

HOUSING RIGHTS, INC.

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 12895, Berkeley, CA 94712. Phone: 510-548-8776, Fax 510-548-5805

FAIR HOUSING IS OPENING DOORS FOR EVERYONE!

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 protect people against illegal housing discrimination. Any 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 race, 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.

EXAMPLES OF ILLEGAL DISCRIMINATION:

- ◆ Refusing to sell or rent because of a persons race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, age or familial status
- ◆ Asking questions or recording information about a persons race, color, etc.
- ◆ Restricting families with children or people with disabilities to certain buildings or floors
- ◆ Charging higher rents to families with children or individuals with personal attendants
- ◆ Steering African Americans to certain neighborhoods
- ◆ Requiring some people to pay higher deposits or fees
- ◆ Refusing to make loans in certain neighborhoods
- ◆ Stating that a unit is unavailable when it is
- ◆ Suggesting that a person pay for their deposit with sexual favors
- ◆ Asking a person with a disability if they are allowed to live on their own
- ◆ Building apartment complexes that do not have units which are wheelchair accessible
- ◆ Refusing to allow service animals for people with disabilities
- ◆ Advertising a unit using terms such as: Christian couple wanted, adults only, or ideal for one person only.

How Do You Know?

Housing discrimination is often done with a smile and a hand-shake. 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 two people in a two bedroom apartment" or "We only allow two people in a one 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 are full"

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

The law provides remedies for people who have been illegally discriminated against. Proving discrimination can be difficult. Follow these guidelines to better protect yourself and prevent additional discrimination:

- ◆ **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 will be able to refer back to your resume.
- ◆ **BRING SOMEONE WITH YOU:** This person can act as a witness.
- ◆ **BE AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS:** Are other applicants being treated differently?
- ◆ **ASK FOR A BUSINESS CARD:** If no card is available, ask for a name, phone number and title.
- ◆ **ASK FOR A COPY OF THE RULES, POLICIES MARKETING MATERIALS**
- ◆ **PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO WHAT YOU ARE TOLD:**
- ◆ **IF YOU ARE DENIED HOUSING, ASK FOR THE REASON IN WRITING**
- ◆ **RECORD A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF YOUR EXPERIENCE. ASK A WITNESS TO DO THE SAME:** Do this while it is still fresh in your mind. Give exact dates, phrases. Write down questions you were asked

- ◆ **CALL HOUSING RIGHTS, INC:** If you think you've been discriminated against. We will help you sort out what happened and what you can do about it.

