

STATE OF NEW YORK
DIVISION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
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**NEW YORK STATE DIVISION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HOME DEPOT
ANNOUNCE AGREEMENT TO ENHANCE CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS**

The New York State Division of Human Rights and Home Depot announced today that Home Depot is enhancing its practices to improve its process for evaluating contractors with conviction records.

This agreement came after the Division examined the company's service provider screening process. The company responded immediately, and cooperative discussions followed, resulting in an agreement that allows Home Depot to retain all the necessary tools to conduct proper background checks while protecting the rights of all New Yorkers.

"This is a perfect example of how the Division is working proactively and collaboratively to educate New Yorkers about the State's great Human Rights Law, to achieve our goal of eradicating and preventing discrimination," stated Division Commissioner, Kumiki Gibson. "I applaud Home Depot for taking this step to ensure that their policies are in line with the Law -- which is essential to make sure that individuals with prior transgressions who pass the appropriate screening criteria have a real opportunity to re-enter the workforce and make positive contributions to our society and our economy."

Under the New York State Human Rights Law, it is unlawful to deny employment to individuals solely because of a previous criminal conviction record. The employer must weigh factors specified in the Human Rights Law to determine whether the prior conviction truly affects the individual's fitness and ability to perform the job requirements. Home Depot's background check screening process for selecting contractors to join its network of independent, licensed professionals that complete contracts for its Home Services division will include these specified factors.

"We have a firm commitment to conducting our screening process in a fair and lawful manner," said Aaron Flowe, The Home Depot's regional vice president for the New York Metro region. "This was a productive collaboration between New York's Division of Human Rights and The Home Depot that makes sure all of our contractors are screened properly and fairly while also protecting the quality and safety of the services we provide."

Commissioner Gibson said that she is committed to working with other employers covered by the Law to achieve full compliance. "Although I am committed to strong law enforcement, I am always looking for ways to assist employers to ensure that their policies and practices comply with our Law, and that New Yorkers are realizing their full rights under the Law. I hope that this agreement with Home Depot is one of many with employers doing business in the State."

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New York has the proud distinction of being the first state in the nation to enact a Human Rights Law, which affords every citizen "an equal opportunity to enjoy a full and productive life." The New York State Division of Human Rights was created to enforce this important law and does so through, among other things, the vigorous prosecution of unlawful discriminatory practices and the receipt, investigation, and resolution of complaints of discrimination. Please visit the Division's website at www.dhr.state.ny.us for additional information about the agency and its work.