Know Your Rights: Fair Housing

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www.equalrightscenter.org
Objectives

• Recognize what housing discrimination may look like

• Identify how you are protected by housing discrimination laws

• Determine what to do if you experience housing discrimination

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Mission of the ERC

The Equal Rights Center is a civil rights organization that identifies and seeks to eliminate unlawful and unfair discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodations in its home community of Greater Washington, D.C. and nationwide.

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Fair Housing Act (FHA)

• Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 & the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988

• Protects individuals from discrimination in housing

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Fair Housing

Applies to ALL housing-related transactions:
• Rental
• Sales
• Lending
• Insurance
• Homeowners Associations

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Fair Housing Act: Protected Classes

- Race
- Color
- National Origin
- Familial Status
- Disability
- Religion
- Sex
Additional Protected Classes in DC

- Age
- Marital Status
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity & Expression
- Source of Income
- Status as a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking
- Family Responsibilities
- Political Affiliation
- Personal Appearance
- Matriculation
- Place of Residence/Business

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Additional Protected Classes in Maryland

• Source of Income
• Marital Status
• Sexual Orientation
• Gender Identity
Additional Locally Protected Classes

• Prince George’s County: Age, Occupation, Personal Appearance, & Political Opinion

• Montgomery County: Ancestry, Age, Presence of Children, & Family Responsibilities
Prohibited Activities

- Refusal to sell or rent
- Discriminatory terms and conditions
- Advertising a discriminatory preference
- Misrepresenting availability

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Prohibited Activities

• Blockbusting or steering
• Harassment, threats, intimidation, coercion
• Inaccessible design
• Retaliation
• Any other conduct which makes unavailable or denies dwellings
Scenario

A landlord tells a parent with 2 children than they don’t rent to families with children under the age of 5 because young kids are too noisy and would disturb the individuals in neighboring apartments.
Source of Income

Includes:

- Payments from federal and local programs
- Short- and long-term rental subsidies
- Housing choice vouchers (Section 8)
- Emergency assistance
- Social Security Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Unemployment insurance
- Alimony
- Veteran benefits
- Disability benefits

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Source of Income

- Any legal source of income
- Minimum income requirements should only consider the portion of rent that the voucher holder pays

RENTEQUAL MIN. INCOME REQUIREMENT

$200 + VOUCHER = $2,000

Your Responsibility Covers Rent Balance Total

$200

Your Responsibility

$600/MO. X 12 = $7,200/YR.

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Hello, I'm looking for a 3-bedroom apartment.
How does your minimum income requirement apply to Housing Choice Voucher holders?
Hello, I'm looking for a 1-bedroom apartment for me and my son.
What Can You Do?

Document your experience:
• Date and time
• Who you spoke to
• Summary of what happened
• Other details: cost of rent, security deposit, availability of units, amenities, etc.
What Can You Do?

Anyone who believes that they have experienced unlawful discrimination can file a fair housing complaint.

• The Equal Rights Center
• HUD
• DC Office of Human Rights or Maryland Commission on Civil Rights

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Filing a Complaint with the ERC

• Call 202-234-3062
• Email info@equalrightscenter.org
• Fill out the “Submit a Lead” form on the ERC’s website
Questions?

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