

COMMENTARY

EOC empowers the public

NEWSDAY 8 HRS AGO



TO BE informed is to be empowered. The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC), in its role in eliminating discrimination and promoting equality, is ever mindful that it is important to remind citizens about the role/functions of the commission and the tenets of the Equal Opportunity Act to empower 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 was established by the Equal Opportunity Act 2000 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 and good relations between people of different statuses.

The EOC's functions are outlined in section 27 of the act. These are:

- (a) to work towards the elimination of discrimination;
- (b) to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status generally;
- (c) to keep under review the working of this act and any relevant law and, when so required by the minister, or otherwise thinks it necessary, draw up and submit to the minister proposals for amending them;
- (d) to receive, investigate and, as far as possible, conciliate allegations of discrimination;
- (e) to develop, conduct and foster research and educational programmes and other programmes for the purpose of eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status;
- (f) to prepare and to publish appropriate guidelines for the avoidance of discrimination;
- (g) to do any other thing conducive or incidental to the carrying out of its functions.

About the act

The act is a piece of legislation that empowers; it seeks to prohibit certain kinds of discrimination and to create a mechanism for those who have been discriminated against to get redress. It operates in four broad categories and on seven status grounds; it prohibits employers, educational institutions, the providers of goods and services and the providers of accommodation from treating with people adversely because of any one of the following inherent and personal attributes: their race, ethnicity, sex, religion, origin, marital status or any disability that they may have.

The act also covers victimisation and offensive behaviour.

Services of the EOC

One of the main functions of the commission is to receive, investigate and conciliate matters of discrimination. If a person thinks that they have been discriminated against, they can lodge a complaint on the EOC's website – www.equalopportunity.gov.tt – or send an e-mail to complaints@eoc.gov.tt. Services at the EOC are free of charge up until the stage of conciliation.

Another important function of the EOC is to educate the public about the act and the mandate of the EOC. Members of the public are reminded that information on inclusivity and equality are available on the EOC's website and social media. The EOC also offers free services such as:

- Providing information and legal advice at our nationwide caravan. The next stop is at the Tunapuna Administrative Complex on Friday.
- Webinar appearances such as its presentation on “Policy Development for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” on Thursday at the Arthur Lok Jack Global School of Business.
- Presenting at conferences such as the mediation conference from July 12 to 14, hosted by the Community Mediation Services Division of the Ministry of Sport and Community Development.
- Facilitating public education engagements with stakeholders such as the legal aid clinic at the Sangre Grande Community Centre on July 29.
- Inclusivity training for organisations (employers and employees in public and private sectors).
- Guidance on inclusive policies such as sexual harassment policies at private and public sector institutions including employers and educational institutions.

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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