



**EMPOWER**  
**COLLABORATE**  
**ENGAGE**



CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG  
COMMUNITY RELATIONS



## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As the human relations agency for the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, we believe that we have an obligation to ensure fairness and help remove barriers that impede the community from living in harmony and equally experiencing all that Charlotte-Mecklenburg has to offer. We strive to leave no one behind and to assure that everyone, regardless of their status, has an equal opportunity to succeed.

The word community is more than just a part of our name. It is our foundation and represents an inclusive group of friends and neighbors of different races, colors, faiths, ethnicities, ages, incomes, disabilities, sexual/gender orientation and nationalities.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations remains committed to building a more fair and just community that supports constructive dialogue, increases understanding, inspires action and promotes harmony.

We thank you for joining in our mission to serve the community we're so fortunate to call home.

– *Willie Ratchford*

*Executive Director, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations*



*Community Relations empowers, collaborates, engages and promotes opportunities to create positive outcomes.*

*Community Relations Mission Statement*

For more than 50 years, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations has been working to help the community deal effectively with issues impacting human relationships. As a statutory agency of the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, Community Relations:

- Promotes the quality of opportunity for all individuals
- Promotes understanding, respect and goodwill among all individuals
- Provides channels of communication among the various racial, religious and ethnic groups in Charlotte-Mecklenburg
- Studies problems in the areas of human and community relations and makes the results available to the public

In addition, as an integral part of the human relations and support system for the City and County, staff and Community Relations Committee (CRC) members pursue activities that:

- Ensure Fair Housing practices and access to Public Accommodations
- Assist in settling disputes and group conflicts
- Improve race, ethnic and community relations
- Prevent discrimination
- Improve communications among various community groups and individuals

As a resident of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community, you have rights. Community Relations remains steadfast in its commitment to assure those rights are protected.

## **ABOUT COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations is made up of five divisions: Administration, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Program, Community Affairs, Dispute Settlement and Fair Housing. Each division works to advance the mission to empower, collaborate, engage and create opportunities to effect positive outcomes throughout the community.

Staff works closely with the CRC, a 45-member team of professionals and volunteers who provide counsel to the Community Relations department and serve as civil rights and human relations advocates. CRC members are appointed by the Mayor, Charlotte City Council and the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners. Together, staff and CRC members build strong relationships, address

community issues and promote awareness of the growing multiculturalism of Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Community Relations provides a range of services designed to make a positive community impact and save taxpayers more than \$600,000 a year. More than 10,000 individuals participate in or are directly impacted by the various programs and activities of Community Relations. From honoring Charlotte-Mecklenburg police officers for exemplary service to mediating disputes and providing conflict resolution training, Community Relations is dedicated to promoting understanding, respect and goodwill.

*Be recognized as a global model in building community harmony by advocating for diversity, equity and access for all.*

*Community Relations Vision Statement*



## **ADMINISTRATION**

The Community Relations leadership team provides oversight of the work of the department, manages the department budget, develops the strategic plan and identifies new opportunities to effectively serve the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community. In addition, the Executive Director works with the CRC Chair to ensure that the committee is equipped to carry out the mission and vision of Community Relations.

## **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) PROGRAM**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law that was enacted on July 26, 1990. The ADA guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications. The law's purpose is to ensure equal access to all municipal programs, services and activities.

The ADA is divided into five titles that relate to different areas of public life:

- Title I          Employment
- Title II        Public Service
- Title III        Public Accommodations
- Title IV        Telecommunication
- Title V        Miscellaneous

The City takes pride in ensuring that people with disabilities are able to take part in, and benefit from, the range of public programs, services and activities offered by the City. The City continues to modify its facilities, programs, policies or practices, as necessary, to ensure access is provided to everyone.



If a grievant believes he or she has been discriminated against on the basis of a disability, the grievant should submit a written complaint containing information about the alleged discrimination, including the name, address and phone number of the grievant and location, date and description of the problem.

The complaint should be submitted as soon as possible but no later than 60 days after the alleged violation to: [CharlotteADA@charlottenc.gov](mailto:CharlotteADA@charlottenc.gov).

## COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

The Community Affairs team develops and implements programs and initiatives that help advance the mission of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations. The primary focus areas for this team are: engagement and outreach, police-community relations, diversity and inclusion, strategic planning and community partnerships. This team also manages youth programs including peer mediation and conflict resolution training.

***Police-Community Relations:*** Community Relations works closely with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) to develop trust and communication between officers and the community. Community Relations' community coordinators support the activities of CMPD, maintain contact with special interest and community groups, identify community needs and provide resources to meet those needs. They also work with officers to provide conflict resolution and de-escalation services to youth in schools across the community.

***Peer Mediation Program:*** The Community Affairs community coordinators work with pre-identified youth groups in various middle schools to train them on the foundation of conflict resolution and awareness. The groups are academically diverse and meet for at least 45 minutes per week. The goal is to provide them with the skills to effectively manage conflict and understand their own response styles when faced with challenging situations.





**Community Engagement:** Community Relations recognizes that a key component of a thriving community is the ability of its residents to feel trust for those with whom they come into contact regularly, particularly those who may be perceived as being “different” – racially, ethnically, sexual/gender orientation, economically, geographically, politically or generationally. To bridge gaps and open lines of communication, trust and understanding, Community Relations periodically holds community forums inviting residents and local officials to build relationships through conversation, group discussion and even debate. Whether the topic revolves around schools, funding, violence or basic human rights, Community Relations, along with partner agencies like CMPD and Community Building Initiative (CBI), feel strongly that honest dialogue can pave the way to a more inclusive Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Community dialogue and other engagement programs are held several times a year, and residents are encouraged to inquire about upcoming programs that may be of interest.

For more information on Community Affairs programs or dialogue, please contact 704-336-2424.

### **DISPUTE SETTLEMENT PROGRAM**

Since 1983, the Community Relations Dispute Settlement Program (DSP) has been providing mediation and conciliation services to Charlotte-Mecklenburg residents.

Through the utilization of trained volunteer mediators, the program has a 90% resolution rate. DSP continues to dramatically decrease the number of court cases that often place an extra burden on an already over-crowded judicial

system by reducing the influx of courtroom cases while saving thousands of dollars each year that individuals may have to pay in their quest for dignity and legal rights. Community Relations representatives remind residents that a request for mediation services is not a guarantee; both parties must agree to mediation before services can be rendered.

**Landlord/Tenant:** Offers opportunities for tenants and landlords to eliminate communication barriers and work together to solve problems. Issues may include: damaged property, security deposit, living conditions, financial assistance for repairs or miscellaneous conflict stemming from the landlord-tenant relationship.

**Juvenile Offender:** Offers a safe environment in which a juvenile who commits a crime (“offender”) and a person who suffers the effects of that crime (“victim”) can meet and talk together. This opportunity provides a chance for each person to more fully understand what happened, to take an active part in determining necessary repairs and to find some measure of healing and closure.

**Medicaid:** Offers Medicaid recipients, who have either been denied requested services or had their services reduced, an opportunity to meet and discuss their concerns with the state entity that made the decision to deny or reduce services. Mediation provides a chance for a better understanding of the needs and concerns of the recipient as well as the Medicaid criteria of the different types of available services and allows the parties to discuss the most appropriate services and/or levels that will meet the recipient’s needs.

**Misdemeanor Cases:** Offers individuals with pending court actions an opportunity to have their court case(s) dismissed without having a criminal conviction on their record. Charges such as simple assault, communicating threats, harassing phone calls, damage to real or personal property, unauthorized use of motor vehicles and larcenies are referred to DSP from district court judges, magistrate offices, district attorney offices, private attorneys, public defender offices, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, Mecklenburg County Sheriff’s Department and the Clerk of Superior Court.

**Truancy/School Issues:** Offers parents, students and school personnel an opportunity to meet in a non-threatening setting to discuss issues that are affecting a child’s attendance and performance in school and to collectively determine a plan of action that will address those issues.

**Charlotte Housing Authority Hearings:** Offers an opportunity for tenant complaints to be heard and acted upon by an unbiased panel in an appropriate period and in a fair manner. The Housing Authority, viewing Community Relations as an impartial third-party, has requested that Community Relations hear eligible cases.

**Mediation for Civil District Court 50C Orders:** Offers individuals who are seeking a 50C no contact order, but do not meet the criteria for such an order, an opportunity to sit down and discuss their concerns. Through mediation, options are developed to address their needs and help understand how they can co-exist and act civilly with one another in the future.



Request for any other mediation services also can be made by submitting the Dispute Resolution Referral Form located at: [charlottenc.gov/communityrelations](http://charlottenc.gov/communityrelations). Click on “Forms.”

## **FAIRNESS IN HOUSING & PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS**

The mission of Community Relations is driven by the fact that equal access in public accommodations is a right, not a privilege.

Community Relations works hard to prevent discrimination in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Formal complaints are accepted from anyone who feels discriminated against in a public place or in housing because of their race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status or disability. When complaints are filed, Community Relations handles each case individually, investigates and participates in any hearings and has a goal of finding a resolution for each case. Staff members document and investigate complaints and conduct standardized testing of alleged violator’s facilities.

Community Relations also provides education and outreach services, which are provided in conjunction with the Federal Fair Housing Assistance Program and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Complaints may be filed using the housing discrimination complaint form located at <http://charlottenc.gov/communityrelations>. Click on “Forms.” For more information about fairness in housing and public accommodations or to file a complaint, call 704-336-5160.

## **TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

Community Relations develops and delivers free training to

Charlotte-area neighborhood associations, civic organizations, schools and other groups.

**Conflict Awareness Training:** Skills are provided to residents and groups on how to handle conflict in an effective, nonviolent manner and where the emphasis is on effective communication.

**Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Training:** Focuses on cultural competency, the strength of a diverse community and how to be accepting of differences.

**Fair Housing:** Practices are taught to Realtors®, apartment management companies, tenants and others in the housing industry. By educating people on fair housing and public accommodations laws, discriminatory practices are curbed proactively.

To inquire about Community Relations training services, please call 704-336-2424.



## **CELEBRATIONS**

### ***Police Community Relations Awards***

For more than 40 years, the Police Community Relations Awards have honored officers who have made outstanding contributions to neighborhoods and communities in the area. Each year, officers are recognized for their advanced creative solutions to neighborhood problems; for demonstrating extraordinary efforts in the area of crime prevention; and for their involvement in helping neighborhoods handle special needs or problems.

### ***Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration***

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. believed in celebrating and promoting the worth of every human being. In his pursuit of equal rights by nonviolent means, Dr. King encouraged diverse cultures to

live together in a spirit of love, understanding and service to one another.

In that same spirit, the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County through the Community Relations Committee, worked to expand the community's observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg MLK National Holiday Celebration includes various events to celebrate those who are committed to carrying Dr. King's legacy forward from generation to generation.

The MLK Medallion Award is another focal point of the Dr. King Celebration and related community recognition efforts. Individuals from all walks of life in Charlotte-Mecklenburg who exemplify the ideas of Dr. King are presented with the award.

## **REQUEST COMMUNITY RELATIONS SERVICES**

You can submit an online form for any of the following:

*Visit: [charlottenc.gov/communityrelations](http://charlottenc.gov/communityrelations) and click on "Forms."*

- Allegation of police misconduct form
- Citizens review board form
- Dispute resolution referral form
- Housing discrimination complaint form
- Landlord and tenant referral form
- MLK Medallion Nomination form
- Police-Community Relations Award nomination form
- Public accommodations discrimination complaint form

## **CONTACT US**

### **Call Us**

ADA Program | 704-336-1297

Community Relations Administration, Training, Community Dialogue | 704-336-2424

Dispute Settlement Program (DSP) | 704-336-2903

Fairness in Housing & Public Places | 704-336-5160

Police-Community Relations Awards Program | 704-336-3056

Police Complaint Review Program | 704-336-5426

### **Visit Us**

700 Parkwood Ave., Charlotte, NC 28205

### **Look for Us Online**

[charlottenc.gov/communityrelations](http://charlottenc.gov/communityrelations)

The City of Charlotte does not discriminate on the basis of disability. We will provide auxiliary aids and services, written materials in alternative formats, and reasonable modifications in policies and procedures to persons with disabilities upon request. To make a request, please call 704-336-1297.



[CHARLOTTENC.GOV/COMMUNITYRELATIONS](https://charlottenc.gov/communityrelations)