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Civil Rights Department Receives Best of California Award for Best Workforce Initiative

Award recognizes the department's recent launch of an internal resource hub aimed at supporting staff throughout civil rights investigations

SACRAMENTO – The California Civil Rights Department (CRD) today announced [receiving the Best of California Award](#) for Best Workforce Initiative. The award recognizes the department's recent launch of an internal resource hub — known as “Knowledge Base” — aimed at supporting staff throughout civil rights investigations with key information and training on relevant laws, standard operating procedures, and more. Every year, the Best of California Awards highlight outstanding innovation and achievements in the public sector as part of the annual [California Government Innovation Summit](#).

“Our employees are on the front lines of tackling complex civil rights disputes all across California,” **said CRD Director Kevin Kish**. “Whether it’s invasive questions from a supervisor or requests to modify an apartment to address a disability, the Civil Rights Department investigates thousands of complaints every year. I am deeply grateful to our team for spearheading the launch of ‘Knowledge Base,’ which helps ensure our staff have access to the consistent, up-to-date information they need to succeed.”

Why Does It Matter?

In 2024, CRD launched “Knowledge Base” to provide staff with a centralized, digital hub to quickly and easily find information and resources related to enforcing California’s civil rights laws. The hub serves as an internal reference and training program, created in collaboration with legal staff, to help department employees obtain answers on the processing of civil rights complaints consistent with legal requirements, including through tailored guides, template documents, and video tutorials. The system also allows employees to suggest new resources or provide feedback to update existing modules, which help staff stay on top of regular changes to California’s civil rights laws and protections. There are currently more than 600 modules available on “Knowledge Base” with around 2,000 monthly visits to the system on anything from how to conduct an intake interview in order to determine whether to file an administrative complaint alleging a violation of any of the laws that CRD enforces to information on civil remedies available under the Fair Chance Act. In short, “Knowledge Base” helps make sure department staff have the tools they need to effectively assess and act on discrimination complaints across California.

State Keeps Up the Results

CRD staff remain deeply committed to using every tool at their disposal, including “Knowledge Base,” to enforce a wide range of civil rights protections across California. For instance, last month, CRD secured a settlement with a property management company to [ensure that the rights of victims of domestic violence are protected](#) at the company’s nearly 100 properties across Northern California. The same month, the department reached a \$200,000 settlement over alleged [disability discrimination in the workplace](#) at the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. In May, CRD helped secure a settlement ending a San Diego County apartment complex’s alleged [ban on children playing in common areas](#). In 2024, the department announced a \$200,000 settlement with a Southern California preschool over claims that management [retaliated against a teacher’s aide for speaking Spanish](#) at work. CRD also obtained a \$14.4 million settlement with Microsoft to resolve allegations of [retaliation and discrimination against workers who used protected leave](#), including parental and disability leave.

If you or someone you know has experienced discrimination, CRD may be able to assist you through its [complaint process](#). The department also [provides general information and factsheets online](#) about a wide range of civil rights protections.

The development of Knowledge Base was spearheaded by staff from the department’s Enforcement Division, including Anjela Boyd, Shahmaila Khan-Khairati, Natasha Clarke, and Jamie Gillette, as well as Cathy Cleek with the department’s executive office. It was supported by numerous others in the department’s Legal Division, Information Technology Division, Development and Training Unit, and more.

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The California Civil Rights Department (CRD) is the state agency charged with enforcing California’s civil rights laws. CRD’s mission is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state-funded programs and activities, and from hate violence and human trafficking. For more information, visit calcivilrights.ca.gov.

