law, and the importance of inclusion in everyday life.

Their conversation with the Marlan focused on common forms of discrimination and how the Commission helps individuals and organisations address these issues. Viewers also got a better understanding of how to file a complaint and what to expect from the process.

These types of media appearances are a key part of the EOC's public education work. They allow the Commission to connect with wider audiences and provide clear, accessible information about rights and protections under the Equal Opportunity Act.

If you missed the segment, you can still follow the EOC on social media for clips and updates, or visit www.equalopportunity.gov.tt for more resources



Legal Outreach in Tobago: Monthly Visits Building Awareness and Capacity



As part of the EOC's commitment to nationwide engagement, the Legal Department has been making regular visits to Tobago to provide education and support on equal opportunity matters. These monthly sessions are more than just routine—they are part of a broader effort to strengthen understanding of equality principles within key sectors on the island for the people.

The team has been based at the Division of Health, Wellness and Social Protection, seeing clients on February 21st, March 21st, and most recently, May 16th to engage Tobagonians and help them understand The Equal Opportunity Act as well as their rights and freedom under the act.

These engagements are designed to go beyond theory. Through discussion and advice the Legal Officers ensure that participants walk away with not just knowledge, but confidence in applying it in their roles.

The consistency of these sessions also helps build relationships.

The Legal Department will continue these monthly visits in the coming months, with plans to expand sessions to include other public and private sector groups. It's a clear reflection of the EOC's mission and vision.



EOC Website Gets a Refresh



The Equal Opportunity Commission's website is currently undergoing an upgrade, led by Navindra Narine, the Commission's Information Technology Infrastructure Specialist.

This project is part of the Communications Unit's broader efforts to strengthen the EOC's branding and improve how the public connects with the Commission online. The upgrade includes updates to the site's layout, structure and design, with the goal of making it more user-friendly and visually aligned with the EOC's message and mandate.

Some of the changes will include a cleaner homepage, more straightforward navigation, and updated graphics and content sections. The refreshed design will also make it easier for

users to find key information, whether they're looking to understand their rights under the Equal Opportunity Act or access the Commission's services.

While the site remains live during the upgrade process, the team is working behind the scenes to ensure the transition is smooth and that the final product offers an improved experience for all visitors.

The IT team comprises of both Navindra and Avinash Ramdass Information and Communication Technology Support Officer who are the magicians that keeps our technology running smoothly, helping us carry out our mandate more effectively.

Some of the changes will include a cleaner homepage, more straight forward navigation, and updated graphics and content sections.

Strengthening Connections: Communications Unit Meets with Key Stakeholders

As part of the Equal Opportunity Commission's push to enhance its public presence and build stronger relationships across sectors, the Communications Unit has been meeting with several key stakeholders over the past few weeks.

Led by Mr. Choy Felix, Communications Manager of the Equal Opportunity Commission, the meetings focused on finding practical ways to improve collaboration, align messaging on issues of national importance, and expand the EOC's reach through strategic partnerships.

In addition to ongoing engagement with the Board of Directors and internal EOC teams, Mr. Felix has held meetings with the Communications Team at the Office of the Attorney General to discuss shared goals and how both institutions can work more efficiently together in communicating legal and rights-based information to the public.

Recognising the importance of innovation in public service, Mr. Felix, Communications Manager, and Navindra Narine, IT Infrastructure Specialist, attended a virtual workshop with representatives from iGovTT to explore the potential integration of artificial intelligence into the Commission's website. The session included a preview of enhanced government chatbot



Mr. Choy Felix
Communications Manager

capabilities, with the aim of improving how the public interacts with the site and accesses information, while also reducing response times for common queries.

Further stakeholder engagement included discussions with the Human Resources Management Association (HRMATT) and the Trinidad and Tobago Management Association (TTMA). These talks explored opportunities for collaboration on training, awareness campaigns and shared advocacy on issues related to workplace equality and inclusion.

Mr. Felix also met with representatives from the National AIDS Coordinating Committee Secretariat, looking at ways to support efforts around anti-discrimination in healthcare settings and ensuring

equal treatment for persons living with HIV and other vulnerable groups.

Additionally, a meeting was held with the Communications Team of the Equal Opportunity Tribunal to ensure that both bodies maintain a clear and coordinated public message on their distinct but complementary roles under the Equal Opportunity Act.

"These meetings are part of a broader strategy to raise the Commission's profile, deepen our relationships across sectors and make sure we are communicating as effectively as possible," Mr. Felix said. "It's about building bridges that help us all do our work better."

The Communications Unit will continue to explore opportunities for collaboration, with a view to advancing the Commission's mandate through clear, consistent and meaningful engagement.

EOC Staff Trained on Office Etiquette and Registry Procedures

Over 20 staff members of the Equal Opportunity Commission participated in two important training sessions designed to enhance internal standards and promote professional conduct across the organisation at its Chaguanas Manic Street office.

The first session, focusing on Office Etiquette, was led by Mr. Choy Felix, Communications Manager. Supported by Ms. Debbie Ann Trotman, this session explored the everyday behaviours that contribute to a positive workplace culture and influence how the Commission is perceived by the public. Staff engaged in discussions on a variety of practical topics, including professional communication, self-presentation, phone etiquette, timely and accurate message-taking, and the fundamentals of respectful workplace behaviour.

Throughout the session, participants were encouraged to consider how seemingly small actions, such as the way we greet callers, write emails, or maintain shared workspaces, can have a significant effect on both internal morale and the experience of those who interact with the Commission. Mr. Felix emphasized that “office etiquette isn’t about rules for rules’ sake. It’s about building a respectful environment where everyone can do their best work and the public feels welcomed and served with care.”

The second training session was led by Ms. Debbie Ann Trotman and focused on Registry Procedures, a key operational area within the Commission. This session aimed to strengthen staff knowledge and skills around the proper handling of documents, files, and records.

Attendees were guided through essential protocols involving document flow, secure filing practices, confidentiality, and record-keeping responsibilities that are critical to ensuring the Commission’s work remains transparent, accurate, and trustworthy.

Ms. Trotman highlighted the important role the Registry plays in maintaining organisational integrity and efficiency. Staff were encouraged to see these procedures not just as administrative tasks, but as foundational to the Commission’s ability to serve the public effectively and uphold its mandate.

Both sessions represent the Commission’s ongoing commitment to fostering a professional, accountable, and people-centred public service. They also reflect a broader focus on continuous learning and development for staff at all levels. For those unable to attend the sessions, materials have been made available, and staff members are invited to reach out directly to Mr. Felix or Ms. Debbie Ann Trotman for further guidance or follow-up discussions.

The Equal Opportunity Commission looks forward to building on this momentum with more training and capacity-building opportunities throughout the year, supporting staff in delivering high-quality service with professionalism and respect.



Legal Department in Action: Raising Awareness, Serving the Public

The Equal Opportunity Commission's Legal Department has been actively engaging the public through both media outreach and direct service, bringing attention to the Commission's work and ensuring greater access to its services.

Legal Director Mr. Haran Ramkaransingh recently appeared on Synergy TV's morning programme Breaking Dawn, where he spoke about the Commission's mandate, its role in promoting equality, and how members of the public can access its free services. His appearance provided a clear and accessible overview of the Equal Opportunity Act, including the types of discrimination the Commission investigates and how the complaint process works.

Legal Officers Ms Adele Ramgoolam and Ms Lorelei Wong also took to the airwaves, joining i95.5FM for a candid and informative discussion on the Commission's functions. They spoke about the rights protected under the Act, the complaint resolution process, and the Commission's broader work in promoting equity and inclusion across Trinidad and Tobago. These interviews were part of the Commission's ongoing efforts to educate the public and ensure that people understand where to turn if they face discrimination.

In Tobago, Legal Officers Ms Lorelei Wong, Ms Nickeelia Payne, and Maria Rodrigues-Fields continue to serve the public through the Commission's monthly legal clinic. Held in partnership with the Tobago House of Assembly's Division of Health, Wellness and Social Protection, the clinic offers free legal advice and guidance to individuals who may have experienced discrimination in areas such as employment, education, accommodation, and the provision of goods and services. The sessions have become a trusted space for Tobagonians to learn about their rights and receive confidential, professional support.

Through these outreach efforts, whether in the media or directly in the community, the Commission's Legal Department continues to play a vital role in making equality real and accessible for all. To view the interviews from Breaking Dawn and I95.5fm visit the EOC's website and social media pages.



EOC Supports Free Legal Aid Clinic

Hosted by Eastern Law Association

The Equal Opportunity Commission was pleased to participate in the Eastern Law Association's free legal aid clinic, held on Saturday 28th June at the El Dorado Cooperative Complex. The event was aimed at increasing public access to legal services and featured a diverse group of legal professionals and public sector agencies to provide free legal guidance and information to members of the public.

Representing the Commission were Director, Legal Services Mr. Haran Ramkaransingh, along with Ms. Cheryl Ann Peters, Ms. Lynsey Chinra-Griffith and Ms. Salisha Ishmael. The team offered information on the Equal Opportunity Act, explained the Commission's complaint resolution process, and responded to queries related to discrimination in the key areas of employment, education, provision of goods and services and accommodation.

Throughout the day, the EOC team engaged with members of the public, raising awareness and reinforcing the Commission's role in the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality.

Several other agencies were also present, contributing to a comprehensive initiative aimed at enhancing public legal education. The clinic highlighted the importance of cross-sector collaboration to ensure legal services remain accessible, especially to those who may not have the means to secure private representation.

The Commission extends its sincere thanks to the Eastern Lawyers Association for the opportunity to further connect with members of the public and supporting the EOC's ongoing mission of advancing equal opportunity for all.



Intern Spotlight: Josiah Austin Joins the EOC Communications Team

The Equal Opportunity Commission welcomed Josiah Austin, who served as an intern with the Communications Unit.

Josiah is pursuing a degree in Sociology, a field that has shaped his understanding of social systems, equity, and the role of communication in public institutions. With a calm and dedicated approach, he brought a thoughtful perspective to the team, along with a strong interest in sport management and how sport intersects with culture, identity, and social change. During his time at the EOC,

Josiah supported various aspects of the Commission's communications work, including content creation, public relations and campaign planning. He viewed this internship as a valuable opportunity to apply his



Josiah Austin

He views this internship as a valuable opportunity to apply his academic knowledge in a real-world setting while gaining practical experience in public engagement.

academic knowledge in a real-world setting while gaining practical experience in public engagement.

"I'm especially interested in how messaging and communication strategies can promote fairness, empower marginalized communities, and contribute to positive societal change," Josiah shared.

He hopes to eventually work at the intersection of sport, society and policy, and sees this internship as an important step toward that goal.

The EOC is proud to support the growth of emerging professionals like Josiah, and we look forward to seeing the contributions he will make in the future.

The poster features the EOC logo at the top, followed by a large red 'FAQ?' graphic. Below this is a cartoon illustration of a man with an afro, wearing a suit and holding a briefcase. To the right of the illustration, the text reads: 'It is AGAINST THE LAW to INSULT, HUMILIATE or INTIMIDATE a person or group in public, including on SOCIAL MEDIA based on their: RELIGION, GENDER, ORIGIN, RACE and ETHNICITY.' At the bottom, the website 'www.equalopportunity.gov.tt' and contact information '672-0928 | communications@eoc.gov.tt' are listed.



Equal Opportunity Commission
Promoting Equality

Equal Opportunity Commission Word Search

U E K T Y U N S E X S B O C H A F F O P
G U S N Q Q F L O T R I B U N A L Q H Q
R Z E G V F Q D S R X F N A J W S D S E
I U R R A E E Q U A L I T Y B G F H T F
Z D V I L C A A L A U O S M H J V B N M
Y I I U F G C Y U C A U J A H J M G H P
E S C G D R C N D F K V H N O R I G I N
M C E M H E O C I I T P S D F Y S C W C
P R S T J L M G S B Y M W A R K V E R N
L I N J U I M R A C E X J T Y L S R K Z
O M D N S G O J B W C C J E S A H D H P
Y I L J T I D Y I S A Z D L C P W G I R
M N O E I O A T L H V S Q O A P X K V R
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N T X P E Q I K T K X Q O Q K F N K A C
T I H H K D O A Y S I M K N R B H N Z A
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V V R J Y H K B S I C I R U M I S F H U
B H U Y F N A E J S D B T G Z J O M Y Z

WORDS TO FIND

EQUALITY
JUSTICE
RACE
RELIGION
SEX

DISABILITY
ORIGIN
EDUCATION
EMPLOYMENT
SERVICES

ACCOMMODATION
DISCRIMINATION
TRIBUNAL
MANDATE
COMPLAINT



The EOC's Voice in the Newsday Columns Every Other Week

The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) continues to strengthen its public education and awareness efforts through a dedicated column in the Newsday newspaper. Published every other week, these columns provide readers with clear and practical insights on issues relating to equality, inclusion, and non-discrimination.

The articles cover a wide range of topics linked to the Commission's mandate, including the seven protected status grounds under the Equal Opportunity Act, the categories of discrimination, and guidance on creating fair and inclusive environments. They also highlight the Commission's ongoing work in advocacy, public sensitisation, and resolving complaints.

By maintaining this regular presence in the media, the Commission ensures that accurate, accessible information on equal opportunity reaches households, workplaces, schools, and communities throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

We invite all stakeholders and members of the public to follow the EOC's column in the Newsday and join the conversation on building a society that values fairness, diversity, and inclusion.

You can read the most recent columns in the following pages.

What EOC does – and why it matters

THE EQUAL Opportunity Commission (EOC), in its mission to eliminate discrimination and promote equality, is ever mindful that it is important to remind citizens about the functions of the commission and the tenets of the Equal Opportunity Act, Chap 22:03, to enable them to exercise their right to equality. In many ways, the EOC provides a framework for larger conversations on equality and the first step in doing so is ensuring that the public is aware of the law.

The EOC is a public body that was created in accordance with the provisions of the act for the purpose of exercising the jurisdiction conferred upon it by the act. Our mandate is to work towards the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different statuses through investigation, advocacy, public education, research, and the conciliation of complaints. Services at the EOC are free of charge to all members of the public.

The EOC operates within the ambit of four broad categories of discrimination and on the basis of seven status grounds. We are guided by the act to enforce the prohibition of employers, educational institutions, the providers of goods and services and the providers of accommodation from treating with people adversely because of any of the following inherent and personal attributes: their race, ethnicity, sex, religion, origin, marital status or any disability that they may have.

What is important to note is that a category of discrimination must correlate to a status ground, for

eg an employer refusing to hire a person because of their religion.

The act also proscribes instances of victimisation as a result of a complaint of discrimination and offensive behaviour committed with the intention of inciting gender, racial or religious hatred in a public setting, with the exception of a place of public worship, because of a person's or group's gender, race, ethnicity, origin or religion.

The EOC continues to receive, investigate and conciliate matters of discrimination. As such, a person who believes that they have been subjected to discrimination in any of the above areas may lodge a complaint with the EOC. The EOC attends to every complaint lodged at its office; firstly by verifying if the complaint meets the legal threshold stipulated in the act.

Once that hurdle has been surmounted, a detailed and extensive investigation takes place to determine all the relevant facts and issues, gather evidence and give both the complainant and respondent the opportunity to state their case. Some complaints may be resolved during the investigation process by proactive action taken by the parties. Others proceed to conciliation, another free, in-house service provided by the EOC's very experienced and qualified conciliator.

If the matter is unresolved after conciliation or if the parties are unwilling to attempt to conciliate the dispute, the complaint can be referred to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal (EOT). The EOT, which is an independent body, separate and distinct from the EOC, is a superi-

or court of record and its mandate is to hear and adjudicate on matters referred to it by the EOC. The EOT has the power to make orders, declarations and awards of compensation as it determines to be appropriate.

In addition to the functions listed above, the EOC offers free services such as inclusivity training for organisations, appearances on webinars and panels as subject-matter experts, publication of guidelines, advising state enterprises and non-governmental organisations on the development of anti-discrimination policies, working with stakeholders on projects to amplify calls for equality, and be a part of movements that meaningfully and positively impact individuals, communities, society and the nation.

Why the EOC's work matters

The EOC is positioned to be the leading public authority on equality and discrimination. We promote the prohibition of certain kinds of discrimination and allow a mechanism for those who have been discriminated against to pursue redress. The EOC provides an essential service that affords affected people the choice to bring their complaint of discrimination to the commission without any legal representation required.

The burden of legal fees can deter individuals from seeking fair treatment, compensation or justice, especially when they have limited financial means or have been terminated and are without an income. By submitting a complaint to the commission, citizens have the opportunity to have their dispute objectively investigated by an independent body free from bias and influence.

At the EOC, we are committed in our duties to foster greater public education and better inform citi-

zens on their rights and obligations. This awareness is beneficial in promoting better working relationships and equitable interactions between parties across the diverse melting pot that is our society in TT. A knowledgeable citizenry promotes respect, equality and anti-discriminatory practices, which help to maintain the pillars that we stand for as a nation

For more information on the act and the services of the commission visit our website:

www.equalopportunity.gov.tt

e-mail: communications@eoc.gov.tt or visit our social media pages:

- **Facebook:** EOCTT
- **LinkedIn:** Equal Opportunity Commission of Trinidad and Tobago
- **YouTube:** Equal Opportunity Commission TT
- **Instagram:** Equal Opportunity Commission TT



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**The EOC offers free educational
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- Understanding Discrimination
- Promoting Equal Opportunity
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- Creating Inclusive Policies

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Changing perceptions, promoting equality

FOR MANY people across TT, home is a place of comfort. But for those who live in so-called “hotspots,” their address alone can be a source of stigma and discrimination. Hotspot communities labelled as high-risk or crime-prone are often treated as monolithic areas of lawlessness. These labels not only affect how the public views these communities, but also how residents are treated when they apply for jobs, seek housing, or try to access services. In short, the stigma of living in a hotspot can follow someone long after they leave their street.

This kind of stereotyping can lead to real consequences. Job seekers may be turned down simply because of the community they come from, rather than their skills or qualifications. A landlord may reject a rental application based solely on an address, without ever meeting the applicant. A business may impose extra conditions or even refuse service because of assumptions about a person's neighbourhood. These practices are often rooted in prejudice, not facts, and they harm individuals, families, and entire communities.

At the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC), we understand that discrimination isn't always about race, sex, or religion. Sometimes, it shows up in more subtle but damaging ways like judging someone because of where they live or grew up. Under the Equal Opportunity Act, the commission is responsible for receiving, investigating, and, where possible, resolving complaints of discrimination in four main areas: employment, education, the

provision of goods and services, and accommodation. While the act defines specific grounds that are protected like race, religion, sex, disability, and origin, many cases reveal deeper patterns of social exclusion that come from years of bias, marginalisation and profiling.

When someone is denied an opportunity because of their perceived background or place of origin, it often overlaps with other protected characteristics. For example, a young person from a marginalised community may be denied an interview not just because of their address, but because of stereotypes linking people from that area to crime or violence. Similarly, an individual from a stigmatised community may face barriers to advancement because of assumptions that people from that area are not “trustworthy” or “professional.”

This is why public education is so important. Beyond handling complaints, the EOC has a mandate to promote understanding of the principles of equality and good relations between people from different backgrounds. That includes highlighting the long-term effects of stereotyping and working to shift how we view each other. The reality is that many communities labelled as hotspots are also home to vibrant cultures, hard-working families and very talented young people striving for better. They deserve to be seen for who they are; not reduced to a stereotype based on a few headlines or police reports.

To address this, we encourage

employers, educators, service providers, and the general public to examine their own biases. Are we giving everyone a fair chance, or are we unconsciously closing doors because of where someone lives? Do we assume a person is dangerous, uneducated, or unreliable because of their community? These are hard questions, but asking them is the first step toward building a more inclusive society. At the EOC, we offer free workshops to help organisations understand how discrimination can show up and what they can do about it. We also provide support for anyone who feels they've been unfairly treated.

Stigma should not be a barrier to opportunity. Every citizen of TT, regardless of their address, deserves respect and a fair chance to contribute to society. It's time we stop judging people by where they live and start recognising their potential.

Let's stop the nonsense of discriminating based on where someone lives, their race, or background and work toward a society where everyone has a fair and equal chance at education, employment, and access to goods and services.

If you've been discriminated against or want to learn more about your rights, we're here to help. Visit www.equalopportunity.gov.tt, e-mail us at communications@eoc.gov.tt, or call 1-868-672-0928 to **book a free workshop for your organization, report discrimination or victimisation, or get support.** *You can also follow us on social media.*



Men's mental health: Why it matters to all of us

Every year, more and more men across the world are silently struggling with depression, anxiety, trauma and other mental health issues. Many don't seek help. Some don't even talk about it and far too many pay the ultimate price by dying young, dying alone, or dying by suicide.

In TT, men account for the vast majority of suicide deaths. Ministry of Health data show that from 2016 to 2019, there were 310 male suicides, rising to 343 between 2020 and 2023. Since 2020, approximately 83 per cent of all suicide victims have been men – four out of every five cases. This rate is significantly higher than the global average, where men are typically twice as likely as women to die by suicide.

The data point to a quiet crisis, one often buried under stigma, silence and the pressure to “tough it out.” This isn't just a health issue. It's a social one. And yes, it's a matter of equality.

At the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) we exist to protect the rights of everyone in TT to live, work, and participate fully in society without discrimination; and while we often speak up for the rights of historically marginalised groups, it's also important to talk about how traditional ideas about masculinity, stigma and social pressure can negatively affect men too. Mental health doesn't discriminate, but society often does. The silent struggle

Let's start with the reality: Men are far less likely than women to seek professional help for mental health issues. Cultural expectations play a big part in this. From a young age, many boys are taught to “man up,” “be strong,” and “don't cry.” Vulnerability is seen as a weakness and talking about your feelings is often discouraged.

By adulthood, this emotional bottling-up becomes a habit. But repressing emotions doesn't make them go away; it just buries them deeper. This can lead to increased rates of substance abuse, violence and even suicide. In TT, as in many other countries, men are more likely to die by suicide and less likely to access counselling or therapy.

We also see this playing out in the workplace. A man may be struggling silently with anxiety but doesn't feel safe taking time off or even asking for help. If he does, he might fear being judged as “unfit,” “soft,” or “not leadership material.” That's not just a personal problem; it's a systemic one.

What does this have to do with the EOC?

The Equal Opportunity Act protects people against discrimination in four broad areas: employment, education, the provision of goods and services, and accommodation. It also recognises several categories of protection, including sex, disability and mental health status.

Mental health is covered under the category of disability. This means a person should not face discrimination in any public space because of depression, anxiety, PTSD, or any other mental health condition. They have a right to be treated fairly, with dignity and respect.

So, when men avoid seeking mental health support because they fear stigma or workplace repercussions, we're looking at a rights issue; and when workplaces don't create supportive environments, or when systems fail to accommodate those with mental health conditions, the EOC can investigate and conciliate.

But beyond legal protection, our mandate includes promoting understanding and education. That's why this month and every month we want to encourage open, honest conversations about mental health, especially among men. We all have a role to play.

Creating a more equal society includes making space for men to feel, speak and heal. That doesn't mean downplaying the struggles of others. It means recognising that equality involves addressing everyone's barriers including those shaped by gender norms. So, what can we as men do?

• **Talk openly:** Whether it's with a friend, colleague or relative, start a conversation. Let the men in your life know it's okay not to be okay.

• **Check your workplace culture:** Are there policies and

practices that support mental wellness for all staff? Are people encouraged to take mental health days, access counselling, or request reasonable accommodations?

- **Challenge harmful stereotypes:** Statements like “real men don’t cry” or “he’s just weak” are not just outdated; they’re dangerous.

- **Know your rights:** If you or someone you know is being treated unfairly at work, in school, or in accessing services because of a mental health condition, you can contact the EOC. Our role is to investigate, support, conciliate


and protect your rights to equal treatment.

A healthier society is a fairer one. Men’s mental health isn’t just a “men’s issue.” It’s a community issue. Families, workplaces, and entire societies function better when people, regardless of gender, are supported and well. Let’s create a culture where men can speak freely, seek help without shame and be met with understanding rather than judgement.

That’s not just good for men, it’s good for all of us. And for the men reading this – stay up, kings. We see

you. Life doesn’t always make space for men to pause, to breathe, to say,

“I’m not okay.” But you matter, and your mental health matters. You don’t have to carry it all on your own. Talk to someone, lean on your support system and give yourself permission to rest when you need to. There’s strength in being honest about your struggles and feelings and there’s no shame in seeking help. You are not alone, and you are not weak; you are human. Keep pushing, keep showing up. You’ve got this, king.



What is the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC)?

The EOC is a statutory body in Trinidad and Tobago, established under the Equal Opportunity Act (EOA), Chapter 22:03.


Its main purpose?

To promote equality of opportunity and prevent discrimination in key areas of public life. The EOC also raises awareness about equal rights and assists individuals in understanding their legal protections.

SERVICES ARE FREE

Complaint Forms can be downloaded at:
<https://equalopportunity.gov.tt/>

For More Info:
www.equalopportunity.gov.tt
672-0928 | communications@eoc.gov.tt
Main Office: 55-57 Manic Street, Chaguanas



Now yuh know!!

UNFAIRLY TREATED?



Equal Opportunity Commission

Promoting Equality

DON'T STAY SILENT.

What We Do

We investigate complaints and conciliate discrimination in categories of

- Employment
- Education
- Provision of Goods and Services
- Provision of Accommodation

TALK TO US We Are Here To Help

What Is Discrimination?

Unfair treatment based on your:

- Race
- Religion
- Sex
- Disability
- Origin
- Marital Status
- Ethnicity

Examples:

A manager refusing promotion because of religion.

A store denies service because of your disability.

Please note all matters must be investigated to confirm that persons were discriminated against.

About the EOC

The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) is a statutory body established to promote equality and eliminate discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago through public education, investigating, and conciliating complaints of discrimination.

Yes, Tobago
you could access
our services too!!!

All our services are 100% FREE.

Opening Hours
Monday - Friday
8:00am - 4:00pm
Except Public Holidays

Free Workshops for Your Organisation

Want to create a more inclusive workplace or community?

The EOC offers free educational workshops on topics such as:

- Understanding Discrimination
 - Promoting Equal Opportunity
 - Sexual Harassment in the work place
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- Available for: Schools • Businesses
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Book a session today!

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