

**COMPLAINANT CONSENT/RELEASE FORM  
FOR DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINTS FILED AGAINST NSF GRANT RECIPIENTS**

National Science Foundation  
Office of Equity and Civil Rights

**Your Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**NSF Recipient Institution The Complaint Is Filed Against** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please read the information below, check the appropriate box, and sign this form. While the provision of your consent, as detailed below, is voluntary, OECR's complaint processing procedures require that you inform OECR of your choice before a complaint may be accepted by OECR for investigation. Failure to complete this form may result in the dismissal of your complaint.

I have read the Notice of Investigatory Uses of Personal Information and Notice of Complainant/Interviewee Rights by the National Science Foundation (NSF). As a Complainant, I understand the following:

- In the course of an investigation I am aware that it may become necessary for NSF to reveal my identity to persons at the organization or institution under investigation in order to gather information necessary for NSF to make a compliance determination with respect to my allegations.
- It may be necessary for NSF to disclose information, including the actual text of my complaint filed with NSF and other personally identifying details, which it has gathered as a part of its investigation of my complaint.
- The obligations of NSF to honor requests under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to provide a requestor information gathered by NSF in the investigation of this complaint (subject to exemptions from disclosure of the information requested under FOIA).
- As a Complainant I am protected by NSF's regulations from intimidation or retaliation for having taken action or participated in action to secure rights protected by nondiscrimination statutes enforced by NSF.

**CONSENT / RELEASE**

☐ **CONSENT** - I have read and understand the above information and authorize NSF to reveal the content of my complaint and my identity to persons at the organization or institution under investigation. I hereby authorize the National Science Foundation (NSF) to receive material and information about me pertinent to the investigation of my complaint. This release includes, but is not limited to, personal records and medical records. I understand that the material and information will be used for authorized civil rights compliance and enforcement activities. I further understand that I am not required to authorize this release and do so voluntarily.

☐ **CONSENT DENIED** - I have read and understand the above information and do not want NSF to reveal my identity to the organization or institution under investigation, or to review, receive copies of, or discuss material and information about me, pertinent to the investigation of my complaint. I understand this is likely to impede the investigation of my complaint and may result in the closure of the investigation.

**SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **NOTICE ABOUT INVESTIGATORY USES OF PERSONAL INFORMATION**

### **NOTICE OF COMPLAINANT/INTERVIEWEE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES**

Complainants and individuals who cooperate in an investigation, proceeding or hearing conducted by the National Science Foundation (NSF) are afforded certain rights and protections. This brief description will provide you with an overview of these rights and protections.

- A recipient (NSF grantee) may not force its employees to be represented by the recipient's counsel nor may it intimidate, threaten, coerce or discriminate against any employee who refuses to reveal to the recipient the content of an interview. An employee does, however, have the right to representation during an interview with NSF. The representative may be the recipient's counsel, the employee's private counsel, or anyone else the interviewee authorizes to be present.
- The laws and regulations which govern NSF's compliance and enforcement authority provide that no recipient or other person shall intimidate, threaten, coerce or discriminate against any individual because he/she has made a complaint, testified, assisted or participated in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing conducted under NSF's jurisdiction, or has asserted rights protected by statutes NSF enforces.
- Information obtained from the complainant or other individual which is maintained in NSF's investigative files may be exempt from disclosure under the Privacy Act or under the Freedom of Information Act if release of such information would constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

There are two laws governing personal information submitted to any Federal agency, including the NSF: The Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. § 552a), and the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. § 552).

- THE PRIVACY ACT protects individuals from misuse of personal information held by the Federal Government. The law applies to records that are kept and that can be located by the individual's name or social security number or other personal identification system. Persons who submit information to the government should know that:
- NSF is required to investigate complaints of discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, and, in some instances, religion against recipients of Federal financial assistance. NSF also is authorized to conduct reviews of federally funded recipients to assess their compliance with civil rights laws.
- Information that NSF collects is analyzed by authorized personnel within the agency. This information may include personnel records or other personal information. NSF staff may need to reveal certain information to persons outside the agency in the course of verifying facts or gathering new facts to develop a basis for making a civil rights compliance determination. Such details could include the physical condition or age of a complainant. NSF also may be required to reveal certain information to any individual who requests it under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. (See below)
- Personal information will be used only for the specific purpose for which it was submitted, that is, for authorized civil rights compliance and enforcement activities. Except in the instances defined in the Privacy Act of 1974, Freedom of Information Act, and applicable NSF regulations, NSF will not release the information to any other agency or individual unless the person who supplied the information submits a written consent. One of these exceptions is when release is required under the Freedom of Information Act. (See below)
- No law requires a complainant to give personal information to NSF, and no sanctions will be imposed on complainants or other individuals who deny NSF's request. However, if NSF fails to obtain information needed to investigate allegations of discrimination, it may be necessary to close the investigation.
- The Privacy Act permits certain types of systems of records to be exempt from some of its requirements, including the access provisions. It is the policy of NSF to exercise authority to exempt systems of records only in compelling cases. NSF may deny a complainant access to the files compiled during the agency investigation of his or her civil rights complaint against a recipient of Federal financial assistance. Complaint files are exempt in order to aid

negotiations between recipients and NSF in resolving civil rights issues and to encourage recipients to furnish information essential to the investigation.

- NSF does not reveal the names or other identifying information about an individual unless it is necessary for the completion of an investigation or for enforcement activities against a recipient that violates the laws, or unless such information is required to be disclosed under FOIA or the Privacy Act. NSF will keep the identity of complainants confidential except to the extent necessary to carry out the purposes of the civil rights laws, or unless disclosure is required under FOIA, the Privacy Act, or otherwise required by law.
- THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT gives the public access to certain files and records of the Federal Government. Individuals can obtain items from many categories of records of the Government --not just materials that apply to them personally. NSF must honor requests under the Freedom of Information Act, with some exceptions. NSF generally is not required to release documents during an investigation or enforcement proceedings if the release could have an adverse effect on the ability of the agency to do its job. Also, any Federal agency may refuse a request for records compiled for law enforcement purposes if their release could be an "unwarranted invasion of privacy" of an individual. Requests for other records, such as personnel and medical files, may be denied where the disclosure would be a "clearly unwarranted invasion of privacy."