



County of Sonoma
Commission on Human Rights

Fiscal Years 2021-2023 Work Plan

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Commission on Human Rights is to promote better human relations among all people in Sonoma County through education, mediation, cooperation with County and community agencies, and by initiating action that fosters the recognition of and an appreciation for the cultural diversity of the community.

With this focus, appointed Commissioners have worked to increase their community involvement to become more visible and known to the public. This keeps them involved with current issues and promote a better community.

The Commission on Human rights has changed their mission statement to address issues of discrimination and unjust.

“The County of Sonoma Commission on Human Rights provides leadership, education, and advocacy to ensure all members of our community, especially those among us who are marginalized, disadvantaged, or whose rights are being violated, enjoy the full range of human rights to which every person is entitled.”

In support of the above mission statement, from fiscal year 2021-2022 the Commission focused on providing support to the unsheltered and the LGBTQIA+ communities, providing partnership with community organizations, and passed resolutions that foster the mission of the Commission.

Knowledge Gained

The Commission has learned that the County lacks Warming Centers for the unsheltered and a better policy is needed to help execute Centers when emergency strikes. The Commission would very much like to work with the BOS to attain safer protocols in the future. The Commission also discovered how difficult

it is to pass a resolution in support to the farm workers working conditions. Additionally, the indigenous people need to be represented more in County. The Indigenous People Ad Hoc was created as a result to represent this marginalized community. The Commission has been very involved and visible in the community. The hope is to increase the yearly budget from \$12,000 to \$20,000 to create more projects that can impact the community and can collect more data to better advise the Board of Supervisors for policy making.

Resources

The Commission is more involved and collaborating with community partners to better understand current issues and resources available.

Connections

The Commission has created “Community Spotlight” during their regular monthly meeting. This allows Community organizations to share their missions and/or voice certain issues. These spotlights bring knowledge, connections, project collaborations, and a safe place for current issues. The Commission has collaborated with organizations that include ALMAS, North Bay Jobs With Justice, JACL, Human Trafficking Task Force, Sonoma Act of Kindness, NAACP, North Bay LGBTQI Families, ACLU Northern CA, CLEAN, and NBOP.

OVERVIEW OF FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022 AND LOOKING AHEAD TO FISCAL YEAR 2022-2023

The Commission created ad hocs to focus on underserved groups and in each ad hoc they contributed to community involvement and worked on projects addressing these populations.

People with Disability Rights

The People with Disability Rights Ad Hoc (PWDR) identifies a range of issues from educating the community on appropriate language use in referring to members of the community living with a disability to safety issues faced by the disability community in using public transportation, affordable and safe housing, job availability, discrimination and bullying are major issues that this ad hoc must address. Currently one of the biggest issues is the resolution of the Sonoma Developmental Center and how the people with disabilities will be included in the future of this property that was originally gifted to the State of California to serve the disability community.

The PWDR Ad Hoc bring current issue to the Commission to determine where support is needed. The members of this ad hoc met with Brian Oh, Comprehensive Planning Manager from the Permit, Resource, Management Dept. for County of Sonoma. They provided input on the plans for the Sonoma Developmental Center. The PWDR Ad will continue to be involved with the center.

The PWDR Ad Hoc has partnered up with Celeste Winders on issues of inequality to the students with disabilities in the Sonoma Valley Unified School District. The logistics of the support is still being developed.

Immigrants' Rights Ad Hoc

Immigrants' Rights Ad Hoc is (IR) founded to advance the goal of protecting the rights of all immigrants in Sonoma County. The priorities of the ad hoc is to enhance the understanding and protection of immigrant rights and opportunities under the law.

Through their work, IR Ad Hoc brought forth the “Resolution On The Dignity, Health, And Safety Of Sonoma County” to the Commission and the Commission supported this resolution and urges the Board of Supervisors to support it as well. The immigrant community makes valuable contributions to Sonoma County and they deserve to work and live in a just place

IR Ad Hoc is currently working on collecting information from county data of languages spoken in Sonoma County and establish connections with organizations that serve undocumented workers. Attend events such as Food Justice Week, Filipino American Heritage Month celebration, Latin American/ Hispanic Heritage Month, and community cross-cultural events. This will create trust between the Commission and the community and better partnership with community organizations.

LGBTQIA+ Ad Hoc

LGBTQIA+ Ad Hoc Sonoma County is home to one of the highest per capita populations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA+) persons in the country. LGBTQIA+ residents are not well-represented in policymaking. While there exist a few groups that provide social forums for networking, they are not readily accessible to all members of the LGBTQIA+ community. LGBTQIA+ Ad Hoc also known as Pride Ad Hoc was created to provide support to the LGBTQIA+ community and to better understand their rights.

The Pride Ad Hoc participated in the 2022 Santa Rosa Pride Parade where Commissioners marched and reached out to the public. The Pride Ad Hoc will attend the 2023 Pride Santa Rosa Parade.

Pride Ad Hoc is working with the Visibility Project in high schools and colleges to make sure LGBTQIA+ students understand and know their rights. Pride Ad Hoc will work on Mental Health issues with schools via the Jr Commission on Human Rights for teens to know they have places to turn to when bullied and/or rejected by family/friends. Along with working with local businesses to bring awareness to LGBTQIA+ issues via safe gatherings to watch movies and have open discussions on the issues.

Junior Commission Project

The Junior Commission Project was created to provide a means to engage high school youth ages 14 to 18 in education and activism around human rights issues

within Sonoma County, as well as provide an opportunity to foster leadership skills by educating their peers, develop a voice for advocacy, and bring awareness to human rights issues affecting members of our community. The students are encouraged to be active participants in their community, engaging with elected officials and human rights organizations.

The members of the Junior Commission are exploring the idea of a scholarship or a monetary award for the participants who complete the program. They are also exploring more funding to increase the youth's participation in the community and fieldtrip opportunities.

Indigenous People Ad Hoc

Indigenous People Ad Hoc was created to research and advise the Board of Supervisors on the misrepresentation of this community. The Indigenous people in Sonoma County need to be heard and represented.

Effective implementation of the Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples made by the United Nations on the 13th of September 2007 to protect, respect and fulfill indigenous peoples collective and individual human rights. We call on governments, the UN system, Indigenous Peoples and civil society at large to rise to the historic task before us and make the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples a priority for the County of Sonoma Commission on Human Rights.

Indigenous People Ad Hoc is responsible for CHR being present at the 2023 Raizes Collective Indigenous People's Gathering in May of 2023 at the Sonoma County Fairgrounds. CHR will plan to financially support this event as sponsors and in person by tabling. Will help with outreach and being involved in the organizing committee to help this event be representative of all indigenous communities locally and nationally.

Indigenous People Ad Hoc will work with local businesses, schools and community-based organizations to bring awareness to indigenous people's collective and individual human rights.

Communications and Outreach Standing Committee

The Outreach and Communication Ad Hoc was formed to communicate with the community through written material, social media and in other platforms.

As a visible county body focused on human rights, the Commission is periodically approached by residents raising concerns about possible human right violations in the county. As the Commission's visibility increases through outreach efforts, we anticipate such approaches to increase. CHR will use all available forms of media from in person workshops to online meetings and discussions; to present programs at community meetings, schools, senior centers tabling at public events, festivals, parades, concerts, farmers' markets, youth leadership groups, churches and businesses.

Through the work of this ad hoc, The Commission collaborated with other community organizations to host a Sonoma County Sheriff Candidate Forum. This event was live-streamed on the Petaluma Civics website as well as recorded and displayed on YouTube. More than 240 individuals attended the webinar and more than 400 viewers have viewed the YouTube video.

Communications and Outreach Standing Ad Hoc has been very involved with the unsheltered community. They have voiced their concerns on the procedures to execute warm centers during freezing temperatures. They are actively involved on the inhumane living conditions at the Palm's Inn. They have written press releases, letters to the Board of Supervisors, and other avenues. This issue of the unsheltered is still being monitored by the ad hoc.

Visibility Project

The Visibility Project was created to gather information around human rights incidents and issues in Sonoma County. Based on information obtained through this survey, the ad hoc may be able to recommend changes to current methods of handling these incidents and identify areas of need within the county.

Currently the ad hoc is planning to update the website: <https://socohrvp.org/> to be more engaging. By doing this the hope to make it easier to identify how to

report human rights violations and help victims obtain resources in Sonoma County. The ad hoc is promoting this website to different organizations and will promote this on social media.

Conclusion

The Commission on Human rights will keep developing and restructuring their work to better align their work to their mission and the needs of the community. The Commission will determine their goals and focuses of their future projectors based on the human rights issues the arises in Sonoma County.