



HHS FACT SHEET

Protecting the Rights of Women of All Ages in Health Care

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office for Civil Rights (OCR), enforces laws that protect against discrimination in health care based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, and disability. OCR also enforces laws that protect the privacy and security of medical records.

Many older adults report living with chronic conditions ranging from **arthritis to coronary heart disease**. Their interactions with the medical system make the laws OCR enforces critical to the ability of the **over 30 million women** 65+ in the U.S. to access safe, culturally competent, and accessible health care free from discrimination and with protections for their privacy.

This Fact Sheet is designed to ensure that YOU know your rights.

- You **cannot be denied health care coverage or treatment** due to your race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.
 - Your doctor, health plan, hospital, or other medical provider may not discriminate against you based on your age.
 - You are protected by **law**, so you cannot be excluded, denied, or have services limited to you based on your age.
 - If you have a disability, you have **the right to accessible health care equipment** such as scales, exam tables, and mammography machines.
 - If you have a disability, telehealth, websites, and mobile apps must also be made accessible to you.
 - Your doctor, other health care providers, and health plan must take appropriate steps to communicate effectively with you if you have a speech, hearing, or vision disability.
- This means providing things like qualified interpreters or readers, Braille, or large print materials that are free, accurate, timely, and protect your privacy.
- You have a right to protections for your medical privacy and access to your medical records.
 - You have the right to see and receive get copies of your medical records.
 - Your health care providers and health plans generally may not share your health information (including to your employer) without your written permission.
 - Your reproductive health care information **cannot be disclosed to law enforcement** to conduct a criminal, civil, or administrative investigation into or impose criminal, civil, or administrative liability on any person for the mere act of seeking, obtaining, providing, or facilitating reproductive health care.

If you believe that your (or someone else's) civil or privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with the HHS Office for Civil Rights at: www.hhs.gov/ocr/complaints/index.html.