

COOK COUNTY FAIR HOUSING FACT SHEET
Housing Professionals
Complying with Fair Housing Law



Most rental housing, including transitional housing for homeless households, is subject to federal and state fair housing laws. It is important that as an owner of rental housing, you understand and provide training to your staff about these fair housing laws.

The [Fair Housing Act of 1968](#) prohibits a landlord/property manager from treating a tenant unfairly because of their protected class. Protected classes include:

- Race
- Color
- National Origin
- Religion
- Gender
- Disability
- Familial Status

If you are a resident of Illinois, the [Illinois Human Rights Act](#) provides additional protection based upon:

- Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity
- Age (40 and above)
- Marital Status
- Order of Protection Status
- Ancestry
- Military Status
- Unfavorable Military Discharge

Through the [Cook County Human Rights Ordinance](#), residents of Cook County have additional protection based upon:

- Parental Status
- Military Discharge Status
- Source of Income
- Housing Status

Prohibited actions by a landlord include, but are not limited to:

- Refusing to rent available housing
- Applying unfair or inequitable criteria when evaluating an applicant/household
- Refusing to rent to a person with a disability or refusing to provide reasonable accommodations or allow reasonable modifications
- Setting unequal rental terms and/or conditions
- Providing unequal levels of service or facilities
- Enforcing rules unequally
- Terminating a tenancy or evicting a tenant for discriminatory reasons
- Threatening or intimidating a person from exercising a fair housing right
- Advertising or making a statement that indicates a lack of preference for a person/household because of their protected class

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What is Fair Housing?

A fair housing market is one in which no consumer is more burdened in making housing choices than any other consumer. Fair Housing is the right for all people to live wherever they choose, to have access to housing (seek, purchase, sell, lease or rent) and enjoy the full use of their homes without unlawful discrimination, interference, coercion, threats, or intimidation by owners, landlords or real estate agents or any other persons.

Why is Fair Housing Important?

Fair housing goes beyond a physical structure. Affirmatively furthering fair housing creates a housing market which is open, inclusive, and fulfills the diverse needs of all community residents. Fair housing reconnects neighborhoods by ensuring access to quality housing, regardless of race, gender, religious views, familial status, or disability. All citizens have the opportunity to live in close proximity to high-achieving schools, employment opportunities, transportation options, banking services, grocery stores and retail, public services, and public space. Local government reaps benefits from promoting integration by lowering costs for social services, improving revenues through strong property values, and providing a desirable community where households and businesses can thrive.

File a Housing Discrimination Complaint

Landlords should be aware that tenants who believe that they may have been the victim of housing discrimination can file a complaint with a fair housing agency or may seek the assistance of an attorney. In addition, landlords may seek information and assistance with fair housing compliance from the fair housing agency with jurisdiction over their housing. As a housing provider, we encourage you to connect with your local fair housing agency to learn about fair housing trainings and to ensure that your housing practices reflect the laws of your area:

Local

All Suburbs: Cook County Commission on Human Rights - www.cookcountyil.gov

City of Chicago: Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Inc. – www.clccrul.org

Southern Cook County: South Suburban Housing Center – www.southsuburbanhousingcenter.org

Northern Cook County: Open Communities – www.interfairhousingcenter.org

West and Northwest Cook County: HOPE Fair Housing Center – www.hopefair.org

State

Illinois Department of Human Rights - www2.illinois.gov/dhr

National

US Department of Housing & Urban Development - www.hud.gov/fairhousing

More information on fair housing and how to affirmatively further fair housing:

Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance - www.cafha.net