



DEPARTMENT OF

HEALTH

GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

**PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS AND STATEMENT OF PUBLIC
POLICY ON CIVIL RIGHTS AND NON-DISCRIMINATION IN PROGRAMS
RECEIVING FEDERAL ASSISTANCE**

**Dr. Víctor Ramos Otero, MD, MBA
Secretary of Health
2026**

**CHAPTER I – GENERAL PROVISIONS****ARTICLE 1. INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PUBLIC POLICY**

The Puerto Rico Department of Health (DOH) is the constitutional agency mandated by law to address public health matters in Puerto Rico. As part of our ministerial duty, the Department of Health has the ministerial responsibility to ensure fair access to public health services.

In compliance with the provisions of applicable federal laws, it is hereby established as public policy to guarantee and protect the fundamental rights of individuals receiving services from the agency without discrimination of any kind. This public policy aims to prevent, address, and eradicate all forms of discrimination in the delivery of services, in accordance with the provisions of the applicable state and federal legal framework governing Puerto Rico.

Furthermore, it provides guidance, orientation, and structure regarding the procedures for handling civil rights and/or discrimination complaints through the services and programs offered as part of the organizational structure of the Puerto Rico Department of Health.

ARTICLE 2. LEGAL BASIS

This public policy is enacted under the provisions of state and federal anti-discrimination laws, including but not limited to:

1. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin (including limited English proficiency);
2. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, ensuring equal employment opportunities;
3. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination based on disability;
4. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits discrimination based on sex in educational programs or activities;

5. Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974, Title VII of the Consumer Protection Act of 1974, as amended, Section 701 of the Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974, Public Law 93-49-15 USC 1691;
6. Age Discrimination Act of 1975, which prohibits discrimination based on age;
7. Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, known as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 2008;
8. Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 4151 et seq.), related to the easy access and use of buildings and facilities by individuals with physical disabilities for design, construction, or modification; or Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987;
9. Section 13 of the 1972 Amendments to the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, Public Law 92-500; or Regulation 40 CFR Parts 5 and 7 of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); or Regulation 7 CFR Part 15 and 12 CFR Part 202 of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA); or Regulations 32 CFR Parts 56, 195, and 196 of the United States Department of Defense (DOD);
10. Article II, Sections 1 and 16 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico;
11. Law 22-2013, Law to Prohibit Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity; and
12. Article 66 of Law 146-2012, as amended, Penal Code of Puerto Rico.

ARTICLE 3. APPLICABILITY

This Public Policy applies to employees, service providers, collaborators, or any person who requests and/or receives a service from the Puerto Rico Department of Health.

ARTICLE 4. VISION AND MISSION

Vision

To be the agency that safeguards the right to health and promotes a preventive, integrated, accessible, and equitable system that effectively addresses the public health needs of Puerto Rico's communities.

Mission

The Department of Health will design and implement public health policies and strategies that foster, evaluate, and achieve healthy communities, considering individuals and the factors that influence their health in a comprehensive manner.

ARTICLE 5. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CFR:	Code of Federal Regulations
PRDOH:	Puerto Rico Department of Health
EEOC:	Federal Operations Office of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in Puerto Rico
EPA:	United States Environmental Protection Agency
HHS:	United States Department of Health and Human Services
USDA:	United States Department of Agriculture

ARTICLE 6. STATEMENTS

This document has been drafted using inclusive and non-sexist language, with the objective of promoting dignity and respect for all individuals, regardless of gender, identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, national origin, or any other condition. The use of neutral or collective terms reflects the institutional commitment to non-discrimination, in line with the principles of human rights and social justice.

To ensure accessibility and dissemination of this public policy, it will be available on the Puerto Rico Department of Health's website at the following link: <https://www.salud.pr.gov/CMS/377>. Additionally, information may be requested through the Human Resources and Labor Relations Office or through the Regional Offices.

ARTICLE 7. DEFINITIONS

A. For the purposes of this Public Policy, the following terms and phrases shall have the meanings set forth below:

1. **Agency** – Refers to the Puerto Rico Department of Health.

2. **Department of Health** – The political and legal entity of the Government of Puerto Rico.
 3. **Employee** – Any person who holds a position and employment within the Department, providing services in exchange for salary, wages, or any other type of compensation, including regular employees, trust employees, employees with temporary appointments, and those in a probationary period.
 4. **Official** – The directors of the Department's administrative units
 5. **Federal Laws** – Refers to federal laws governing the elimination of discriminatory practices.
 6. **Office** – Refers to the Human Resources and Labor Relations Office of the Department of Health.
 7. **Public Policy** – Refers to the Public Policy for the elimination of discriminatory practices within the Department of Health.
 8. **Secretary of Health** – Refers to the Chief Executive of the Department of Health of the Government of Puerto Rico or any person to whom such authority is delegated by law.
- B. Words or phrases used in this Policy shall be interpreted according to their context and commonly accepted meaning. Unless such interpretation is illogical, words used in the present tense shall include the future; words in the singular shall include the plural, and vice versa; and words in the masculine gender shall include the feminine, and vice versa.
- C. The provisions of this Policy shall be interpreted in an integrated manner with the applicable federal laws governing anti-discrimination practices.

CHAPTER II. PROCEDURE FOR FILING COMPLAINTS AGAINST VIOLATIONS OF CIVIL RIGHTS OR DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES

ARTICLE 1. PROCEDURE

Any employee, service provider, collaborator, or any person receiving services may file a complaint for civil rights violations and/or discrimination related to any service or activity carried out and/or sponsored by the Puerto Rico Department of Health (DOH), in accordance with the procedure described and established below. This procedure provides a clear mechanism for any individual

to file a complaint when they believe they have been subjected to discrimination based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, retaliation or vengeance for prior civil rights activities, or any other category protected by law.

The procedure for filling civil rights or discrimination complaints shall be as follows:

1. Any person may file a civil rights and/or discrimination complaint at any time with the Non-Discrimination Coordinator of the Department of Health.
2. The Non-Discrimination Coordinator shall provide guidance to the individual regarding the process of filing a civil rights and/or discrimination complaint.
3. The complaint may be submitted in writing by postal mail, email, or delivered in person to the Human Resources and Labor Relations Office of the Department of Health.
4. The complainant shall have fifteen (15) calendar days to file the civil rights and/or discrimination complaint from the date they receive orientation.
5. If the fifteenth (15th) day falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or holiday, the deadline shall be extended to the next business day.
6. The civil rights and/or discrimination complaint submitted to the Department of Health must include the following information:
 - a. Name, address, and telephone number of the complainant;
 - b. A clear and precise account of the facts considered discriminatory (e.g., date, location, persons involved);
 - c. The reason the complainant believes they were subjected to discrimination (e.g., due to race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, retaliation);
 - d. The signature of the complainant (or their attorney); and
 - e. The date the complaint is submitted.
7. Once the civil rights and/or discrimination complaint is received, the Non-Discrimination Coordinator shall send a confirmation letter of receipt to the complainant.

8. Within 24 to 48 hours, the Non-Discrimination Coordinator shall forward the complaint to the Legal Advisory Office of the Department of Health to initiate the investigation process.
9. The Legal Advisory Office shall be responsible for investigating and gathering information related to the complaint. It shall also evaluate the facts of the investigation, the evidence collected and submit a report concluding whether the employee engaged in acts constituting discrimination.
10. In cases where it is determined that the complaint will be closed without initiating an investigation process, the Non-Discrimination Coordinator shall notify the complainant and provide justification for such action.
11. The Legal Advisory Office shall complete the investigation, and its findings shall be sent to the Non-Discrimination Coordinator, who will then notify the complainant.
12. The Non-Discrimination Coordinator shall be responsible for maintaining a file of complaints submitted under this Procedure, which shall contain all documentation related to the complaints. Additionally, the Coordinator shall maintain an internal statistical record of civil rights and/or discrimination complaints handled by the Department of Health, including:
 - a. Identification of the complaints;
 - b. Date the complaint was received, date the investigation began, and date the investigation concluded;
 - c. A brief description of the complaint;
 - d. The reason the complainant believes they were subjected to discrimination (e.g., due to race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, retaliation);
 - e. Determination of the investigation.

ARTICLE 2. PROCEDURE FOR INVESTIGATING CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLAINTS

This procedure establishes the guidelines and steps to be followed by the Legal Advisory Office for investigating complaints related to civil rights violations or acts of discrimination, in accordance with current public policy.

Its purpose is to ensure a fair, confidential, and efficient process that addresses claims in a timely manner, safeguarding the fundamental rights of all

individuals. Investigations shall be conducted with seriousness, impartiality, and promptness. The implementation of this procedure reaffirms the Department of Health's commitment to respect for human dignity.

1. The Department of Health and its Legal Advisory Office shall immediately contact and inform the complainant about the investigation process and their rights.
2. The complaint shall be assigned to a designated individual from the Legal Advisory Office, who will be responsible for conducting the investigation in an impartial and objective manner.
3. The Department of Health shall receive and handle the complaint with strict confidentiality, safeguarding the security of all parties. The allegation shall be evaluated to determine whether precautionary measures should be implemented to prevent recurrence of the conduct during the investigation process.
4. The complainant may be accompanied by an attorney during the interview process, although this is not required.
5. The investigator shall have one hundred eighty (180) calendar days from the date the complaint was filed to complete the investigation. This period may be extended for just cause.
6. The investigator shall gather all relevant evidence, which may include, but is not limited to, documents, emails, text messages, and any other pertinent material.
7. The investigator shall schedule individual interviews with the complainant, the defendant(s), and witnesses, using open-ended questions to obtain complete information.
8. The investigator shall evaluate the facts presented, the evidence collected, and submit a report containing Findings of Fact, legal conclusions, findings, and recommendations.
9. If it is determined that acts constituting discrimination occurred, the Department of Health shall take corrective or disciplinary actions in accordance with the applicable Agency regulations.
10. The Non-Discrimination Coordinator shall notify the complainant in writing of the investigation's outcome.

ARTICLE 3. SEVERABILITY CLAUSE

If any word, subsection, sentence, article, section, or part of this regulation is declared unconstitutional or null by a court, such decision shall not affect, impair, or invalidate the remaining provisions and parts of this protocol, but its effect shall be limited to the specific word, subsection, sentence, article, section, or part declared unconstitutional or null. The nullity or invalidity of any word, subsection, sentence, article, section, or part in any case shall not be understood to affect or prejudice in any way its application or validity for any other complaint.

ARTICLE 4. VALIDITY AND APPROVAL

This Procedure for Handling Complaints and Statement of Public Policy on Civil Rights and Non-Discrimination in Programs Receiving Federal Assistance is hereby approved in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on this day, January 15, 2026.



Dr. Víctor Ramos Otero, MD, MBA
Secretary of Health
Government of Puerto Rico



DEPARTMENT OF

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GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND
LABOR RELATIONS

APPENDIX A. NOTICE OF NON- DISCRIMINATION



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NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Puerto Rico Department of Health (PRDH) operates its programs and services without discrimination based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, retaliation for prior civil rights activities, or any other category protected by law. Any employee, service provider, collaborator, or any person receiving services from the Puerto Rico Department of Health has the right to file civil rights and/or discrimination complaints. The PRDH strictly prohibits and will not tolerate any retaliation against a person who files or participates in a discrimination complaint.

Any person who believes they have been discriminated against may submit a written complaint by postal mail, email, or in person to the PRDH Human Resources and Labor Relations Office. To obtain a copy of the procedure and complaint forms, visit: <https://www.salud.pr.gov/CMS/377>. If you need assistance due to a disability, language assistance, translation, or interpretation services to access this policy, or to obtain information on how and where to file a discrimination complaint, you may contact the PRDH Non-Discrimination Coordinator directly:

Ms. Janice M. González Galarza, MBA

Non-Discrimination Coordinator and Assistant Secretary II of the Human Resources and Labor Relations Office of Puerto Rico Department of Health

- **Physical Address:** Monacillos Building Center, Department of Health, Street 8828, Km 6.3, Sector El Cinco, Río Piedras, Puerto Rico 00936
- **Mailing Address:** PO BOX 70184, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 00936-8184
- **Email:** jgonzalez.galarza@salud.pr.gov
- **Phone:** (787) 765-2929 ext. 3404

"The PRDH is an equal opportunity provider."

Civil Rights and No Discrimination Policy



DEPARTMENT OF

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APPENDIX B. DESIGNATION OF NON-DISCRIMINATION COORDINATOR



January 15, 2026

Ms. Janice M. González Galarza, MBA
Assistant Secretary of the Human Resources and Labor Relations Office
Puerto Rico Department of Health

Dear Ms. González Galarza:

Greetings.

In compliance with state and federal law provisions, through this communication I am designating you as the Non-Discrimination Coordinator for the Puerto Rico Department of Health. You will be responsible for receiving any complaint or claim of discrimination brought to your attention involving acts constituting discrimination based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, retaliation for prior civil rights activities, or any other category protected by law.

All complaints received must be submitted to the PRDH Legal Advisory Office, which will be responsible for conducting the investigation in accordance with the established procedure for such cases. As Non-Discrimination Coordinator, you will be responsible for:

- Coordinating the implementation of the "Public Policy on Civil Rights and Non-Discrimination in Programs Receiving Federal Assistance from the Puerto Rico Department of Health" throughout the Agency.
- Overseeing the complaint procedure to ensure timely and fair resolution.
- Providing support and information to complainants throughout the complaint process.
- Ensuring compliance with state and federal civil rights and non-discrimination laws and regulations.
- Ensuring that all parties are aware of their rights and responsibilities under this policy.
- Following up on all complaints filed under state and federal civil rights and non-discrimination laws and regulations.
- Conducting periodic reviews of formal and informal civil rights and non-discrimination laws and regulations to identify and address any systemic patterns or issues.
- Providing staff training to ensure proper implementation of this non-discrimination and anti-retaliation policy.
- Maintaining a file with all documentation related to complaints for at least three (3) years.
- Maintaining an internal statistical record of civil rights and/or discrimination complaints handled by the PRDH.

Ms. Janice M. González Galarza
January 15, 2026
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Given your experience and knowledge, I have entrusted you with this responsibility and expect you to fulfill it diligently.

Sincerely,



Dr. Víctor Ramos Otero, MD, MBA
Secretary of Health
Puerto Rico Department of Health

cc: Personnel File

JOSEPH EST. ROMER



DEPARTMENT OF

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APPENDIX C. CIVIL RIGHTS OR DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT FORM



DEPARTMENT OF

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CIVIL RIGHTS OR DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT FORM

In accordance with state and federal anti-discrimination laws, agencies, offices, employees, and institutions participating in or administering programs funded under the Federal Government are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, retaliation for prior civil rights activities, or any other category protected by law. The information you provide will be handled in compliance with best practices for information management and will be used for investigation and complaint handling purposes.

A. Provide Information About Yourself.

Complainant's

Name: _____

Date: _____

(dd/mm/yyyy)

Mailing

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

(xxx-xxx-xxxx)

B. Provide Information Related to the Event Being Reported.

Select as applicable:

- ☐ Violation or civil rights complaint under any protected category based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, retaliation for prior civil rights activities, or any other category protected by law, in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Federal Government.
- ☐ Administrative complaint.

Location: _____

Date: _____

(dd/mm/yyyy)

Name(s) of
person(s)
involved in the
event:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Civil Rights and No Discrimination Policy



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Appendix D. Federal Operations Office of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in Puerto Rico



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Federal Operations Office of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in Puerto Rico

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is responsible for enforcing federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability, genetic information, or for reporting discrimination, filing charges, or participating in an investigation or lawsuit regarding employment discrimination.

The San Juan Local Office is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (except federal holidays). Walk-ins are accepted before 2:30 p.m.; however, scheduled appointments have priority, and walk-ins may or may not be seen depending on staff availability. To schedule an appointment, you may use the online system (<https://publicportal.eeoc.gov/Portal/login.aspx>) or contact:

a. San Juan Local Office of the EEOC Federal Operations

525 F.D. Roosevelt Ave. Plaza Las Américas, Suite 1202

San Juan, PR 00918-8001

Tel: 787-520-5614

Fax: 787-771-1485

TTY: 1-800-669-6820

ASL Video Call: 844-234-5122

b. EEOC Headquarters

131 M Street, NE

Washington, DC 20507

Tel: 1-800-669-4000

TTY: 1-800-669-6820

ASL Video Call: 1-844-234-5122

Email: info@eeoc.gov



DEPARTMENT OF

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APPENDIX E. ORGANIZATIONAL CHART OF THE PUERTO RICO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

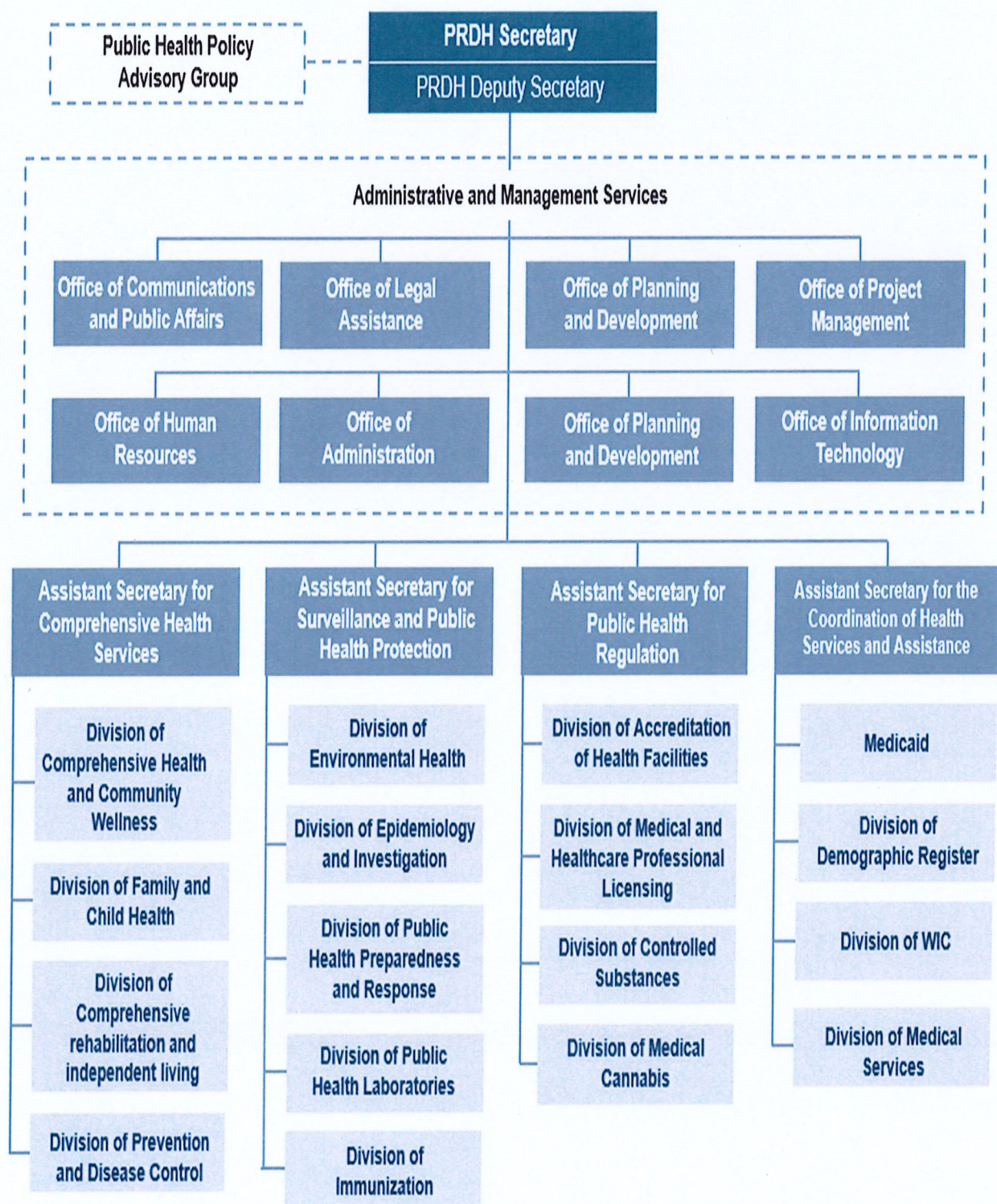


Figure 1. Organizational Chart of the Puerto Rico Department of Health