

FAIR HOUSING IS YOUR RIGHT!

Landlords should ONLY be concerned that you will pay rent on time, you will take care of their property, and you will not disturb other tenants. "Fair Housing" is a body of federal, state and local laws that protects people against illegal housing discrimination. Every person involved in a housing transaction is responsible to follow and uphold fair housing laws. This includes property owners, on-site managers, rental agents, mortgage lenders, real estate brokers and agents and appraisers.

Illegal housing discrimination is when one person is treated differently than another person because of such personal characteristics as age, sex, gender, race, creed, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, presence of children in the family or because a member of the household has a disability. Sometimes illegal discrimination is blatant and intentional, other times it is not obvious but is just as harmful when a seemingly neutral rule keeps people out because of their race, religion, etc. Another form of discrimination is when a housing provider refuses to change their policies, practices or procedures for people with disabilities.

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

Housing discrimination is often done with a smile and a handshake.

A landlord, property manager or real estate agent isn't likely to say "I don't rent to people like you."

So be suspicious when you hear:

"I don't think you'd fit in here."

"Sure we rent to families with kids, but we need an extra security deposit"

"Sorry, but the apartment was just rented."
(but the sign is still up and the ad is still listed)

"We only allow 2 people in a 2 bedroom apartment" or "We only allow 2 people in a 1 bedroom apt."

"I have to see your green card"

"Are you two married?"

"Do you have someone to take care of you?"

"I'm sure you'd be happier somewhere else."

"We have apartments set aside for the handicapped, but they're full"

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

The law provides remedies, but proving discrimination can be difficult. Follow these guidelines to better protect yourself and prevent additional discrimination:

1. Put together a renter's resume.

Include your employment and rental history, references, etc. This way you will have a record of what you have submitted. If you are disqualified because of income, rental history, etc, you'll be able to refer back to your resume.

2. Bring someone with you.

This person can act as a witness.

3. Be aware of your surroundings.

Are other applicants treated differently?

4. Ask for a business card.

Or ask for a name, phone # and title.

5. Ask for a copy of the rules, policies, marketing materials.

6. Remember what you are told.

7. If denied, ask for the reason in writing.

8. You and witness(es) record a detailed account of your experience.

9. Give exact dates, phrases. Write down questions you were asked.

10. Contact the Human Rights Department: 1300 Main St. (563)589-4190

EXAMPLES OF ILLEGAL DISCRIMINATION:

Sexual Harassment

A woman lives alone in an apartment complex, and the manager keeps making unwelcome sexual comments to her.

Refusal to Provide Services

A Muslim tenant requests repairs, but the landlord does not respond as promptly as he does for Christian tenants. Often, repairs for Muslim residents are not made at all.

Unfair Lending Practices

A Hispanic family applies for a home loan at a bank. Although they meet the financial qualifications, they are turned down. Qualified non-Hispanic applicants are not treated this way.

Misrepresenting the Availability of Housing

An Asian immigrant who has a noticeable accent calls in response to a rental ad. The property manager tells him that the house he wants to see is already taken. Later the immigrant learns the house is still available.

Refusal to Allow "Reasonable Modifications"

A tenant with a disability is not allowed to install grab bars in her bathroom, even though the apartment would be more accessible.

Refusing Rental

A rental agent will not allow a same sex couple to rent a 1-bedroom apartment.

Racial Harassment

A landlord makes negative comments about a tenant's race, friends and family, and issues unfair violation notices.

Discouraging Rental

A landlord requires an African American man to undergo a background check in order to qualify for the apartment in question, and the African American man later finds out that other tenants were not required to have a background check.

... EXAMPLES CONTINUED

Preferential Advertising

A housing provider advertises available homes, using terms such as "adult community," "ideal for young professionals" or "Christians only."

Retaliation

After experiencing discrimination, a tenant asserts her fair housing rights by complaining to her apartment manager. The manager then raises her rent significantly.

"Steering"

An African American couple looking for a new home is pressured by their real estate agent to purchase in an area where many African Americans live.

Asking questions unrelated to rental history or ability to pay

A landlord asks a person with a physical disability, "Are you going to be able to keep your apartment clean?" or "How are you going to keep this apartment clean?"

Offering different terms and conditions

A management company charges higher rents/security deposits to families with children or individuals with personal attendants.

Failure to accommodate

A condo association refuses to allow service animals for people with disabilities.

Exclusion of Children

A family is not allowed to rent a third floor apartment because "children are too noisy and will bother the tenants below."

Unreasonable Occupancy Limits

An apartment manager tells a family that the 2-bedroom unit they wish to rent is too small. He says there is a policy that requires each child in the family to have a separate bedroom.

*If you believe that you have been discriminated against, contact the
Dubuque Human Rights Department at (563) 589-4190 or humanrgt@cityofdubuque.org*