

# Free and easy EOC redress

THE SERVICES offered at the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) are designed to be accessible and inclusive. The Equal Opportunity Act removes potential barriers that may prevent a person from accessing justice and empowers them to exercise their right to equality.

If you feel that someone has discriminated against you, you can turn to the EOC for redress. This is one of the main reasons the commission exists. It is empowered to receive, investigate and conciliate complaints.

## Cost to access service

The services of the EOC are free of charge up until the stage of conciliation. There are no legal or administrative fees attached to the its services. The EOC is a viable and accessible option for those who cannot afford to hire legal services to seek justice.

## Facilities to lodge a complaint

Website: Visit the EOC's website, [www.equalopportunity.gov.tt](http://www.equalopportunity.gov.tt) and go to the *lodge a complaint* tab. E-mail- [complaints@eoc.gov.tt](mailto:complaints@eoc.gov.tt).

In-person: You can mail or deliver a letter to our office located at 55-57 Manic Street, Chaguanas.

Outreach: Even though outreach activities are suspended due to covid19, people can lodge a complaint when our caravan is on the road again in various communities.

## Discrimination consequences

The EOC investigates all complaints that are lodged at its office. We provide

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conciliation services but if the matter is not resolved, with the consent of the aggrieved the matter will be referred to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal. The tribunal, though it is an independent and distinct body, was also established by the act and can order and award compensation. The tribunal has an official seal that will be judicially noticed in all courts.

## We cover victimisation

The Equal Opportunity Act protects you against discrimination by victimisation. The act is clear that victimising someone because they lodged a complaint or provided evidence for a person who lodged a complaint is in contravention of the act.

## Hefty fines for discriminators

When a person lodges a complaint,

the commission makes all reasonable endeavours to resolve the complaint if it finds it may be resolved by conciliation. The commission may issue a notice requiring the complainant, the person who allegedly committed the act of discrimination and any other person who may be likely to assist in the settlement to attend conciliation.

A person who, without reasonable excuse, refuses or fails to comply with any requirement of the notice (under sections 33 and 35(2) of the Equal Opportunity Act) are liable on summary conviction. This means that the individual or organisation can find themselves before the Magistrates' Court to account for not attending conciliation and made to pay fines. In the case of an individual, the fine is \$1,000 and in the case of an organisation, the fine is \$5,000. This fine will be applied for every day that the individual or organisation refuses or fails to comply with any requirement of a notice.

## Complaint against individuals and companies

Some people are under the impression that only employees can lodge a complaint against their employer or that members of the public can only lodge a complaint against an organisation, but this is not the case. You can lodge a complaint against a person. This includes a person who has discriminated against you on social media. A major benefit of the Equal Opportunity Act is that it offers redress for those who have experienced discrimination outside of workplace contexts.