The Civil Rights Department is proud to share an overview of the new *Welcome In* program, which launched at the end of 2024. *Welcome In* is a multiyear pilot that aims to support and recognize California businesses that get training and take other steps to create safe and inclusive environments for California consumers.

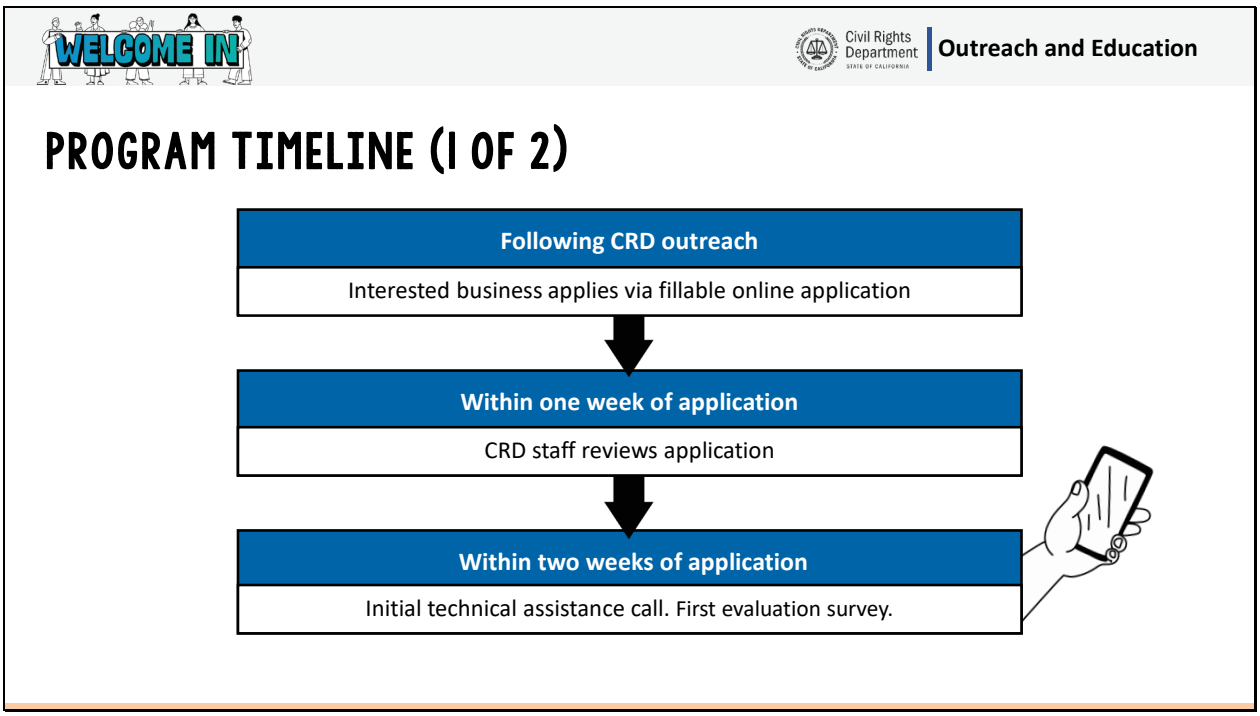
Welcome In was created by CRD to combat a recent rise in acts of discrimination and hate at businesses, including customer-on-customer harassment. Indeed, in 2022, the Legislature passed and Governor Newsom signed Assembly Bill 2448, requiring CRD to create the program. This is because many Californians were and still are experiencing racial, xenophobic, and other forms of harassment when getting groceries, putting gas in their cars, or doing other daily activities.

CRD has designed *Welcome In* to be a partnership between CRD and participating businesses. Over the course of the pilot, CRD will be evaluating the program's effectiveness and making any necessary adjustments. Unless extended by the Legislature, the pilot will end by January 1, 2028.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

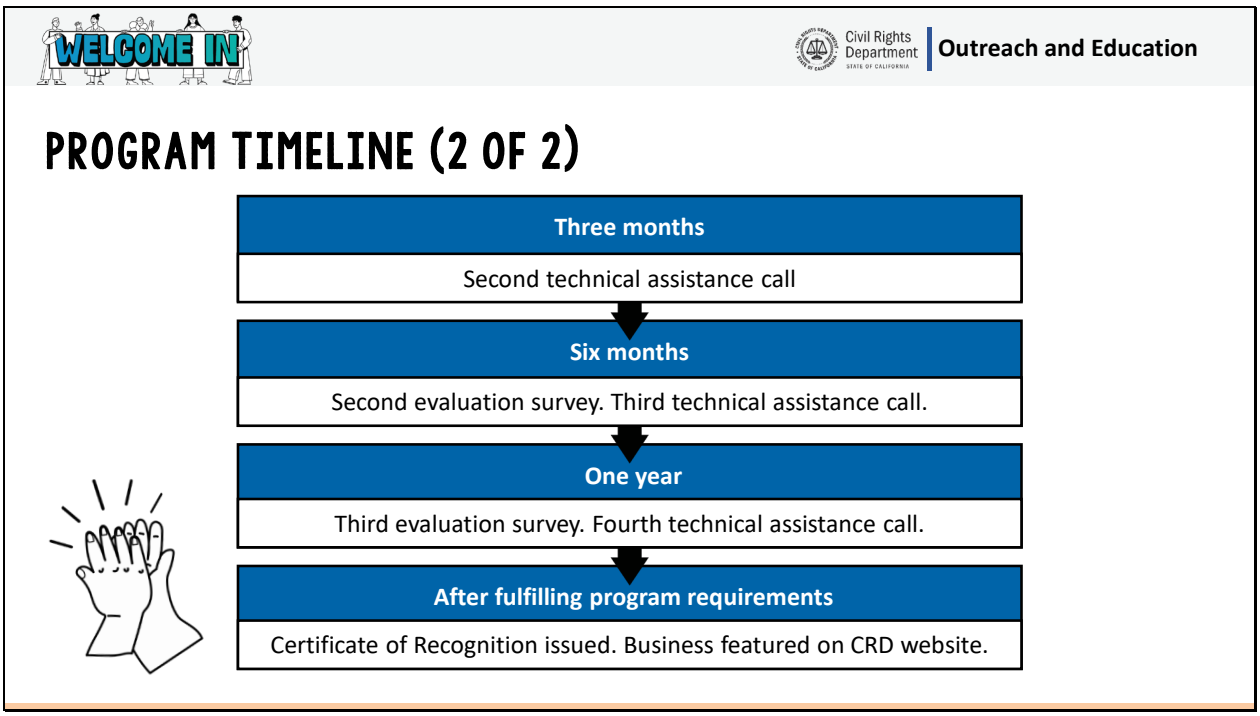
- **Legal trainings**
  - How Can I Help You customer service bystander intervention
  - Civil Rights at California Businesses (Unruh Civil Rights Act)
  - Sexual harassment prevention
- **Adoption of model policy**
- **Four technical assistance calls**
- **Three program evaluation surveys**
- **Three community engagement activities**
- **Public signage**

- **Legal trainings**: When a business joins the program, they will be responsible for identifying who is the best person or people to take our legal trainings and how that person will share the relevant information with the rest of staff. Required trainings cover harassment, discrimination, and hate incidents at businesses, what these terms mean legally, and how to respond to incidents as they occur.
- **Adoption of model policy**: Businesses are expected to adopt our model employee policy, share it with their staff, and/or incorporate it into their existing HR manual or anti-discrimination/harassment policy. The model policy addresses discrimination, harassment, and acts of hate against customers and members of the public.
- **Four technical assistance calls**: These calls are designed to ensure participant businesses understand the program's requirements and have a plan to meet them, including a timeline for implementation. CRD staff will also help troubleshoot any issues or concerns that arise during the business's participation in the program.
- **Three surveys**: the surveys are administered every three months to evaluate how effective and beneficial the program is.
- **Three community engagement activities:** These can be events open to the public at the business itself or participation in other events identified by *Welcome In* staff.
- **Public signage**: Businesses are required to post the code of conduct poster and, upon completion of the program, a certificate of recognition.



The application includes information about the type of business, why they are interested in the program, and what they hope to get out of it.

During the first technical assistance call, the business and *Welcome In* staff will work together to come up with a participation plan tailored to the individual business, including identifying key staff who will serve as point people and developing a timeline for completing the program requirements. Before or soon after the technical assistance call, the business must complete the first anonymous evaluation survey. The goal of the first evaluation survey is to gather baseline data on the business's current approach to handling incidents of discrimination, harassment, and hate.

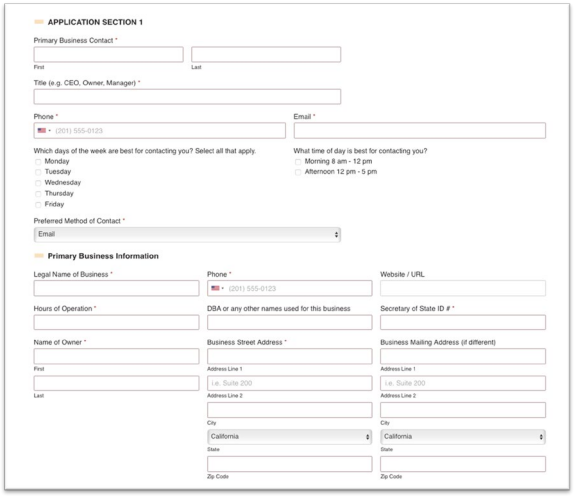


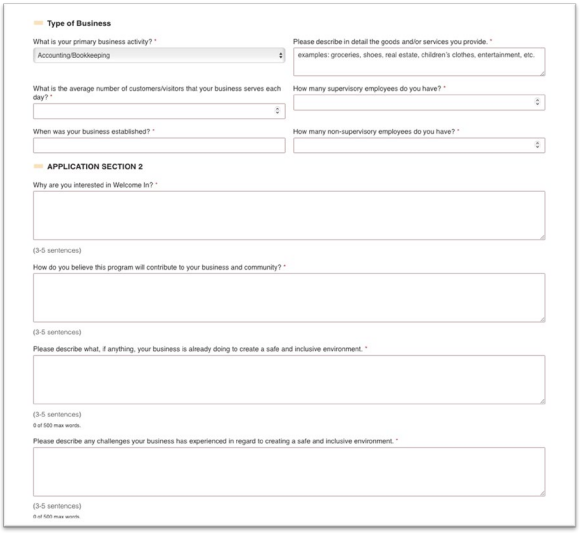
The goal of the second evaluation survey is to assess how easy it is for businesses to participate in the program.

The goal of the third evaluation survey is to collect feedback on the effectiveness and value of the program. Consistent with the requirements of Civil Code section 51.17, this survey (in conjunction with the other surveys) will help CRD evaluate whether *Welcome In* has been successful in affecting customer behavior, incentivizing compliance among businesses, and reducing discrimination and harassment at California businesses. Each of the three surveys is anonymous.

Each of the technical assistance calls will serve as an opportunity to touch base with *Welcome In* staff, monitor progress toward completing program requirements, and address any questions or concerns.

APPLICATION





The application features questions about the business's location, type of business, and interest in the *Welcome In* program.

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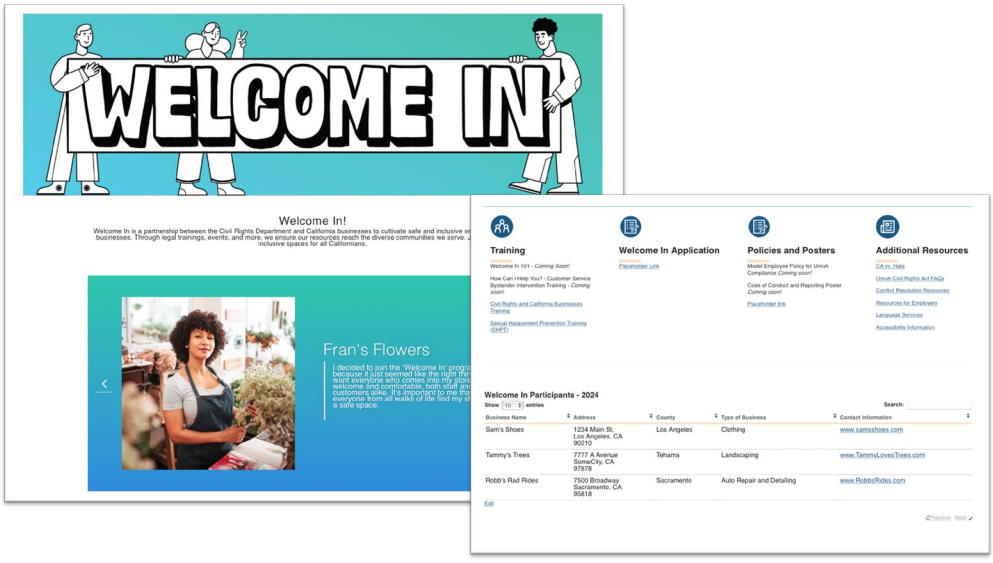
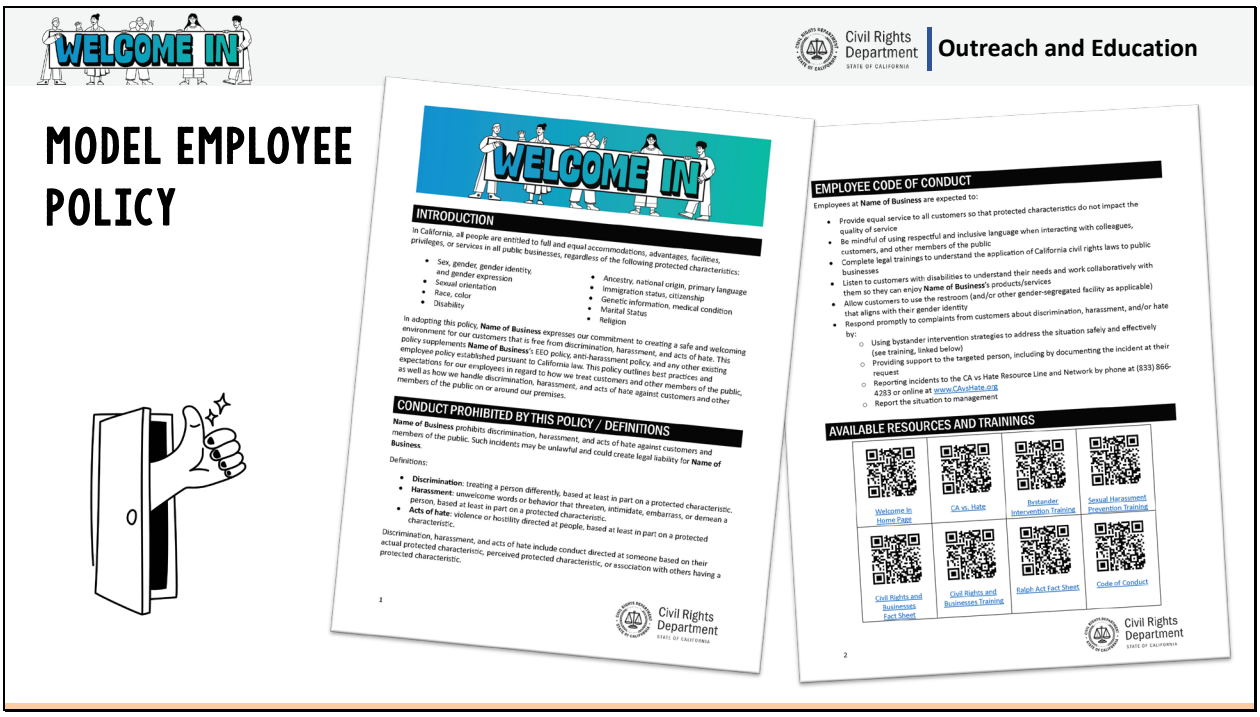
WEB PAGE



The web page links to the application, trainings, and other resources. It also highlights participating businesses

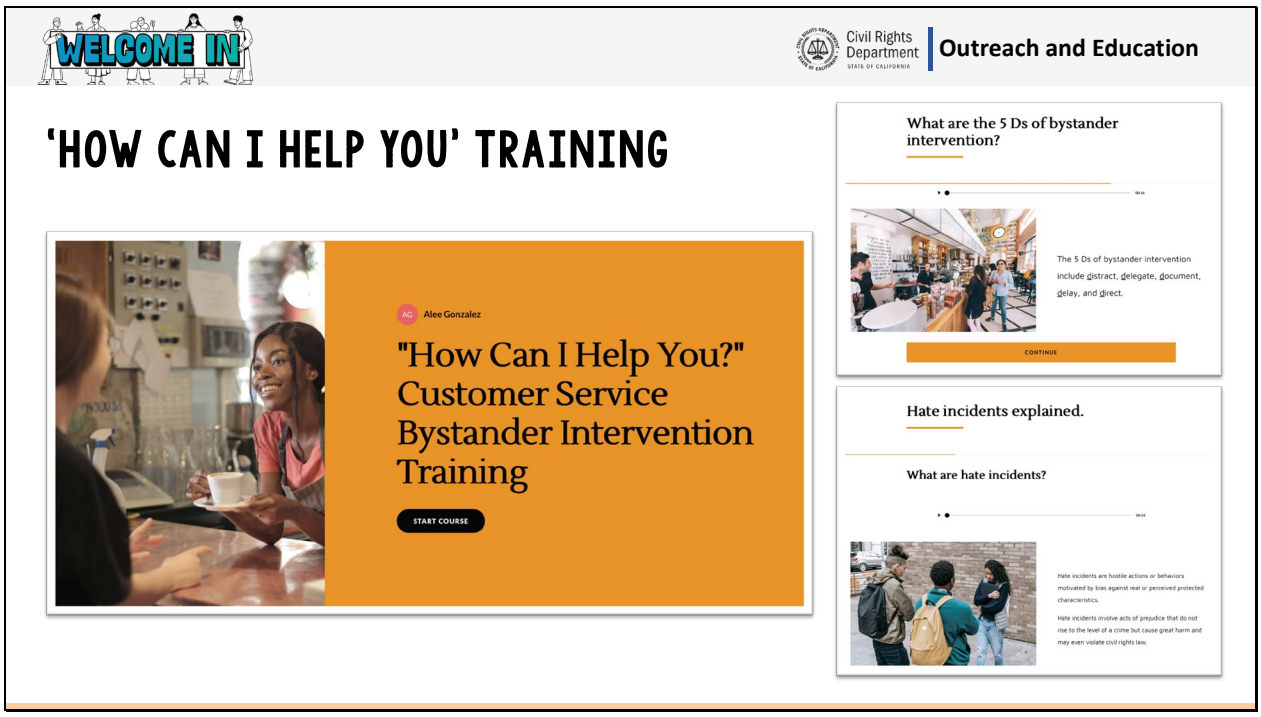
The code of conduct states:

> We value inclusivity, respect, safety, kindness, and the well-being of our community
> Join us in keeping our community free of hate, harassment, and discrimination
> We agree our customers and staff will treat everyone here with dignity and respect
> If you need assistance, please let a staff person know if someone here is mistreating you based on who you are. We are here to help.

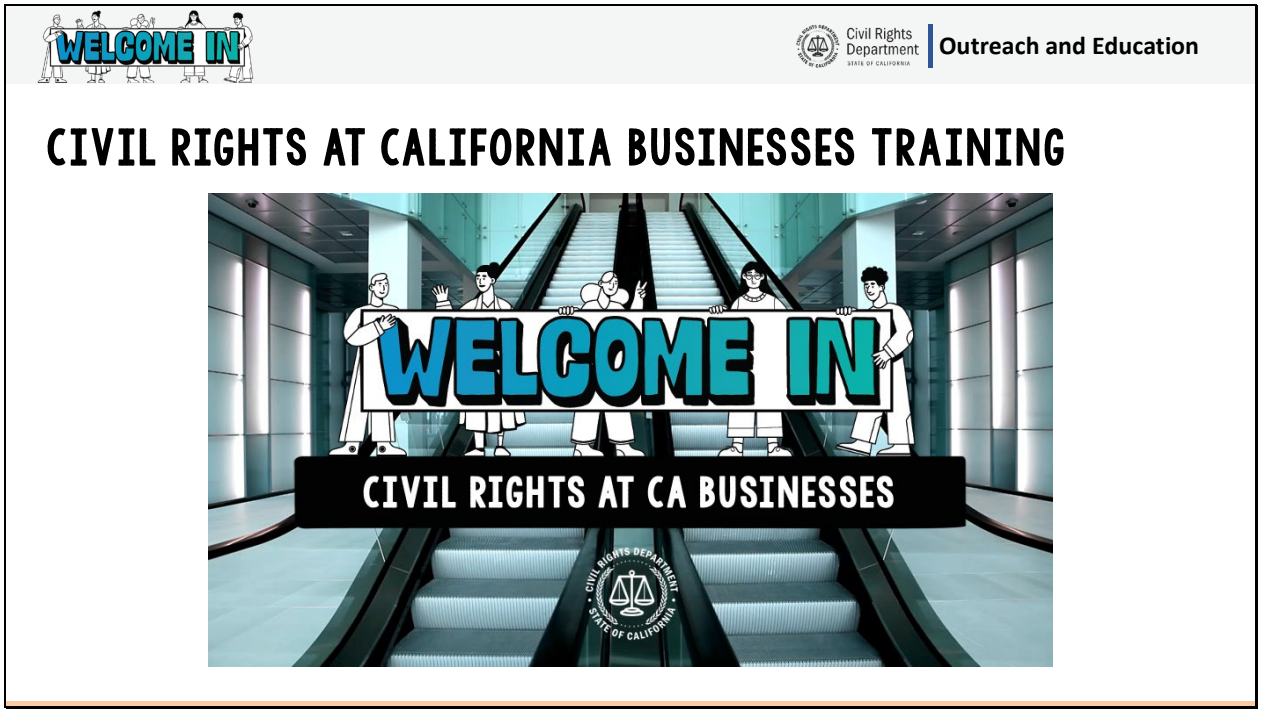


The model policy goes over characteristics that are protected by law, including sex, gender, gender identity, race, color, sexual orientation, and more. It goes on to state that in adopting this policy, the business expresses its commitment to creating a safe and welcoming environment for customers that is free from discrimination, harassment, and acts of hate. It then defines those terms.

Finally, in the employee code of conduct section, it addresses things like using inclusive language when interacting with customers and colleagues, allowing customers to use the restroom that aligns with their gender identity, and how to approach a conversation with someone who is seeking a reasonable accommodation.

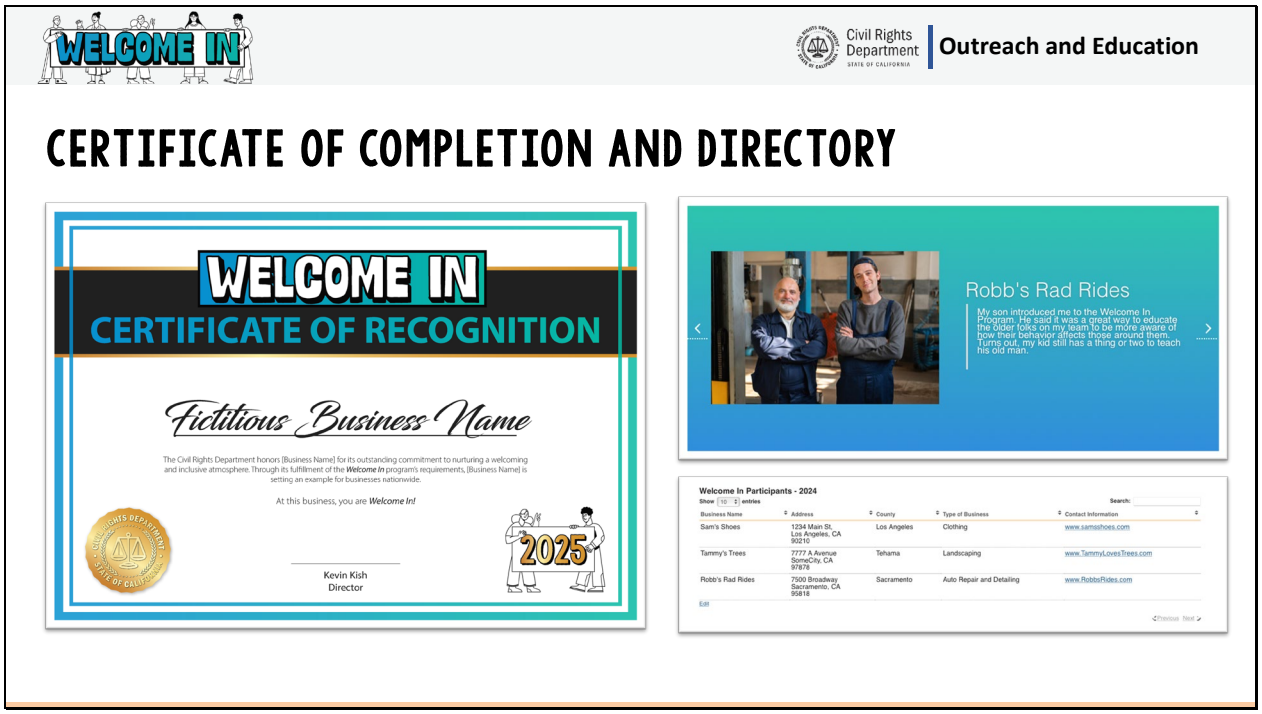


The training goes over what hate, harassment, and discrimination mean, discusses a customer service provider's role in creating a safe and inclusive business, and uses real-world examples and interactive tools to illustrate how to respond to incidents of discrimination, hate, or harassment at a business.



The Unruh Civil Rights Act prohibits businesses in the state from discriminating against anyone because of a protected characteristic. This video summarizes the law and addresses things like:

- Reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities
- Circumstances unrelated to protected characteristics where a business can exclude someone
- Discounts for certain demographics, such as the elderly or children
- To what extent a business can host an event for one particular group



When a business completes the program requirement, this is the certificate it will get. Business staff can post it on their wall. The business will also be featured on the *Welcome In* website as a participating business.

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