



HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

WHAT KINDS OF DISCRIMINATION ARE ILLEGAL?

In Minnesota, no one connected to your housing can treat you differently because of your:

- Race
- Sex
- Color
- Religion
- Family Status (having kids or being pregnant)
- Public Assistance (MFIP, GA, SSI, etc.)
- Sexual Preference
- Marital Status (being single or divorced)
- Disability
- National Origin
- Age (St. Paul only)
- Creed (beliefs)

WHAT ARE COMMON EXAMPLES OF DISCRIMINATION?

Application Denials

- When you call on the phone, the apartment is available. But when the landlord sees the color of your skin, it is “already rented.”
- The landlord says “no MFIP” or “no welfare.”
- You get turned down because you have a disability, even though your disability would not keep you from following the lease.
- The landlord says “no kids,” but it is not a seniors-only building or an owner-occupied building with 4 units or less.
- The apartment manager treats the people who apply differently. For example, they tell people who get welfare they need an income of 3 times the rent, but they do not tell that to working people.
- Your application is never processed.



Different Treatment

- The caretaker makes repairs for white tenants before tenants of color.
- The manager punishes lease violations more strictly if they are by people of color.
- The landlord will not make a simple change in the rules to let a person with a disability live there successfully. Like allowing a companion animal.
- There are special rules for children.
- The manager only shows you apartments in certain areas.

Harassment

- The caretaker pressures you to date him, and lets himself into your apartment.
- The security guard treats your visitors differently, because they are gay or lesbian.
- The neighbors try to force you out of the neighborhood with racial insults or threats.

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

If you are turned down for an apartment and you suspect discrimination, call the numbers below for help right away. You can have someone you know call the landlord and apply, and see how the landlord treats that person. For example, if you suspect discrimination based on race, see if a white person gets treated better. Keep notes on what happened each time and who you and your friend each talked to.

If you are being treated badly or harassed where you live, write a letter to the landlord. Keep a copy of it and of any evidence of the discrimination. Try to have witnesses who can see or hear it. Write down notes every time something happens. If the discrimination does not stop, or if you are in danger, call for help.

LAWSUITS AND AGENCY COMPLAINTS



You can start a lawsuit to stop the discrimination and sometimes get money damages. If you need quick action to get an apartment you were denied, to stop harassment, or to avoid an eviction, a lawsuit may be your best bet. If you have a low income, call your legal aid office.

In the Twin Cities metro area, call the Housing Discrimination Law Project (612) 334-5970 or Housing Equality Law Project, (651) 222-4731.

You can also look for help from government agencies that enforce housing discrimination laws. They will investigate at no charge to you. If they find discrimination, they will see if an agreement can be reached. If no agreement is reached, the agency may file a case against the person who discriminated. 2 of these agencies are:

Housing and Urban Development

77 West Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, IL 60604-3507
Phone: (800) 424-8590
TDD: (800) 543-8294

Minnesota Department of Human Rights

190 E 5th St., Ste. 700
St. Paul, MN 55101
Phone: (651) 296-5663
TDD: (651) 296-1283

Whatever you do, act fast. In most cases, you need to file a complaint or lawsuit within 1 or sometimes 2 years.