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Advancing Opportunity and Equality
Through Human Rights

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“Human Rights are Universal,
but their experience is local.”

-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

What is meant by
“international human rights?”

- Standards
 - Strategies
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Human Rights Standards

- Ensure fairness, dignity and equality for every person
 - Enable all individuals to meet their basic survival needs
 - Recognize interdependence of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights
 - Place affirmative obligation on government to respect, protect and fulfill these rights
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Human Rights Strategies

- a set of tools and approaches that hold government and other powerful actors accountable for protecting the rights of all people
 - provide opportunity for community engagement
 - Include:
 - documenting human rights abuses
 - engaging in public education
 - using international mechanisms
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How are international human rights
relevant to the work of state and local
agencies?

“Human Rights” is a Local Issue

- Human rights must start at home, and must involve and reflect the needs and expertise of local communities
 - Realization of human rights requires local decision-making, and strong cooperation between local, state and federal government, and between government and civil society
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Human Rights in a Federalist System

- US Constitution's Supremacy Clause: ratified treaties are the Supreme Law of the land
 - US Ratification: human rights treaty obligations will be implemented by state and local government to the extent that they exercise jurisdiction over such matters
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Human Rights Treaties Ratified by the US

- Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
 - Race Convention (CERD)
 - Convention Against Torture (CAT)
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Human Rights Treaties Signed but not Ratified

- Women's Convention (CEDAW)
 - Children's Rights Convention (CRC)
 - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
 - Economic and Social Rights Covenant (ICESCR)
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Human Rights Treaties Provide Opportunities to:

- Report on conditions within communities
 - Train officials and community members to promote equality and non-discrimination
 - Conduct hearings to examine the relevance of findings by international treaty bodies
 - Issue recommendations for future action
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State and Local Human Rights Agencies:
Recommendations for Advancing Opportunity and Equality
Through an International Human Rights Framework

Columbia Law School, Human Rights Institute
International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF
The Campaign for a New Domestic Human Rights Agenda

Key Recommendations

- Monitor and document human rights issues
 - Assess local policy in light of international standards
 - Promote human rights education
 - Incorporate human rights principles into advocacy efforts
 - Investigate human rights complaints
 - Coordinate and implement local policy to integrate human rights principles
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US Civil and Human Rights Commission

- dedicated staff to coordinate with state and local government
 - education and training for state and local officials
 - Funding for state and local agencies
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“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home . . .”

- Eleanor Roosevelt
