

HOUSING DISCRIMINATION & LEAD PAINT

Becoming a parent should be a happy moment in a person's life, but sometimes that moment can be ruined by the illegal actions of housing providers. The following actions are signs of discrimination:

- Refusal to rent available housing to families with children due to the presence of lead.
- Eviction of a pregnant woman because of the presence of lead in the unit.
- Steering families with children away from housing because it contains lead.

When Looking for Housing, Save the Following Information:

- Date and time of all contacts
- Name of the person and/or company with whom you spoke
- Address of the property, including unit number
- Information about all units offered to you
- Details about any statements made to you related to your protected status (i.e., questions about the ages of your children or source of income)

REMEMBER: Save all emails and text messages sent to or received from a housing provider!

Fair Housing is Your Right!

For more information or to file a housing discrimination complaint contact:



257 Union Street
New Bedford, MA 02740

<http://www.southcoastfairhousing.org>

(774) 473-8333

To contact us via TTY,
call MassRelay using your TTY
at 711 or 800-439-2370
(or 866-930-9252 for Spanish)
and provide our phone number.

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SouthCoast Fair Housing, Inc. is solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication.

LEAD PAINT & FAIR HOUSING FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN



(774) 473-8333



COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What is lead paint and why should I worry about it?

Lead paint is a toxic chemical that can be found in housing built before 1978. Lead paint was banned in 1978 due to its toxic effects on children under the age of six, including unborn children. Lead-based paint and lead contaminated dust are the most hazardous sources of lead for U.S. children.

As lead-based paint deteriorates with age, or as homes undergo renovation, lead-containing dust is generated. This dust can affect everyone in the household (including adults), but pregnant women and children under age six are at higher risk of being poisoned and suffering serious medical consequences. In addition, peeling or chipping paint can also poison children who are old enough to crawl and place their hands on the floor and/or other areas of the house. When children place their hands in their mouths, they can ingest the dust and/or paint chips and become poisoned with lead paint.

What are the effects of lead poisoning in children?

Kids under six and unborn children are the most vulnerable to lead poisoning due to their developing brains and organs. Lead poisoning can affect the nervous system, resulting in potentially permanent learning and behavior disorders. Lead poisoning in pregnant women has resulted in babies being born prematurely and with low birth weight.

What are some symptoms of lead poisoning?

The following symptoms are most common in children: loss of appetite, abdominal pain, vomiting, weight loss, constipation, anemia, kidney failure, irritability, lethargy, learning disabilities, and behavioral problems.

What laws protect my family from lead paint poisoning and housing discrimination?

The federal Fair Housing Act and the Massachusetts lead and fair housing laws protect children's right to live in healthy homes of their choice. Under these laws, it is illegal to refuse to rent or otherwise deny access to, steer and evict families with children due to the presence of lead paint in the dwelling.

The Massachusetts lead law requires the removal or covering of lead paint hazards in homes built before 1978 where any children under six live. Owners are responsible for complying with the law. This includes owners of rental property as well as owners living in their own single family home. Financial help is available through tax credits, grants and loans by contacting local government agencies.

May a rental property owner be held liable for a lead poisoned child?

Yes. If a child is lead poisoned by lead hazards where the child lives, the owner is legally responsible. An owner cannot avoid liability by asking tenants to sign an agreement that they accept the presence of lead in the dwelling.

HOUSING DISCRIMINATION IS ILLEGAL

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing-related transactions because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability or familial status. The Massachusetts Fair Housing statute also prohibits housing discrimination on the basis of age, veteran or military status, sexual orientation, marital status, receipt of public assistance or housing subsidy, genetic identity, and gender identity.

Fair housing laws apply to a wide variety of housing transactions, including rentals, sales, home mortgages, appraisals and homeowners insurance. Landlords, real estate agents, lenders, insurance companies, and condominium, cooperative and homeowner's associations must not discriminate because of one's membership in a protected class.

Fair Housing is Your Right!

Don't hesitate to report any instances of housing discrimination. Be attentive when seeking housing opportunities, report discriminatory advertisements, and watch out for inquiries regarding your children's ages. Always ask if the housing in question has a lead certificate.

SouthCoast Fair Housing, Inc. (SCFH) is a private, non-profit organization established in 2012 to eradicate housing discrimination throughout southeastern Massachusetts. Through education, investigation, and enforcement activities, SCFH works to ensure that all individuals have equal housing opportunities.

For more information or to file a housing discrimination complaint, call
(774) 473-8333