OFFICE FOR INCLUSION AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Protected Classes in the Workplace

The statuses defined below are protected from discrimination, harassment, and retaliation in employment under federal and Connecticut state law, as well as University policy. Protections are based on actual or perceived identities. [1]

UConn and UConn Health comply with all applicable federal and state laws and do not discriminate based on protected class. All employment decisions must be objective, non-discriminatory, and based on posted qualifications.

Core Identity & Demographic Protections

- **Age**: Protects individuals from age-related discrimination in hiring, promotion, wages, and termination.
- **Ancestry:** Protection based on a person's **family lineage, descent, or historical country of origin**, extending beyond current national citizenship.
- **Color:** Protection against discrimination based on **pigmentation, complexion, or skin tone** of a person, which can occur independently of race.
- **Ethinicity:** Refers to a social group with shared common language, culture, ancestry, race, and/or other social characterisitcs.
- **National Origin:** Protects individuals based on their **place of birth, country of origin, ethnicity, or accent**, as well as physical, cultural, or linguistic characteristics.
- **Race:** Protects individuals from systemic or individual discrimination based on **ethnic traits, physical characterstics, hair textrures, or hairstyles** historically associated with specific racial groups.
- **Religion:** Protects individuals belonging to traditional, organized religions, as well as those who hold sincerely held religious, ethical, or moral beliefs. It also mandates reasonable accomodations for religious practices.

Sex, Gender, & Family Protections

- **Sex (Including Pregnancy):** Prohibits discrimination based on biological sex, which explicity encompasses pregnancy, childbirth, lactation, or related medical conditions. This includes providing reasonable modifications related to pregnancy and preganancy-related
- **Marital Status:** Protects individuals from discrimination based on **marital status, including being single, married, divorced, widowed, or separated**. Employers cannot make employment decisions based on an individual's marital situation.
- **Gender Identity or Expression:** Protects an individual's **gender related identity, appearance, or behavior**, regardless of whether it aligns with their assigned sex at birth.

[1] The University's Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment and Related Interpersonal Violence prohibits discrimination and discriminatory harassment based on actual or perceived protected identities, as well as retaliation.

- **Sexual Orientation:** Protects individuals from discrimination based on their identity in relation to the gender(s) to which they are romantically or sexually attracted to (e.g., homsexuality, bisexuality, or heterosexuality).

Health, Disability, & Genetic Protections

- **Physical or Mental Disability:** Protects individuals with **chronic physical illnesses, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, or a past/present history of mental illness**. It requires employers to provide reasonable accomodations to qualified individuals.
- **Genetic Information:** Prohibits the use of **genetic tests, family medical histories, or hereditary data** in making employment decisions (per the federal Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act).
- **Workplace Hazard to the Reproductive System:** A specific Connecticut protection ensuring that an employee cannot be discriminated against, reassigned, or terminated due to **environmental or chemical hazards in the workplace that could impact reproductive health.**

Status-Based Protections under Connecticut Law

- **Criminal Record:** Under Connecticut law, an individual cannot be automatically disqualified from **state employment or professional licensing** solely due to a prior criminal conviction, unless the crime directly relates to the job.
- **Domestic Violence / Sexual Assault / Human Trafficking Victim:** Protects employees who are survivors of these crimes from discrimination. It mandates **reasonable safety accommodations** and protected time off for court appearances or medical care.
- **Veteran Status:** Protects **military veterans, active-duty service members, and reservists** from workplace discrimination, requiring affirmative steps to hire and advance protected veterans.

Prohibited Retaliation

- **Prior Protected Activity:** Strictly prohibits retaliation against any individual who has filed a discrimination complaint, opposed an unlawful employment practice, or participated as a witness in a civil rights investigation or proceeding. [2]

[2] In addition to the provisions in the Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment and Related Interpersonal Violence prohibiting retaliation, the University's Non-Retaliation Policy also prohibits retaliation for making a good faith report or participating in a proceeding concerning suspected violations of policy or law.