

COOK COUNTY FAIR HOUSING FACT SHEET

Tenants and Homebuyers Know Your Fair Housing Rights



Residents of Cook County are protected from discriminatory housing practices by federal, state, and county-wide fair housing laws. Depending on where you live in Cook County, you may also be protected by a local 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

Fair housing laws protect you when you are looking for housing as well as when you are living in rental housing. 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

The Cook County Commission on Human Rights investigates, conciliates and, if warranted, holds hearings on complaints of housing discrimination occurring within Cook County. If you believe that you have been discriminated against, you may be able to file a complaint with the Cook County Commission on Human Rights. Tenants that may have been the victim of housing discrimination may also seek the assistance of a private attorney or legal services office. Where you live will determine which agency you can file a complaint with:

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