



**DEPARTMENT OF FAIR EMPLOYMENT  
AND HOUSING  
ENFORCEMENT DIVISION  
DIRECTIVE**

**DIRECTIVE NUMBER  
216**

**DISTRIBUTION DATE  
June 1, 2016**

1. **SUBJECT:** REFERRAL OF EQUAL PAY CASES BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF FAIR EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING AND THE DIVISION OF LABOR STANDARDS ENFORCEMENT (DLSE) LABOR COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE
2. **PURPOSE:** To set forth the procedures for the appropriate referral of individuals with sex-based wage discrimination claims to the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement (DLSE) Labor Commissioner's Office and to differentiate the jurisdictions of the Labor Commissioner's Office and the Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH).
3. **BACKGROUND:** The Labor Commissioner's Office and DFEH both administer and enforce laws which prohibit wage discrimination on the basis of sex.

A. **DFEH Statutes:**

DFEH is responsible for enforcing the Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA), California Government code section 12900 et seq., which prohibits many forms of discrimination, including wage discrimination based on sex.

Government Code section 12940 provides, in part:

"It shall be an unlawful employment practice, unless based on a bona fide occupational qualification, or, except where based upon applicable security regulations established by the United States or the State of California:

(a) For an employer, because of the race, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, physical disability, mental disability, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, sexual orientation, or military or veteran status of any person,...to discriminate against the person in compensation or in terms, conditions or privileges of employment."  
[emphasis added]

**B. Labor Code Statutes**

The Labor Commissioner's Office is responsible for administering and enforcing the provisions of the Labor Code which prohibit wage discrimination based on sex. Labor Code section 1197.5, commonly referred to as the Equal Pay Act, defines sex-based wage discrimination, prohibits such discrimination, and establishes the rights and duties of employees and employers in any situation in which sex-based wage discrimination is alleged and found to exist.

Labor Code section 1197.5, subdivision (a), provides, in part:

“(a) An employer shall not pay any of its employees at wage rates less than the rates paid to employees of the opposite sex for substantially similar work, when viewed as a composite of skill, effort, and responsibility, and performed under similar working conditions, except where the employer demonstrates:

(1) The wage differential is based upon one or more of the following factors:

(A) A seniority system;

(B) A merit system;

(C) A system that measures earnings by quantity or quality of production;

(D) A bona fide factor other than sex, such as education, training, or experience. This factor shall apply only if the employer demonstrates that the factor is not based on or derived from a sex-based differential in compensation, is job related with respect to the position in question, and is consistent with a business necessity. For purposes of this subparagraph, “business necessity” means an overriding legitimate business purpose such that the factor relied upon effectively fulfills the business purpose it is supposed to serve. This defense shall not apply if the employee demonstrates that an alternative business practice exists that would serve the same business purpose without producing the wage differential.

(2) Each factor relied upon is applied reasonably.

(3) The one or more factors relied upon account for the entire wage differential.

C. **Responsibilities of Each Department:**

1) DFEH and Labor Commissioner Staff Responsibilities

All professional staff in DFEH and the Labor Commissioner's Office and all other personnel whose duties may involve public contact are required to be familiar with the relevant statutory mandates and must be able to advise accurately any person contacting their offices of his/her rights and duties under these sections.

2) DFEH Procedural Instructions:

DFEH staff should refer to Directive 215, "Complaints Alleging Gender Discrimination in the Form of Pay Inequalities" for instructions on handling cases of this nature.

4. **PROCEDURES FOR COOPERATION AND REFERRAL:**

The following procedures have been developed by DFEH and the Labor Commissioner's Office to promote cooperation between the agencies, avoid a duplication of effort, and provide guidance to staff in handling prospective Labor Commissioner's Office claimants and/or DFEH complainants.

A. **General:**

Persons inquiring about sex-based wage discrimination should be given the opportunity, within the procedures of the relevant agency, to discuss their concerns with a member of the professional staff. The staff member should express the agency's willingness to accept and investigate the claim or complaint, and render an objective determination based on all of the available facts.

B. **Claimants Initially Contacting the Labor Commissioner's Office:**

- 1) If the claim is solely one of sex-based wage discrimination, the Labor Commissioner's Office will accept the claim and advise the claimant that he/she also has the option of filing with DFEH. The Labor Commissioner's Office will refer the claimant to a DFEH document entitled "Equal Pay Cases" on the

DFEH's and Labor Commissioner's websites for reference, or a copy of "Equal Pay Cases" will be mailed to the claimant if he/she does not have access to the Internet.

2) If a sex-based wage discrimination claim is combined with other issues of alleged discrimination, the claimant will be advised that he/she has the following alternatives:

a) Requesting the Labor Commissioner's Office to handle the claim for sex-based wage discrimination

If the claimant selects this alternative, the Labor Commissioner's Office will accept the claim and advise the claimant that he/she also has the option of filing with DFEH. The Labor Commissioner's Office will refer the claimant to a DFEH document entitled "Equal Pay Cases" on the DFEH's and Labor Commissioner's websites for reference, or a copy of "Equal Pay Cases" will be mailed to the claimant if he/she does not have access to the Internet. The claimant is responsible for contacting DFEH to file claims on issues other than wage discrimination; *or*

b) Filing all of his/her claims, including the claim for sex-based wage discrimination, with DFEH. If the claimant selects this alternative, the DFEH shall process all claims. No further action will be taken by the Labor Commissioner's Office.

3) If the issue is one of sex discrimination involving issues other than sex-based wage discrimination as defined by Labor Code section 1197.4, the claimant will be referred to DFEH with no further action by the Labor Commissioner's Office. Examples would include alleged discrimination in hiring, promotions, seniority systems, training practices, or termination.

**C. Complainants Initially Contacting DFEH:**

At the conclusion of the DFEH intake interview, complainants initially contacting DFEH with issues over which both the DFEH and the Labor Commissioner's Office have jurisdiction, will be advised that the Labor Commissioner's Office is also an avenue of redress. The DFEH will refer the complainant to a DFEH document entitled "Equal Pay Cases" on the DFEH's and Labor Commissioner's websites for reference, or a copy of "Equal Pay Cases" will be mailed to the complainant if he/she does not have access to the Internet. DFEH will accept the complaint if that is desired by the complainant.

**5. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION:**

**A. Authority for Sharing Information:**

The Labor Commissioner's Office and DFEH recognize that each is a law enforcement agency for purposes of the California Information Practices Act. The Labor Commissioner's Office and DFEH agree to share information in matters requiring joint investigation by the agencies (such as, in cases where the Labor Commissioner's Office is investigating a sex-based wage discrimination claim while the DFEH is investigating allegations of other forms of discrimination). In addition, the Labor Commissioner's Office and DFEH agree to share information in cases where the agencies determined that the sharing of information would assist in the investigation, resolution, and prosecution of the case.

**B. Procedures for Sharing Information:**

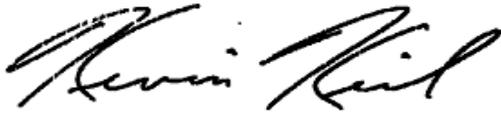
Each agency may make appropriate information available to the other upon request. Requests will be made, and responded to, by the person in charge of the respective offices and will be made in writing. The agency receiving such shared information shall maintain the confidentiality of such shared information consistent with applicable sections of the California Information Practices Act, the California Public Records Act, and the California Labor Code.

**C. Interpretation of this Directive:**

Questions regarding the interpretation of this Directive should be referred through appropriate channels to the DFEH's Chief of

Enforcement or the Deputy Chief of the Labor Commissioner's Office, or such other designated person.

6. **APPROVAL:**



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Kevin Kish, Director

May 12, 2016

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Date



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Julie A. Su, Labor Commissioner

May 24, 2016

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Date