

Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council

Fair Housing is Your Right: Protect Yourself!

Seeking housing is never an easy task. For many Milwaukee County residents, illegal discrimination makes finding and keeping housing much more difficult than it should be. Housing discrimination is common, yet most people remain unaware of its prevalence. Equal housing opportunity – the idea that all people should have equal access to all the housing they can afford – is still an elusive dream for our community.

Fair housing laws make it illegal for housing providers (landlords, real estate agents, apartment managers, etc.) to discriminate based on any of the following categories:

- Race
- Sex
- National origin/Ancestry
- Color
- Disability
- Religion
- Family status (household composition, including presence of children)
- Sexual orientation
- Marital status
- Lawful source of income
- Age

Housing discrimination appears in many different forms. Sometimes housing providers discriminate overtly by making statements to applicants such as “we only rent to working people,” “no kids allowed,” or “we don’t rent to single moms.”

In this day and age, however, housing discrimination is often subtle and difficult to detect. Sometimes people leave an interaction with a housing provider not knowing that they were treated differently than other people because of their race, because they have kids or because they have a disability.

The following are some possible “red flags” that may indicate illegal discrimination:

- You called about an apartment for rent. You were told that it has been rented, but you continue to see that apartment advertised in the newspaper or with a “for rent” sign.
- You ask to make an appointment to see an apartment, and the landlord tells you that you must bring your entire family along.
- A landlord or apartment manager gives you confusing or contradictory information.
- You are told of extremely long waiting lists.
- You are told that you don’t meet a housing provider’s eligibility criteria, but the provider won’t tell you what the eligibility requirements are.
- A landlord, rental manager, or real estate agent doesn’t return your phone calls.
- Your lease is non-renewed for no apparent reason.
- Your landlord refuses to allow you to make modifications to your apartment to make it physically accessible for you.

If you’re concerned that you may have experienced a violation of fair housing law, there are ways to address the problem. Victims of

housing discrimination have the right to pursue complaints in public administrative agencies, such as the Wisconsin Equal Rights Division. People with housing discrimination complaints may also file lawsuits in state or federal court.

If you have any questions regarding housing discrimination, fair housing laws and what your options may be for pursuing a complaint of housing discrimination, call the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council at 278-1240.

The Fair Housing Council offers many helpful services, including:

- Counseling for persons alleging housing discrimination
- Investigations of behalf of victims of housing discrimination
- Assistance in filing fair housing complaints with an administrative agency or in a court of law

In addition, the Fair Housing Council provides educational presentations to neighborhood groups, civic and religious organizations, social service agencies, community centers and other groups that are interested in learning more about fair housing law and housing discrimination. Please call Felita Daniels Ashley at 414-278-1240 to schedule a presentation for your group.

