

No Reasonable Cause Decisions and Appeals



The Seattle Office for Civil Rights (SOCR) has completed its investigation of your charge, and you have received its decision of “No Reasonable Cause.” A “no reasonable cause” decision means that SOCR has not found enough evidence to support a decision in your favor.



You have the right to appeal this decision to the Seattle Human Rights Commission (SHRC) within 30 days of the date your decision was issued. SHRC independently reviews appeals of SOCR’s “No Reasonable Cause” decisions.

How does the SHRC appeal process work?

Your appeal letter should state why you think SOCR’s decision is wrong, and describe the evidence in the case file that you think the Appeals Panel should consider.

The Appeals Panel can only consider:

- Was SOCR’s investigation adequate? – and/or – • Does the evidence in the case file support SOCR’s finding?

The SHRC Appeals Panel cannot overturn SOCR’s decision about a charge. The Appeals Panel does not “re-investigate” the case or look at new information.

How can you file an appeal?

Step 1: Submit a written statement within 30 days of the date your decision was issued.

To file an appeal, you must submit a written statement (handwritten or typed) describing the reasons for your appeal. Your statement must explain why you believe SOCR’s investigation was not adequate, and/or why the evidence in the case file does not support SOCR’s decision. The Seattle Human Rights Commission must receive your written statement within

30 days of the date your decision was issued. Send your written statement to:

**Seattle Human Rights Commission
810 Third Avenue, Suite 750
Seattle, WA 98104-1627
Attn: Felicia Yearwood**

If the Human Rights Commission does not receive a written appeal within 30 days, your case will be closed.

If you plan to file an appeal, please review all the materials sent to you from the Seattle Office for Civil Rights. They contain important details about the appeals process.

More on other side

Step 2: The Human Rights Commission considers your written appeal.

If you file an appeal, SOCR and the Respondent will receive a copy. Both of them also will have the option to provide a response to the Appeals Panel or request that the Panel conduct a hearing. SOCR will provide copies of written materials to both the Charging Party and the Respondent.

The Panel has several options. It can:

- **Affirm the no reasonable cause decision:**
The Panel can decide that SOCR's original decision was correct, and that no further action is needed. Your case will be closed.
- or –
- **Remand with instructions:**
The Panel can decide that your appeal raises valid issues, and send (remand) your case back to SOCR for further review. If the Panel takes this action, it will include detailed instructions on what it wants SOCR to re-examine.
- or –
- **Schedule a hearing:**
The Panel can decide that it wants to hold a hearing to learn more about the points raised by your appeal. The Panel will schedule a hearing and invite you (the Charging Party), the Respondent and SOCR to attend and make oral statements.

What happens if you are granted a hearing by the Appeals Panel?

On the scheduled date, the Appeals Panel will hear your appeal. Most hearings last about 45 minutes. Hearings are taped and a record is kept by the Human Rights Commission.

You will have no more than 10 minutes to present more details regarding why you think:

- SOCR's investigation was not adequate;
- The evidence in the case file does not support SOCR's finding.

The Respondent and SOCR also will present their arguments. You can bring someone else with you, but only one of you can speak, unless the Panel grants special permission. The Appeals Panel does not look at new information.

Step 3: The Appeals Panel usually will send you its decision within 30 days of the hearing.

The Panel has two options. It can:

- Affirm SOCR's original decision; – or –
 - If the Appeals Panel affirms SOCR's original decision, your case will be closed.
- Remand (send back) your case to SOCR with instructions for further investigation. If the Panel takes this action, it will include detailed instructions on what it wants SOCR to re-examine.
 - Upon receipt of a remand order, SOCR will consult with the City of Seattle Law Department about:
 - Approaches to additional investigation;
 - Response to the Commission's instructions on remand;
 - Completion of the additional investigation or other instructions on remand; and
 - Preparation of a Finding after Remand.
 - After SOCR conducts an additional investigation in compliance with the Appeal Panel's instructions, SOCR will issue a "Finding after Remand."
 - If SOCR issues a no reasonable cause decision, you also have the right to appeal this decision to the SHRC.

If you have any questions concerning the appeal process, please contact the Seattle Human Rights Commission's staff assistant Felicia Yearwood at (206) 684-4537.