

# THE FAIR HOUSING TIMES

## What are the protected classes under the Fair Housing Act?

- Race
- Color
- Religion
- National Origin
- Sex
- Disability
- Family status (presence of children)

## What does the Fair Housing Act cover?

- Rental housing
- Housing for sale
- Mortgage lending
- Homeowner's insurance
- Zoning
- Advertising
- Many others housing-related transactions!

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## THE FAIR HOUSING ACT PROTECTS SENIORS FROM DISCRIMINATION

What does "fair housing" mean to you?

The Fair Housing Act was passed in 1968, and now it prohibits discrimination in housing based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability and family status (the presence of children under 18 in a household).

When most people think about "housing discrimination," they think of someone being turned away from renting an apartment because of their race.

But the Fair Housing Act goes much further than that. The Act protects you from discrimination even after you are accepted as a tenant.

Under the Fair Housing Act, you can't be harassed because of your religion, race, disability or other factors. You can't be treated differently because of any of those factors. And you can't be segregated into a certain part of the complex.



You can't be mistreated simply because you are African-American, Muslim or Middle Eastern. And you can't be mistreated because someone of another race or nationality visits your apartment.

And your landlord must stop neighbors who are mistreating you based on any of the protected classes under the Fair Housing Act.

And if you have a disability, your landlord is required to allow you to have certain reasonable accommodations and reasonable modifications

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## REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS UNDER THE FAIR HOUSING ACT

Under the Fair Housing Act, people with disabilities are entitled to "accommodations" and "modifications" they need to live successfully.

A "reasonable accommodation" is

an exception to a normal rule or policy if you need it because of your disability. Examples:

— You might need an assistance dog, even if the complex has a "no-pets"

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*Fair housing is your right!*

**Do you need a reasonable accommodation or modification?**

1. Put your request to the landlord in writing, for your own protection.
2. You don't have to tell the landlord what your disability is, but you have to show that the accommodation or modification is necessary.
3. Be prepared to have your doctor or other treating professional provide documentation of your disability and the need for the accommodation. The doctor does not have to tell your landlord what your disability is.
4. Call the Fair Housing Council or Legal Aid if you need help.

**What is a disability?**

It's a physical or mental impairment that **substantially limits** a **major life activity**.

## THE FAIR HOUSING ACT PROTECTS SENIORS FROM DISCRIMINATION

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and reasonable modifications so that you can use your apartment like anyone else. (We'll discuss this more below.)

Your landlord can't refuse to rent to you just because you use a wheelchair or perhaps need a family member or assistant to help you with certain tasks.

Further, your landlord can't ask you about what medications you are on or whether you are an "active senior" who can live without any assistance. Your disabilities, if you have any, are your private business and are between you and your doc-

tor.

If you live in a seniors-only complex, your landlord can legally refuse to rent to families with children, but does this mean your grandchildren can't come and visit? Absolutely not! And the Department of Housing and Urban Development even requires government-funded seniors-only housing to allow children to live there because of the growing number of seniors who are caring for their grandchildren.

The Fair Housing Act protects you at all times, in all kinds of housing, and at all ages.

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## REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS

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rule.

— You might need reserved parking because you have trouble walking.

— You might have trouble seeing so you need someone to read the complex's newsletters and announcements to you.

— You might even need to break your lease early if you become too disabled to live on your own and have to move into assisted living or a nursing home.

What if you have trouble using your apartment or part of the the complex? Your landlord must let you make "reasonable modifica-



tions" to your apartment and even to other parts of the complex. Examples:

— A ramp to get into your apartment or into the complex's clubhouse or other amenities.

— A light that flashes when the phone or doorbell rings if you have trouble hearing.

— Grab bars to help you get in and out of the bathtub.

— Lowered light switches or raised electrical outlets that you can reach from your wheelchair.

— Wider doorways for a wheelchair or scooter.