

Fair Housing Frequently Asked Questions.

Q. What is Fair Housing?

A. The United States Fair Housing Act and the Minnesota Human Rights Act provide protection against discrimination based on race, sex, religion, color, handicap, familial status or national origin. The State of Minnesota also prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and status with regard to public assistance. The Minnesota Human Rights Act housing provisions include a requirement to allow serve animals, and to provide or permit adaptation of the premises needed by disabled occupants as a reasonable accommodation.

Q. What are Examples of Fair Housing Violations. (note this is from Hennepin County but it is well done and I do not think it can be improved much)

A. Denying or refusing to rent housing
Denying or refusing to sell housing
Treating applicants differently for housing
Treating residents differently in connection with terms and conditions
Advertising a discriminatory housing preference or limitations
Providing false information about the availability of housing
Harassing, coercing or intimidating people from enjoying or exercising their rights under the act
"Blockbusting" for profit or persuading owners to sell or rent housing by telling them that people of a particular race, religion, etc. are moving into the area or neighborhood.
Imposing different terms for loans for purchasing, constructing, improving, repairing, or maintaining a home, or loans secured by housing
Denying use of or participation in real estate services, e.g., brokers' organizations, multiple listing services, etc.

*Q. Are all Situations Where What is Seen as Unfair Treatment in Housing a Violation of State or Federal Housing Laws? **This question could be excluded I thought it might be useful to explain that not all things are fair housing violations but the safer choice is to not do this.***

A. No, a housing provider must not treat the groups listed in the act differently than any others. However, a housing provider may require background checks, credit checks and require certain rules to be followed as long as everyone is treated the same. There are also exemptions written into the law that may affect your situation. This issue can be complex and if you feel that housing discrimination has taken place you may want to discuss it further with Northeast Minnesota Legal Services, your own attorney, or by contacting the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development or the Minnesota Department of Human Rights.

Q. Is There a Time Limit to Filing a Complaint?

A. Yes, both the state and federal agencies have time limits to file a complaint. Generally, complaints must be filed within one year of the incident.

Q. How are Fair Housing Laws Enforced?

A. Fair housing complaints may be filed with the federal or state agencies. You do not need an attorney to file a complaint, however, you may want to consult one, including the services available at Northeastern Minnesota Legal Services. The federal housing complaint form and process can be found at:
<http://www.hud.gov/complaints/housediscrim.cfm>

The federal form does permit a formal online complaint or you may print it out and mail it in. HUD also permits in lieu of the form a letter addressing the following:

- Your name and address
- The name and address of the person your complaint is about
- The address of the house or apartment you were trying to rent or buy
- The date when this incident occurred
- A short description of what happened

The letter should be sent to:

Chicago Regional Office of FHEO
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Ralph H. Metcalfe Federal Building
77 West Jackson Boulevard, Room 2101
Chicago, IL 60604-3507
(312) 353-7776 ext. 2453
1-800-765-9372

The state online contact site is:

http://www.humanrights.state.mn.us/about_helpnow.html

The Minnesota online complaint form is a request for information and does not constitute a formal complaint. The state can be contacted at:

Minnesota Department of Human Rights
190 East Fifth St., Suite 700
St. Paul, MN 55101
651-296-5663
Toll free: 1-800-657-3704
TTY: 651-296-1283

Q. How Can I Contact Legal Services?

A. **South St. Louis County**

Legal Aid of Northeastern Minnesota
302 Ordean Bldg.
424 West Superior St.
Duluth, MN 55802
(218) 726-4800
1-800-622-7266
TDD: (218) 726-4826
Fax: (218) 726-4804
HandsNet ID: HN2945

North St. Louis County

Legal Aid of Northeastern Minnesota
Olcott Plaza, Suite 150
820 N. Ninth St.
Virginia, MN 55792
(218) 749-3270 (Voice and TDD)
1-800-886-3270
Fax: (218) 749-0706
Website: <http://lasnem.org/DNN/>