

# 2026-2027 Commission on Human Rights Work Plan Report



County of Sonoma  
Commission on Human Rights

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# Commission on Human Rights 2026-2027 Work Plan

## **Introduction:**

The Commission on Human Rights will continue advancing its mission through a range of ad hoc committees and community-based initiatives focused on leadership, education, advocacy, and public engagement. These efforts are intended to promote dignity, equity, and access to human rights for all members of the community, particularly individuals and groups who are marginalized, underserved, or experiencing violations of their rights.

Current ad hoc initiatives include:

- Events, Forums, and Spotlight Ad Hoc
- Communications and Visibility Ad Hoc
- CHR Capacity Building and Shared Leadership Ad Hoc
- Surveillance Ad Hoc

Current projects include:

- Understanding Human Dignity: A Civic Education Workshop
- West Sonoma County Health Center and Community Services Soup and Community Project

In addition, the Commission will continue supporting the Youth Commission Educational Program, which empowers local youth through leadership development and human rights education and will host the annual Kathleen Finigan Award Ceremony. This award recognizes an individual whose exceptional leadership and service reflects former Commissioner Kathleen Finigan's commitment to supporting the unhoused community.

## **2026-2027 Ad Hoc and Project:**

### **Events/ Forum/Spotlight Ad Hoc**

This ad hoc committee will focus on events, community forums, and community spotlights throughout the 2026–2027 fiscal year. Its goal is to increase awareness of the Commission on Human Rights while providing education, resources, and opportunities for community engagement.

The committee will organize at least one public event designed to serve diverse community members and address local needs, with potential initiatives including the 2027 Human Rights Summit.

In addition, the committee will host public forums where residents can share concerns and discuss important issues with the Commission. These concerns may then be brought forward to the Board of Supervisors for consideration. Forum topics will be shaped by emerging community needs and priorities throughout the year.

## **Communications and Visibility Ad Hoc**

The Communications & Visibility Ad Hoc will support the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), the County, and the broader community by sharing human rights information, data reports, newsletters, and outreach materials, while strengthening the Commission's social media, website presence, and community engagement efforts. A major focus of this work is the Visibility Project, which includes the human rights violation tracking survey and related data collection efforts.

As part of Sonoma County's larger network of nonprofits, commissions, committees, and advocacy organizations, this ad hoc seeks to promote accessible human rights education, increase awareness of local issues, and strengthen collaboration among community partners. Through public communications, campaigns, and educational materials, the committee aims to foster meaningful relationships and connect residents with available human rights resources and support systems.

Key goals of the Communications & Visibility Ad Hoc include updating CHR information on the County website, promoting the CHR newsletter, sharing findings from the Visibility Project, and increasing participation in the human rights violation tracking survey. The committee will also provide regular updates to the CHR and collaborate on strategies to improve public outreach and accessibility.

The committee will promote:

- Community resource providers and human rights advocates
- The County, Youth Commission on Human Rights, CHR, and J/CSW
- The Visibility Project's human rights violation tracking survey
- Data on reported human rights violations in Sonoma County from 2019–2025
- Accessible human rights education and information
- Collaboration among community networks and partners

The committee will continue developing:

- The CHR newsletter, social media presence, and website updates
- Human rights education materials and outreach campaigns
- Brochures, tabling materials, and promotional resources
- Public awareness campaigns focused on human rights education, data, and local resources

- Communication strategies centered on accessibility, community engagement, and human rights advocacy

### **CHR Capacity Building and Shared Leadership Ad Hoc**

The Capacity Building & Leadership Ad Hoc Committee strengthens the Sonoma County Human Rights Commission by developing leadership, improving organizational effectiveness, and enhancing strategic planning. Through commissioner training, accountability measures, and the creation of a Human Rights Framework based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the committee helps ensure the Commission is equipped to identify community needs, address human rights concerns, and advance equity, dignity, and inclusion for all residents.

### **Surveillance Ad Hoc**

The Surveillance Transparency Ad Hoc Committee examines the use and expansion of surveillance technologies in Sonoma County through a human rights lens. By fostering community dialogue, conducting research, and collaborating with local organizations, the committee seeks to increase transparency, accountability, and public understanding of surveillance practices. Its work will inform recommendations to local governments to ensure that public safety technologies are used in ways that protect privacy, civil liberties, equity, and the human rights of all Sonoma County residents.

### **West Sonoma County Health Center and Community Services Soup and Community**

This project builds on West County Health Services' Project 100, which focuses on supporting families during a baby's first 100 days by addressing basic needs like food, housing, and healthcare through community collaboration. It has grown into a monthly community soup program in the lower Russian River area, bringing together local health providers, farmers, educators, businesses, and volunteers to provide free, organic soup and connect residents with health and social resources. The initiative responds to local food insecurity and limited access to affordable, healthy food, and is grounded in the idea that community-driven efforts can support dignity, wellness, and basic human rights.

### **Understanding Human Dignity: A Civic Education Workshop**

This project uses the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a framework to explore respect, fairness, accountability, and personal responsibility within community life, particularly for incarcerated individuals. Through guided discussion and reflection, participants are encouraged to consider how their choices and actions affect families, neighborhoods, and the broader community. The workshop recognizes that incarcerated people remain human beings with the right to dignity, education, and a voice, despite the suspension of certain civil rights during incarceration. Many participants remain deeply

connected to their families and communities, making opportunities for reflection, growth, and engagement especially meaningful. The goal of the project is to help participants understand how the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can support personal growth, informed decision-making, and advocacy for healthier and more equitable communities. The sessions are designed to foster respectful dialogue, self-awareness, and a sense that every individual's experiences, perspectives, and aspirations matter.

## **Youth Commission Educational Program**

The Youth Commission on Human Rights is a free leadership and civic engagement program created by the Commission on Human Rights to educate and empower Sonoma County high school students ages 14–18 around human rights issues. Students develop leadership, advocacy, and community engagement skills while learning about issues affecting local communities and working with elected officials, community leaders, and human rights organizations.

### **The program offers two ways for students to participate:**

- 1. Seasonal Youth Commissioner Volunteers** can take part in flexible volunteer opportunities throughout the academic year, making it ideal for students with busy schedules who want to learn more about human rights, earn volunteer hours, and engage in local community events and educational projects. At least six volunteer opportunities are coordinated each year, and no interview is required.
- 2. Focused Youth Commission Cohort members** serve a nine-month term during the school year, meeting monthly with students from across Sonoma County to develop action-oriented human rights projects. Youth Commissioners focus on topics such as education, environmental justice, labor rights, systemic justice, and health care, while dedicating at least 70 hours of volunteer service through advocacy, workshops, campaigns, and community projects.

## **Kathleen Finigan Award**

Each year, the Commission honors one individual whose outstanding leadership and service reflects former Commissioner Kathleen Finigan's commitment to supporting the unhoused community. Through an open nomination process, Sonoma County residents are encouraged to recognize community members making a meaningful impact. Award recipients are announced at a Commission meeting in July and celebrated at a special event held in their honor.

## **Community Engagement**

The Commission will take part in tabling events hosted by partner organizations. In addition, through an open application process, the Commission on Human Rights will provide community assistance including resources, materials, products, and financial support to community-based organizations, programs, and events that align with its mission, policy priorities, and public service goals, and that serve the broader community.

## **Outreach and Training Expenses**

The Commission will table at community events throughout the year, including Sonoma County Pride, Hispanic Heritage Month celebration, Farmers Markets and other community festivals and events, to engage with community members, share information about its program and increase public awareness of its mission and vision.

The Commission will also provide opportunities for Commissioners to attend conferences and trainings offered by other Commissions and organizations across the state. These opportunities support professional development, encourage collaboration and knowledge-sharing, and help Commissioners strengthen their leadership skills and capacity to effectively serve the community.

## **Budget:**

Fund General expenses (storage unit, food, supplies, translation services, etc.)- \$5,000-\$10,000

Events, Forums, and Spotlight Ad Hoc-\$0- \$4,500

Communications and Visibility Ad Hoc-\$0-\$2,200

Understanding Human Dignity: A Civic Education Workshop-\$0-\$300

West Sonoma County Health Center and Community Services Soup and Community Project-\$0-\$2400

Youth Commission Educational Program-\$0-\$4,400

Kathleen Finigan Award Ceremony-\$0-\$800

Total budget of \$5,000-\$20,000\*

\*The Commission will seek funding through the Community Investment Grant from the County of Sonoma to cover for extra costs in their budget.

## **Conclusion:**

The Commission on Human Rights 2026–2027 Work Plan focuses on promoting dignity, equity, education, and advocacy through community engagement and human rights

initiatives across Sonoma County. The Commission will continue supporting underserved and marginalized communities through public forums, outreach efforts, educational workshops, and collaborative community projects. Key initiatives include community events and forums, expanded communications and visibility efforts, the Soup and Community Project supporting food access and wellness in West Sonoma County, and the Understanding Human Dignity workshop focused on civic education for incarcerated individuals. The Commission will also continue the Youth Commission Educational Program, which develops leadership and advocacy skills among local youth, and host the annual Kathleen Finigan Award Ceremony honoring outstanding community leadership in support of the unhoused community.