

FAIR HOUSING AND DISABILITIES

IF YOU HAVE A DISABILITY . . .

You have a right to the housing of your choice.

It is illegal for anyone to deny you housing because you have a mental or physical disability, or a record of having had a mental or physical disability, or because people think you have a mental or physical disability.

The Fair Housing Act (FHA) protects people with mental retardation, mental illness, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, visual and hearing impairments, AIDS and other disabilities. People who use walkers, wheelchairs, service dogs, or a personal care attendant are all protected against housing discrimination.

Alcoholics, whether or not in recovery, are covered. The only people with disabilities the FHA does not protect are those who use drugs illegally.

HOW TO RECOGNIZE HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

Landlords and real estate agents usually don't say, "You can't live here because you have a handicap." **But, some things they do say are:**

- "You can't live here because there's no one to take care of you."
- "I'd like to rent to you, but my insurance will go up."
- "How can I be sure that you can pay the rent?"
- "We don't want alcoholics or drug addicts here, even if you are in recovery."
- "We have a no-pet rule and that includes your guide dog."
- "I want to see your medical records."
- "Your wheel chair will damage the carpet and walls, and you won't be able to get out if there is a fire."

Can you legally be rejected as a tenant?

Yes . . . but, only in two situations.

1. The landlord may reject your application if you cannot meet the obligations that apply to all tenants, such as being able to pay the rent and complying with reasonable rules and regulations. Such a rejection must be based on concrete evidence.
2. Your application could also be rejected if your living there would directly threaten the health and safety of other individuals or would result in substantial physical damage to the property of others.

Reasonable Accommodation

The Fair Housing Act required that housing providers make reasonable accommodations in their rules, policies or services to give a person with a disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling unit or common space. As the tenant, you have the responsibility to ask for an accommodation when it's needed.

Examples of Reasonable Accommodations

A landlord, manager or housing cooperative with a “first come, first serve” parking policy makes an exception by creating a reserved parking space for a tenant who has difficulty walking and needs to park close to the building.

A landlord or manager makes an exception to the buildings “no pet” rule for people with a disability who use guide dogs or other “service animals”.

WHERE TO GET HELP

If you suspect you have experienced housing discrimination or for more information about the housing rights of people with disabilities, contact:

Coshocton County Fair Housing Administration

Robin Schonauer

401 ½ Main Street

Coshocton, Ohio 43812

740-622-1753 or 740-295-7467