

Stark County Fair Housing Department

Division of Stark County Regional Planning Commission



Fair Housing Newsletter

April – July 2023

A Quarterly Insight into Housing Discrimination



Fair Housing Act

1968 - 2023

APRIL IS
FAIR
HOUSING
MONTH

HOUSING DISCRIMINATION IS ILLEGAL!



President Lyndon Johnson
signs the Civil Rights Act
into law on April 11, 1968

Fair Housing Month



This month marks the 55th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Fair Housing Act into law seven days after Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination. Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (also known as the Fair Housing Act) prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of housing.



CELEBRATING THE FAIR HOUSING ACT AND PROTECTED CLASSES



The Fair Housing Act makes it illegal to discriminate on the basis of a person's Protected Class.

FAIR HOUSING FOR ALL

HISTORY OF FAIR HOUSING LAW

1866

Civil Rights Act of 1866

Prohibits discrimination on the basis of race and color. All citizens of the United States shall have the same right as white citizens to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey real and personal property.

1964

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act

Prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.

FAIR HOUSING FOR ALL

HISTORY OF FAIR HOUSING LAW

1968

Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act

A follow-up to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Prohibits discrimination concerning the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race, color, religion, and national origin. Title VIII of the Act is also known as the Fair Housing Act (of 1968).

1973

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Prohibits discrimination based on disability in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

FAIR HOUSING FOR ALL

HISTORY OF FAIR HOUSING LAW

1974

**Section 109 of Title I of the
Housing and Community
Development Act**

Sex was added as a protected class.



1988

Fair Housing Amendments Act

On September 12, 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed this law (FHAA) to include familial status and handicap as a protected class.

FAIR HOUSING FOR ALL

HISTORY OF FAIR HOUSING LAW

1990

Title II of the Americans with Disability Act

Prohibits discrimination based on disability in any program provided or made available by public entities.



1995

Housing for Older Persons Act

Eliminates “significant facilities and services.” Exempts “housing for older persons” from the Act’s prohibition of discrimination against families with children in two categories: 100% of the occupants must be 62 years of age or older or 80% of the occupied units must be occupied by at least one person who is 55 or older.





DID YOU KNOW?

Housing Discrimination
Against Families With
Children Is **ILLEGAL**



Housing discrimination is also prohibited based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, or disability.

The Fair Housing Act makes it illegal to deny housing to families with children under the age of 18.

It is illegal to:

Steer families to certain floors, buildings or neighborhoods.

Have rules that target or restrict children.

Deny housing or evict because you have a child or are pregnant.

Charge more rent because you have a child.

Advertise stating children are not welcome.

Do you know of a landlord who may be discriminating against families with children?

Report it! We'll investigate it!

Stark County Fair Housing
Valerie Watson, Fair Housing Manager
(330) 451-7775



Sexual Harassment in Housing is Illegal



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

Types of Sexual Harassment

- Unwanted sexual advances
- Request for sexual favors
- Unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature

Sexual harassment can happen to any person, male or female, and can be committed by someone of the same sex or someone of the opposite sex.





Disability Case Resolved

The Stark County Fair Housing Department resolved allegations of a disability discrimination case against a Plain Township owner/landlord. The landlord gave his tenant permission to hang flags along the balcony of his building. The neighboring tenant (complainant) started complaining that the flags were causing chaos with their autistic daughter. The flag placed directly in front of the complainant's front door caused havoc for the autistic teenager which included aggression, meltdowns and impulsivity. So, the complainant removed the flag that was located directly in front of his door. Soon thereafter, the neighbor put the flag back up. The complainant then complained to the landlord. The landlord allegedly asserted that he owned the property and had full control of the common areas. The complainant then received a 30-day notice to vacate. After serving the notice, the landlord permitted the complainant to temporarily remove the flag. Instead of requesting a reasonable accommodation to permanently refrain from placing flags near the complainant's front door due to his daughter's disability, he agreed to move. However, they found it difficult finding adequate housing.

Valerie Watson, Fair Housing Manager, contacted the owner and discussed reasonable accommodation under the fair housing law. Without admitting to any wrongdoing, the landlord agreed to give the complainant additional time to locate satisfactory housing. The Fair Housing Act prohibits housing providers from discriminating against persons with disabilities. Housing providers must make reasonable accommodations in policies or practices when such accommodations may be necessary to provide tenants an equal opportunity to use or enjoy a dwelling. Housing providers cannot evict a household in an attempt to avoid reasonably accommodating persons with disabilities.

Stating the apartment is “not available” or “I don’t want my insurance to get canceled” or “you can’t live on the second floor” or “we don’t accept emotional support animals” may be a landlord’s attempt to discriminate.



Denying housing, evicting a household or treating someone differently because they have a disability is illegal. According to the Federal Fair Housing Act, it is unlawful to discriminate in housing based on a person’s race, color, national origin, religion, sex, **disability** or familial status.

**Fair Housing is not an Option,
it’s the Law!**



*“Will the
apartment still be
available when
they meet me in
person?”*





STARK
COUNTY OHIO



Can you find the
County Commissioners
on the next page



Fair Housing: MORE THAN JUST WORDS



Fair Housing is not a game, IT IS THE LAW!

If you believe
you have
experienced
housing
discrimination,
contact Stark
County Fair
Housing.
**Know Your
Rights!**





We Need You

BECOME A FAIR HOUSING TESTER

Tester Compensation

\$45 stipend per completed on-site test

\$20 stipend per completed telephone or email test

Testers are not employees and are utilized on an as needed basis.

Fair Housing testers help ensure that people are not denied housing due to unlawful discrimination by meeting with housing providers and documenting the details about their experiences. Fair housing testing is an effective way of protecting people against housing discrimination and securing the rights established under the Fair Housing Act. We are seeking honest, well-organized individuals of all ages, gender, races, and nationalities to assist us in fulfilling our mission to ensure everyone has access to housing free from discrimination in Stark County.

Skills we look for in a Tester:

- Ability to follow instructions and remember details
- Good oral and written communication skills
- Attention to detail and accuracy
- Dependable
- Good active listening and observation skills
- Can act the role of a home seeker in a variety of situations
- Able to be reached by cell phone/email
- Have means of reliable transportation



If you are passionate about civil rights, oppose discrimination and believe that all people should have equal opportunity in housing, contact the Stark County Fair Housing Department at (330) 451-7775 or email vjwatson@starkcountyohio.gov by April 30 to sign up for the upcoming Tester Training Session. Please provide your name, cell number and email address.

Obligations of Landlord

The landlord's duties are specifically stated in the Ohio Revised Code Section 5321.04. A landlord who is a party to a rental agreement shall do all of the following:

1. Comply with housing, health and safety codes.
2. Make all repairs and keep the premises in a fit and habitable condition.
3. Keep all common areas safe/sanitary.
4. Maintain in good and safe working order all electrical, plumbing, sanitary, heating, ventilating, and air conditioning fixtures and appliances, and elevators, supplied or required to be supplied.
5. Provide garbage cans and arrange for pickup. (Four or more units only)
6. Supply running water, reasonable amounts of hot water and heat at all times.
7. Not abuse the right of access.
8. Give the tenant reasonable notice, unless it is an emergency, before entering a tenant's unit and enter only at reasonable times. Twenty-four hours is presumed to be a reasonable notice.
9. Evict tenant, when informed by a law enforcement officer of drug activity by the tenant, a member of the tenant's household, or a guest, occurring in or connected with the tenant's premises.

LANDLORD TENANT LAW



Obligations of Tenant

The tenant's obligations are specifically stated in the Ohio Revised Code Section 5321.05. A tenant who is a party to a rental agreement shall do all of the following:

1. Keep the premises that they occupy safe and sanitary.
2. Dispose of all rubbish, garbage, and other waste in a clean, safe, and sanitary manner.
3. Keep the plumbing fixtures as clean as their condition permits.
4. Use and operate all electrical and plumbing fixtures properly.
5. Comply with housing, health and safety codes.
6. Refrain from destroying, defacing, damaging, or removing any fixture, appliance, or other part of the premises.
7. Maintain appliances supplied by the landlord in good working order.
8. Act in a manner that will not disturb any neighbors.
9. Permit the landlord to enter the unit if proper notice is given.
10. Comply with state drug laws.

2022 ACTIVITY REPORT

Landlord-Tenant

- **569 Households Assisted**
- **109 Female Head of Household**
- **109 Low Income Households**
- **98 Disabled Households**
- **79 Elderly Households (over 62)**
- **50 Cases Referred to Cooperating Attorneys**

Discrimination Cases

- **12 Cases Investigated**
- **6 Disability**
- **2 Race**
- **2 Race & Gender Identity**
- **1 Race & Disability**
- **1 Familial Status**
- ~~~~~
- **5 Pending**
- **4 Settled**
- **2 No Probable Cause**
- **1 Closed Because Client Chose Not to Pursue**

Outreach/Education

- **200 People Trained**
- **Launched the First Fair Housing Newsletter**
- **Advertised in The Repository and Alliance Review**
- **350 Educational Materials Distributed**



If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, contact:

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



Do you think you have been discriminated against?

Don't Wait

Don't Hesitate

Let Us Investigate

Call Stark County Fair Housing!

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

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