

FAIR HOUSING AND YOU

CLERMONT COUNTY, OHIO



TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION

There are both Federal and State laws which prohibit housing discrimination. In fact, it is not only illegal to discriminate against someone because of his or her race, but also because of a person's color, creed, sex, religious belief, national origin, handicap, family status or military status. Some of these terms are easily understood, but others may be confusing. Simply put:

- Race refers to a major ethnic group;
- Color means a person's complexion or skin tone;
- Creed includes any statement of principles, opinions or beliefs;
- Sex refers to either the male or female gender;
- Religious belief is a person's spiritual faith or conviction;
- National origin refers to a person's ancestry;
- Handicap means a physical or mental disability;
- Family status means families or heads of households with children; pregnant women or person's seeking custody of children under 18; it may also cover elderly housing;
- Military status means the performance of duty in uniform service.

Laws prohibiting discrimination affect everyone who may be involved with the sale or rental of housing.

This includes not only the real estate agent and landlord, but also the seller and lending institution.

Secondly, discrimination is prohibited not only in the public and private sale or rental of housing units, but also, in the offering of vacant land for residential construction.

AREAS OF DISCRIMINATION

The Civil Rights Act of 1966, the National Fair Housing Act of 1968, Jones vs. Alfred H. Mayer Company (U.S. Supreme Court, 1968) and Chapter 4112 of the Ohio Revised Code address the following areas of discrimination:

- Refusing to sell, rent or lease;
- Altering the terms or conditions for buying or renting;
- Denying that housing is available for inspection, sale or rent when it is available;
- Denying or altering terms and conditions for home loans by commercial lenders;
- Steering mortgage or insurance red lining.

RECENT AMENDMENTS TO THE FAIR HOUSING ACT

Changes made to the Federal Fair Housing law or Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 by the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 were enacted in September 1988 and became effective on March 12, 1989.

Title VIII has prohibited discrimination in the sale, rental and financing of a dwelling based on color, race, religion, sex or national origin. The Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 expands the coverage of Title VII to prohibit discriminatory housing practices based on handicap and familial status. The Act also establishes an administrative and judicial enforcement mechanism for cases where discriminatory housing practices cannot be resolved informally, and provides for monetary penalties in cases where housing discrimination is found.

SUBTLE DISCRIMINATION

If you were looking for an apartment and were told “we don’t want your kind in this neighborhood”, you might rightfully feel that you have been discriminated against.

However, subtle discrimination may also exist and is more difficult to recognize. For example:

- You call about an apartment advertised in the newspaper and are told that it is still available. When you immediately go to see the apartment, you are told that it has been rented.
- You are told by the manager of an apartment complex that there are no units available for families with children and there is a long waiting list. You happen to notice a few days later that there is an apartment advertised for rent in the same complex.
- While showing you a home, the real estate agent spends a great deal of time emphasizing the problems and limitations of the residence.

All of these may be subtle forms of discrimination, and you may have just cause for filing a complaint if you experienced similar situations.

HOW & WHERE TO FILE

If you feel that you have been discriminated against while trying to buy or rent, first call (513) 732-7286 and ask for the CLERMONT COUNTY FAIR HOUSING OFFICER. When filing a complaint, you will need to provide the following information:

- Your name, address and telephone number;
- The name, address and telephone number of the person or firm being charged with housing discrimination;
- The date when the alleged act occurred;
- State the basis for discrimination (race, color, creed, sex, marital status, religion, national origin or handicap);
- State clearly all details which caused you to file the complaint;
- The full name and exact position or title of all individuals mentioned;
- The name, address and telephone number of any witness able to support your charge.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOU FILE?

The first step is an investigation of your complaint. If there appears to be a basis for action, an attempt will be made to reconcile the differences that caused the complaint. This means it may be possible to negotiate an agreement acceptable to both parties.

If reconciliation between the parties is not possible, further legal action may be necessary to remedy the discriminatory conduct.

Regardless of the action taken, you have the right to file a complaint with the Ohio Civil Rights Commission and with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

HOW CAN YOU HELP PROMOTE FAIR HOUSING IN CLERMONT COUNTY?

- Insisting on an open occupancy policy if you rent or sell;
- Being a good neighbor to all new residents;
- **Doing something** if you feel that someone has violated your right to live wherever you choose!
- Filing your housing discrimination case in State or Federal court.

IF YOU NEED ASSISTANCE, PLEASE CONTACT:

CLERMONT COUNTY FAIR HOUSING OFFICER
2275 Bauer Road
Batavia, OH 45103
(513) 732-7286

Ohio Civil Rights Commission
Cincinnati Regional Office
Holiday Office Park, Suite 200
801-B West 8th Street
Cincinnati, OH 45203
(513) 852-3344

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
Region V
HUD-Fair Housing
Enforcement Center
Room 2101
Chicago, IL 60604-3507
1-800-669-9777 (HOTLINE)
1-800-927-9275 (TDD)

Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) Of Greater Cincinnati, Inc.
2400 Reading Road
Cincinnati, OH 45202
(513) 721-HOME (4663)