

# FLORIDA COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

## 2009 FALL UPDATE



*We're All In It Together*

## 2009 Hate Crimes Awareness Summit

The University of South Florida (USF), in partnership with the Florida Commission on Human Relations, recently held the Florida Hate Crimes Awareness Summit on the campus of USF in Tampa. The purpose was to empower students and community leaders to develop innovative strategies to prevent and eliminate hate crimes in Florida.



This successful event was held in conjunction with the 40th anniversary of the Commission in its series of year long events commemorating its establishment and educating the public on civil rights and human relations.

"We gathered some of the most knowledgeable and active people involved with this problem and filled the audience with people who care deeply and want to help solve it," said Dr. Donna Elam, Chairperson for the Commission.



There were speakers from the U.S. Attorney General's Office, FBI, U.S. Dept. of Justice, Southern Poverty Law Center, Anti-Defamation League, Florida's Attorney General's Office of Civil Rights and many others. There was also a "Victim's Panel," which left a profound mark on the many participants.

Breakout sessions, which focused specifically on hate crimes targeting certain groups, took place in the afternoon. Session participants developed strategies to address these atrocities, which are destroying the quality of life of so many. It is the hope of the Commission that the impact of this important Summit is felt statewide and that this event can be replicated in various parts of Florida through partnerships and collaboration.



## Do's and Don'ts of Interviewing

Are you married? What's your maiden name? Do you plan on having children any time soon? These are questions that some employers may feel are harmless to ask while interviewing a potential new hire, but in actuality, these questions can be considered illegal. Questions about marital status and number and ages of children can be used to discriminate against job applicants (especially female applicants) and may violate the federal Title VII if used to deny or limit employment opportunities. It is clearly discriminatory to only ask female applicants these questions and not male applicants (or vice versa). Generally, employers should only ask job-related questions during the job interview. Such questions can be asked after the job offer has been given and accepted if needed for insurance or other business-related purposes ([www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov)).

Non-job related questions include, but are not limited to:

- Applicant's marital status or plans of marriage
- Number and/or ages of children or dependents



- Number and/or ages of children or dependents
- Names of spouses, children, or dependents
- Whether the applicant is pregnant or has future plans of pregnancy
- Employment status of spouse
- Childcare arrangements



The Florida Commission on Human Relations has focused on discrimination based on familial and marital status during the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary public awareness campaign. To listen to our PSAs, please visit our website at [http://fchr.state.fl.us/publications/public\\_service\\_announcements](http://fchr.state.fl.us/publications/public_service_announcements) .

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## Through the Storm, The Commission is Here to Help

Across the state of Florida, there are many businesses and agencies closing or experiencing budget cuts due to the continued economic downturn. Unfortunately, city and county governments have not been immune. Most recently, some local human relations offices around the state have either closed or their services have been drastically reduced. These agencies provided discrimination investigation and mediation services, along with education and outreach to Floridians within their respective areas. Because some of these agencies will not be able to provide the same level of service, we wanted to ensure the public that the Commission is here to help! With the assistance of HUD and EEOC, the Commission will be accepting additional cases so that these much needed public services can continue to be provided. If you have questions about office closures throughout the state, or if you need to file a complaint, please contact us at <http://fchr.state.fl.us> or 1-800-342-8170.

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The Florida Commission on Human Relations is the state agency which enforces the state's civil rights laws and works to prevent and eliminate discrimination through its investigatory and outreach efforts.

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