



The Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) supports the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as it secures the nation while preserving individual liberty, fairness, and equality under the law.



Remembering Hurricane Katrina

Ten years have passed since Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast region, changing lives and changing the way DHS prepares for and responds to disasters. As we reflect on the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, we consider the lessons learned and progress made to improve planning and recovery for future emergencies and natural disasters.

Historically, diverse communities have faced barriers to critical services and information following disasters because of race, color, national origin, disability, and other bases. This was especially evident following Hurricane Katrina. Under the [Homeland Security Act](#), and by delegation of the Secretary of Homeland Security, CRCL has responsibility for ensuring compliance with and enforcement of civil rights law and policy in the programs and activities conducted and assisted by DHS. By ensuring compliance with federal civil rights laws, we support meaningful access to preparedness, response, and recovery services, programs, and activities for diverse communities affected by disasters.

Through Department collaboration, we ensure civil rights are protected in our varying homeland security missions:

- CRCL and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) have embedded civil rights protections into national emergency management doctrine, including the [National Preparedness Goal](#), the [National Response Framework](#), and the [National Disaster Recovery Framework](#).
- CRCL and FEMA also provide [guidance](#) to recipients of DHS financial assistance on effectively communicating with diverse communities during preparedness, response, and recovery.
- CRCL collaborates with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Customs and Border Protection on public messages announcing limits on immigration enforcement associated with evacuations and sheltering in connection with disasters.
- CRCL also consults with communities before, during, and following emergencies to incorporate their needs and perspectives in DHS activities.

Going forward, CRCL remains committed to working with FEMA and other partners to ensure that civil rights are an integral part of disaster preparedness, and the lessons we learned from Hurricane Katrina are never forgotten.

Read stories of recovery at FEMA’s website, [Hurricane Katrina: A Decade of Progress through Partnerships](#).

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**A Decade of Progress
through Partnerships
Hurricane Katrina**



[Read stories of recovery](#)

DHS Announces Faith-based Rule

DHS has published in the *Federal Register* a [supplemental notice of proposed rulemaking on Nondiscrimination in Matters Pertaining to Faith-Based Organizations](#). Following an initial proposal published in 2008, DHS proposes to issue a rule to ensure that faith-based organizations may compete on an equal footing with other organizations for direct federal financial assistance for which they are otherwise eligible, and to allow those groups to fully participate in federally supported social service programs, while beneficiaries under those programs also receive appropriate protections. The proposed rule would implement policy set forth in Executive Orders issued by President Barack Obama and by President George W. Bush, including Executive Order 13559, Fundamental Principles and Policymaking Criteria for Partnerships with Faith-Based and Other Neighborhood Organizations (November 17, 2010). The principal provisions of the proposed rule are:

- Equal treatment, nondiscrimination, and independence for faith-based organizations seeking to participate in social service programs funded by alongside assurance that such organizations may not discriminate against beneficiaries of the social service programs on the basis of the beneficiaries' religion. Faith-based organizations participating in DHS programs would maintain their independence, including practice of their religious beliefs and selection of board members.
- DHS direct financial assistance could not be used to support explicitly religious activities. Indirect financial assistance – such as a voucher or certificate placed in the hands of a beneficiary, who can use the voucher with a choice of providers – could be used for programs with more religious content, so long as the beneficiary has a true choice of providers including an adequate secular option.
- Beneficiaries of social service programs provided through faith-based organizations would generally receive a notice of the protections afforded to them, and could seek a referral to a different provider for programs receiving direct DHS financial assistance.
- The existing statutory and regulatory provisions pertaining to employment discrimination based on religion would not be affected by the proposed rule.

DHS is seeking public comment on the [proposed rule](#). Any public comments **must be received by October 5, 2015** and can be submitted through the eRulemaking Portal at www.regulations.gov, or by other means set forth in the proposed rule.

Read more: [Promoting Common-Ground Reforms of Social Service Partnerships](#), White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships (August 5, 2015).

CRCL Works to Protect Houses of Worship in Denver

CRCL, in partnership with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Colorado, recently hosted a special engagement to discuss protecting houses of worship in Denver. The meeting was held to address concerns and vulnerabilities felt by various communities of faith following the church shooting in Charleston, South Carolina and active shooter threats in the Denver area. More than 200 faith-based and community leaders, local law enforcement, federal partners, and advocacy groups attended.

U.S. Attorney John Walsh spoke on how his office works with local authorities and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to keep communities informed about potential threats. Federal and advocacy representatives also presented on these topics:

- an FBI Special Agent spoke on preparing for active shooter scenarios and special training available for communities to better prepare for incidents
- the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division spoke on ways that hate crimes are prosecuted and how communities can be involved in that process
- the Anti-Defamation League spoke on various symbols that hate groups use to promote their ideology

- the President of Colorado Sikhs spoke on the Sikh community’s efforts to protect their houses of worship following the active shooter incident at a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin in 2012
- the DHS Protective Service Advisor for Colorado spoke on the available community resources to assess and protect houses of worship

CRCL will conduct similar events with diverse communities in other metropolitan areas. For more information on DHS resources for communities, see our [Community Outreach and Training webpage](#) or email communityengagement@hq.dhs.gov.

15 Years of Expanding Language Access

August 11, 2015 marked 15 years since the signing of [Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency](#) (August 11, 2000), which expanded language access across the federal government. CRCL is charged with implementing the Executive Order throughout DHS. We have taken great strides to ensure meaningful access for LEP individuals in our programs and activities. Our progress in recent years includes:

- Establishing the DHS Language Access Working group to focus on related issues and needs across DHS Components
- Developing and implementing the first-ever [DHS Language Access Plan](#) (in 2012) and individual [Component Language Access Plans](#), which will soon be finalized and released to the public
- Improving access for LEP persons in the complaint and redress processes, including providing CRCL’s [complaint form in multiple languages](#) and translation and interpretation services
- Increasing outreach and services to LEP persons and diverse communities in the languages they speak and understand, including rare or less common indigenous languages of Central and South America
- Developing and disseminating “I Speak” language identification materials across DHS for use in law enforcement activity, disaster response, and other DHS encounters with LEP persons
- Integrating language access considerations in planning and procedures connected to public alerts
- Improving access for LEP persons in disaster services, including the [FEMA mobile app in Spanish](#)
- Increasing the availability of immigration benefits and services information in multiple languages through [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Multilingual Resource Center](#)

CRCL has consulted with stakeholders such as LEP persons and their representative organizations for their input on our language access initiatives. Stakeholder feedback has improved our work and overall efforts to provide timely and high quality language services across the Department’s many missions and program areas. We welcome your continued feedback and ideas on these issues.

CRCL on the Road, August

August 17 – Denver, Colorado

CRCL convened meetings with the U.S. Attorney’s Office and diverse community stakeholders.

August 25 – Denver, Colorado

CRCL convened its quarterly community engagement roundtables with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

August 27 – Los Angeles, California

CRCL convened its quarterly community engagement roundtables with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

August 24 – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

CRCL convened meetings with diverse community stakeholders.

August 26 – Atlanta, Georgia

CRCL convened its quarterly community engagement roundtables with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

August 27 – Boston, Massachusetts

CRCL participated in the BRIDGES roundtable with local federal partners and diverse community leaders.

Additional information, and contacting us

The goal of this periodic newsletter is to inform members of the public about the activities of the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, including: how to file complaints; ongoing and upcoming projects; opportunities to offer comments and feedback; etc. We distribute our newsletters via our stakeholder email list and make them available to community groups for redistribution. Issues of the newsletter can be accessed online at: www.dhs.gov/crcl-newsletter.

If you would like to receive this newsletter via email, want to request back issues, or have other comments or questions, please let us know by emailing crcloutreach@dhs.gov. For more information, including how to make a civil rights or civil liberties complaint about DHS activities, visit: www.dhs.gov/crcl.

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