I. Policy Statement

Venango County is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any program, activity, or project, including those receiving federal financial assistance. In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as well as U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7, Venango County strictly prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin (including limited English proficiency), age, sex, or disability in all of its programs, services, and activities. Venango County does not participate in, or tolerate, intimidation or retaliation.

This policy applies to all members of the public, program beneficiaries, participants, and applicants interacting with any project administered or overseen by Venango County.

II. Designated Non-Discrimination Coordinator

To ensure compliance and oversee the investigation of external civil rights complaints, Venango County has designated a Non-Discrimination Coordinator. All inquiries, accessibility requests, or grievances concerning external discrimination should be directed to:

Attn: Justin Wolfe, Non-Discrimination Coordinator
Venango County Human Resources Department
1174 Elk Street
Franklin, PA 16323
Email: justin.wolfe@venangocountypa.gov
Phone: (814) 432-9555

III. Accessibility and Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Venango County will take reasonable steps to ensure that individuals with disabilities and those with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) have meaningful access to public programs, public notices, and project information. If you require language interpretation services, translated materials, or auxiliary aids to participate in a County program or project, please contact the Non-Discrimination Coordinator listed above.

IV. External Grievance Procedure

Any person who believes they, or a specific class of individuals, have been subjected to discrimination prohibited by 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7 may file a formal complaint using the steps below.

Step 1: Submitting a Complaint

Complaints must be filed in writing within one hundred and eighty (180) calendar days of the alleged discriminatory act or when the complainant became aware of the alleged discrimination.

The written complaint should include:

- The complainant's name, address, and contact information.
- A detailed description of the alleged discriminatory act(s), including dates, times, locations, and the specific program, activity, or project involved.
- The basis of the alleged discrimination (e.g., race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability).
- The names and contact info of any witnesses, if available.
- The requested remedy or resolution.

Complaints should be sent via mail or email to the Designated Non-Discrimination Coordinator listed in Section II.

Step 2: Intake and Initial Review

Within fifteen (15) calendar days of receiving the complaint, the Non-Discrimination Coordinator will review the submission to confirm jurisdiction.

- If the complaint is complete and falls under federal civil rights jurisdiction, an investigation will be initiated.
- If the complaint is incomplete or falls outside the County's jurisdiction, the Coordinator will notify the complainant in writing, explaining what information is missing or directing them to the appropriate agency.

Step 3: Investigation

The Coordinator (or a designated investigator) will conduct a thorough investigation into the allegations. This process may include interviewing the complainant, interviewing relevant County personnel or contractors, and reviewing project documentation. The investigator will maintain a confidential log of all civil rights complaints.

Step 4: Resolution and Final Notice

Within sixty (60) calendar days of receiving the complaint, the Non-Discrimination Coordinator will issue a written Final Determination. This notice will be sent to the complainant and will outline:

- The findings of the investigation.
- A determination of whether discrimination occurred.
- Any corrective actions, remedies, or procedural adjustments that will be implemented.

Step 5: Right to File Externally

The complainant maintains the right to file a direct complaint with the appropriate federal oversight agency at any time, regardless of the status or outcome of the internal County grievance process. For projects funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, complaints may be directed to:

EPA External Civil Rights Compliance Office (ECRCO)
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW (Mail Code 2310A)
Washington, DC 20460
Email: Title_VI_Complaints@epa.gov

V. Public Notice and Posting

This policy and procedure will be prominently displayed on the official Venango County public website, made available at public project sites, and included in public notices for federally funded projects.

