

Fair Housing **In-the-Know** Newsletter

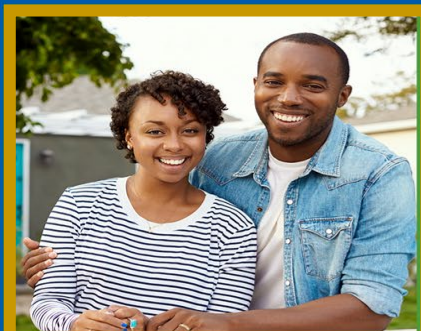


August 2026 – November 2026

A Quarterly Insight into Housing Discrimination

Stark County Fair Housing Department ~ Division of Stark County Regional Planning Commission

FAIR HOUSING FOR ALL!





EQUAL HOUSING
OPPORTUNITY

Fair Housing Act

Discrimination based on disability, race, color, national origin, sex, religion and familial status continues to impact individuals and families seeking a safe, accessible, and affordable place to live.

Housing Discrimination is Illegal! KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

when a disabled veteran is refused a ramp to safely enter his home

when a mother with children is told, “*sorry no kids here*” while trying to rent an apartment

WHO YOU GONNA CALL?!



when a black couple is steered to the other side of town

when a landlord demands sex instead of rent

when a municipality deny a permit for a home because of the disability of individuals who would live there

when a landlord denies your service or emotional support animal in a “no pet” complex

Stark County Fair Housing Department

(330) 451-7775

The Fair Housing Act Makes it Illegal to...

Say housing is unavailable when in fact it is

Set different terms, conditions, or privileges for the sale or rental of housing

Impose rules against children

Charge fees for an emotional support animal

Impose restrictions on group housing for persons with disabilities

Deny a request to install a wheelchair ramp

Evict because a tenant becomes pregnant

Charge additional rent because children are in the family

Steer minorities to certain areas of town

Steer families to certain floors or buildings

Refuse to make reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices or services for persons with disabilities

di·scrim·i·na·tion

tice of treating one
unfair way: [+ against]

stop discrimination
of] discrimination
rac

Our New Office

110 Central Plaza S., Ste. 300
Canton, Ohio 44702

**We Have
MOVED!**

STARK
COUNTY
OFFICE
BUILDING



Sexual Harassment in Housing is Illegal

The Fair Housing Act protects you from harassment, including someone repeatedly entering your apartment without permission, making unwelcome sexual advances or refusing to make repairs because you deny sexual favors. If this happens to you or someone you know, [file a housing discrimination complaint](#) with the Stark County Fair Housing Department.



"I DON'T
FEEL SAFE
IN MY HOME
ANYMORE."

"I'M
SCARED!"
"My
landlord's
comments
are ALWAYS
sexual."

"This
isn't
FAIR!"

"I FEEL
SO
VIOLATED."
"Who
can I
call?"

"I DON'T
KNOW
WHERE TO
GO."

"I
Need
Help!"

"If I don't
give in to
the advances,
I will get
evicted."

"Who will
believe
me?"

"SEX FOR
HOME
REPAIRS
IS WRONG."

"I felt
like I
didn't
have a
CHOICE!"

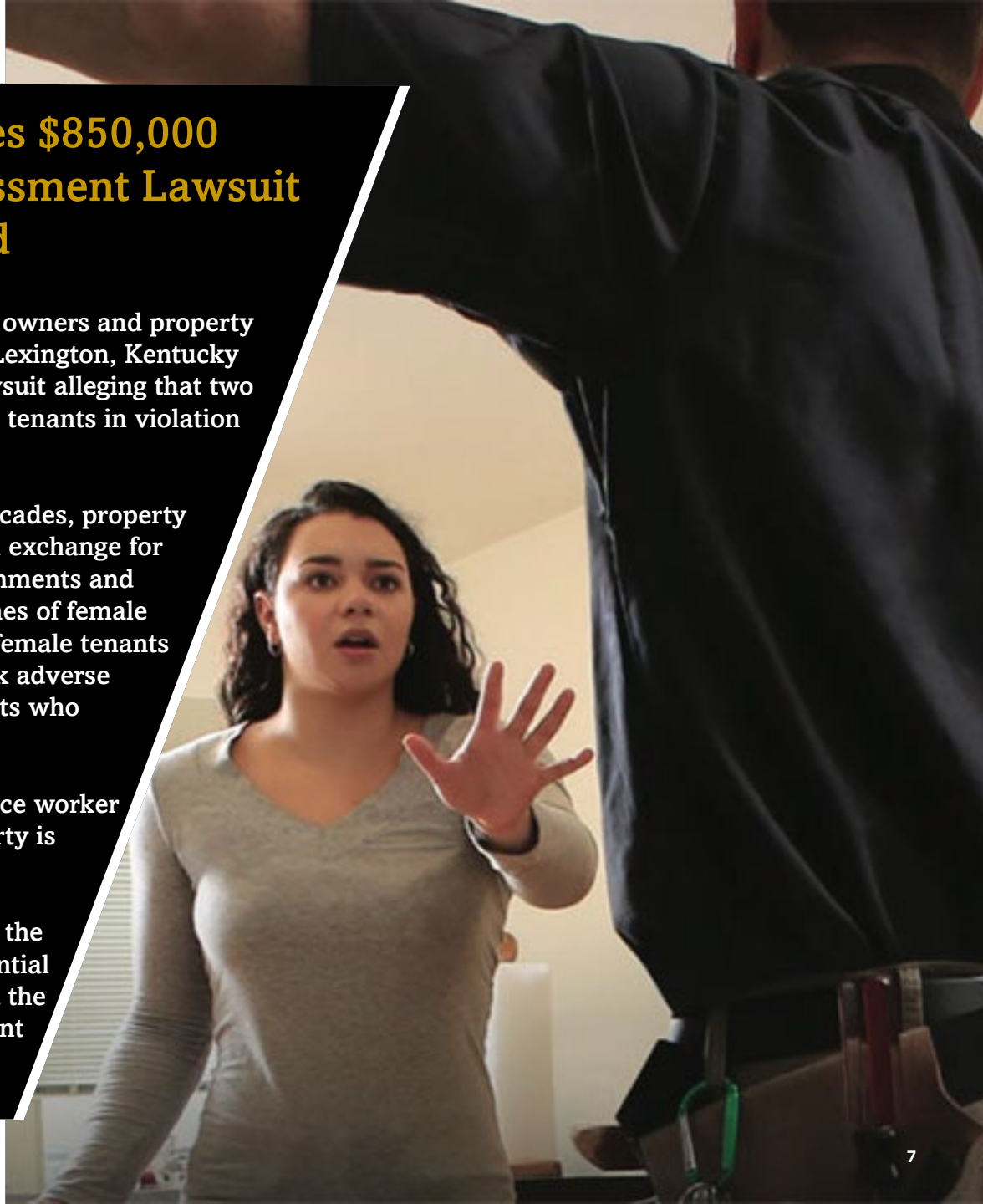
Justice Department Secures \$850,000 Settlement in Sexual Harassment Lawsuit Against Kentucky Landlord

The Justice Department announced that the owners and property managers of residential rental properties in Lexington, Kentucky have agreed to pay \$850,000 to resolve a lawsuit alleging that two property managers sexually harassed female tenants in violation of the Fair Housing Act.

The Department's lawsuit alleged that for decades, property managers offered housing-related benefits in exchange for sexual contact, made unwelcome sexual comments and advances to female tenants, entered the homes of female tenants without their permission, subjected female tenants to unwelcome touching and groping and took adverse housing-related actions against female tenants who refused their sexual advances.

Sexual harassment by a landlord, maintenance worker or anyone associated with your rental property is against the law.

The settlement agreement permanently bars the owners and managers from managing residential rental properties, and mandates training and the adoption of policies and procedures to prevent future discrimination at rental properties owned or managed by either defendant.



REPORT SEXUAL HARASSMENT!

Have a Fair Housing Question?

Email your question to

vjwatson@starkcountyohio.gov

We may publish the answer in the next issue of the Fair Housing In-the-Know Newsletter

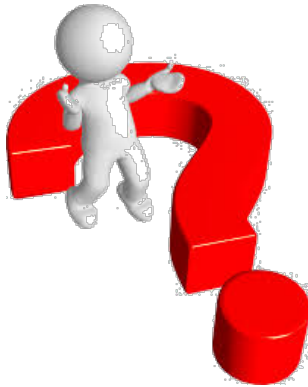


Test your knowledge.
Answer is on page 17.

QUESTION

Fair Housing

What are the two most common
fair housing violations?



WHY FAIR HOUSING MATTERS

EXAMPLES

When a disabled tenant's planned relocation fell through just days before a 30-day notice to vacate expired, he faced the immediate threat of homelessness. As a result of SCFHD's advocacy, the housing provider granted him extra time to locate suitable, long-term housing.

When a housing provider ignored a tenant's request for a safer and closer parking space due to mobility issues, SCFHD intervened. Due to a physical disability, steps, uneven pavement, and the lack of a handrail, the tenant struggled to walk to her carport safely. Through direct advocacy, SCFHD persuaded the housing provider to reassign the space, guaranteeing the tenant safe and accessible entry to and from her home.

SCFHD assisted a tenant with a disability who needed to relocate to an accessible unit with no stairs and a walk-in shower. When the housing provider refused to release her from her lease, despite only four months remaining, SCFHD intervened. SCFHD submitted a reasonable accommodation request and advocated on the tenant's behalf. As a result, the housing provider agreed to release the tenant from her lease, allowing her to secure housing that better met her accessibility needs.

ATTENTION

Landlord Conference and Expo
will be rescheduled in the
spring to celebrate
FAIR HOUSING MONTH!

**DATE
CHANGE**



New Date to be Announced Soon!

**Stark County Fair Housing
Settles Discrimination Case With
Jackson Township Apartment Owners**



Neighbor-on-Neighbor
HARASSMENT

On May 19, 2026, a Conciliation Agreement between the owners of an apartment complex in Jackson Township and Stark County Fair Housing resolved allegations that the owners discriminated on the basis of disability when they failed to address a tenant’s complaint of neighbor harassment. The harassment included physical intimidation and disparaging statements being made about the tenant’s disability.

The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination based on disability, as well as other protected classes. The Act also prohibits housing providers from failing to take prompt actions to correct and end discriminatory harassment by other tenants when the housing provider knew or should have known of the discrimination.

“No one should be subjected to verbal abuse or the threat of physical harm because they have a disability,” said Valerie Watson, Fair Housing Manager for Stark County Fair Housing.

The case came to SCFHD 's attention when they were contacted by a Stark County Commissioner. The disabled tenant contacted the Commissioner, who in turn referred it to the Stark County Fair Housing Department (SCFHD). After becoming aware of the matter, SCFHD initiated an investigation. The investigation revealed that a neighbor subjected the disabled tenant to discriminatory statements and launched a campaign of harassment, which included verbal abuse, intimidation, and interfering with her ability to access her transport for nearly one year. SCFHD’s investigation also revealed that at least one owner knew of the harassment, had the power to end it, but neglected to take any action to address what he knew to be a hostile living environment created by one tenant targeting another tenant.

The SCFHD filed a complaint with the Ohio Civil Rights Commission (OCRC). Prior to a full investigation by the OCRC, the complainant passed away and her estate chose not to pursue. Thereafter, the case was transferred to HUD for investigation on the county’s complaint. Prior to an investigation by HUD, SCFHD and the owners reached an agreement.

Under the Conciliation Agreement, the housing providers will pay \$1,250 to SCFHD, prominently include the Fair Housing logo or phrase, “Equal Housing Opportunity,” in advertisements and attend fair housing training.



Reasonable Accommodation



Disability discrimination is the leading cause of fair housing complaints. Under the Fair Housing Act (FHA), housing providers must allow tenants to make reasonable accommodations.

A reasonable accommodation is “a change, exception, or adjustment to a rule, policy, practice, or service that may be necessary for a person with a disability to have an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling, including public and common use spaces.”

Examples of reasonable accommodations in housing:

- Assigning a designated parking space for a person with limited mobility
- Allowing service/emotional support animals in “no pet” housing
- Transferring a disabled tenant to a more accessible unit
- Adjusting the rental due date to align with when a disability check arrives
- Allowing a tenant to have a live-in aide
- Allowing a variance of a rule about fence height to accommodate the needs of children with disabilities

To qualify for a reasonable accommodation in your housing, you must have a disability, and the reasonable accommodation must be necessary to give you an equal opportunity to use and enjoy your home. A landlord’s failure to grant a reasonable accommodation request is discriminatory.

Reasonable Modification

A reasonable modification is a structural change made to existing premises, occupied or to be occupied by a person with a disability, in order to afford such person full enjoyment of the premises. Reasonable modifications can include structural changes to interiors and exteriors of dwellings and to common and public use areas. The Act makes it unlawful for a housing provider to refuse to allow a reasonable modification to the premises when such a modification may be necessary to afford persons with disabilities full enjoyment of the premises. Tenants generally pay for the modification unless they live in federally subsidized housing. A landlord can ask you to return the unit to its original condition when you move out if the modification would limit their ability to re-rent the unit.

Examples of reasonable modifications in housing:

- ❑ Installing visual-alerting fire alarms and doorbells
- ❑ Installing ramps
- ❑ Widening a doorway
- ❑ Installing accessible door handles
- ❑ Installing grab bars and a roll-in shower in a bathroom
- ❑ Installing a lift for the community pool



Schedule a Fair Housing Presentation



The Stark County Fair Housing Department's educational outreach program is part of an ongoing effort to educate the public in Stark County on the fair housing laws. The SCFHD offers presentations, trainings and seminars on Fair Housing and Landlord Tenant Laws for landlords, property managers, real estate professionals, social workers, attorneys, government officials, and others.

Potential Topics:

- Fair Housing: Disability & Familial Status
- Fair Housing for Landlords & Rental Property Owners
- Fair Housing for Real Estate Professionals
- Fair Housing and Municipalities

If you are interested in increasing your knowledge of the laws, contact the Stark County Fair Housing Department to request training, presentation or a seminar at (330) 451-7775 or email vjwatson@starkcountyohio.gov

Question is on page 9

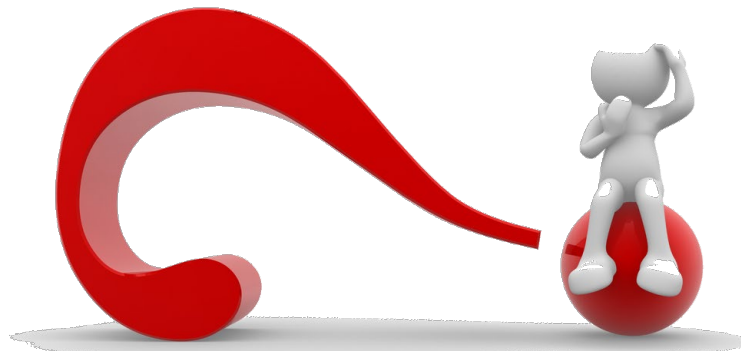
ANSWERS



The two most common fair housing violations are:

- disability discrimination (primarily failing to provide reasonable accommodations or modifications).
- discriminatory refusal to rent or sell (falsely claiming a unit is unavailable).

Both of these make up the bulk of all fair housing complaints filed each year around the country.





The Stark County Regional Planning Commission administers the Fair Housing Program on behalf of the Stark County Commissioners



Stark County Regional Planning Commission
Stark County Fair Housing Department
110 Central Plaza S., Ste. 300
Canton, Ohio 44702

Phone: (330) 451-7389

Fax: (330) 451-7990

Website: www.rpc.starkcountyohio.gov

NEW ADDRESS

David Thorley
President

Robert Nau
Executive Director

Valerie Watson
Fair Housing Manager
Newsletter Editor
Newsletter Graphic Designer

Do you think you have been
discriminated against?

Don't Wait

Don't Hesitate

Let Us



Contact:

Stark County Fair Housing Department
Valerie Watson, Fair Housing Manager
Phone: (330) 451-7775 (direct line)
Email: vjwatson@starkcountyohio.gov

