

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 class (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!

SouthCoast Fair Housing, Inc. (SCFH) works to eliminate housing discrimination and help develop inclusive communities throughout Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts. SCFH provides fair housing education, outreach, advocacy, and enforcement activities to ensure all individuals have equal housing opportunities. If you contact SCFH to file a complaint, we may:

- Conduct an interview to obtain the facts
- Investigate your complaint
- Review investigation results with you and discuss your options
- Help you file a complaint
- Offer legal representation to victims of housing discrimination

For more information, to schedule a fair housing training, or to file a housing discrimination complaint, call (774) 473-9994 or (401) 285-2550, visit southcoastfairhousing.org or email info@southcoastfairhousing.org.



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

SouthCoast Fair Housing

257 Union Street
New Bedford, MA 02740
(774) 473-9994

1005 Main Street, Suite 1210
Pawtucket, RI 02860
(401) 285-2550

SouthCoastFairHousing.org

To contact us via TTY, using your TTY call 711, call MassRelay at 800-439-2370 (or 1-866-930-9252 for Spanish), or call Rhode Island Relay at 1-800-745-5555 (or 1-866-355-9214 for Spanish) and provide our phone number.

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FAIR HOUSING FOR RECIPIENTS OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE OR HOUSING VOUCHERS

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 (presence of minor children or pregnancy).

The Massachusetts and Rhode Island fair housing statutes prohibit housing discrimination on the basis of these additional protected classes:

age • veteran or military status • sexual orientation • gender identity • marital status • receipt of public assistance* (e.g., food stamps) • use of housing subsidy* (e.g., Section 8) • genetics* • status as a victim of domestic violence‡

*Massachusetts only • ‡ Rhode Island only

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 associations must not discriminate because of one's membership in a protected class.

WHAT THE LAW PROHIBITS

Do fair housing laws prohibit discrimination against individuals who receive public assistance or use a housing voucher?

It depends. The Massachusetts fair housing law prohibits discrimination in housing because an individual receives public assistance or uses a housing voucher. A housing provider in Massachusetts is prohibited from refusing a tenant with a housing voucher because the housing provider does not want to comply with the requirements of the voucher program.

Neither the federal nor Rhode Island fair housing laws explicitly prohibit this activity.

However, federal and state fair housing laws prohibit housing providers from treating users of housing vouchers differently if the difference in treatment disparately impacts members of a protected class. For example, if a larger proportion of users of housing vouchers in a region are people of color, then a policy of refusing to rent to individuals using vouchers may result in a significantly disproportionate adverse impact on people of color. This may violate prohibitions against discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

Does this mean that a landlord must rent to or cannot evict any household that receives public assistance?

No. A housing provider has the right to refuse rental applications or evict tenants based on objective criteria, such as bad tenant history or ability to afford the rent (when taking into account all of an applicant's income or benefits). A housing provider should establish qualification standards and apply them equally to each household.

Can a landlord accept a housing voucher from some people, but not others?

It depends. A landlord cannot treat applicants differently due to their membership in a protected class as defined by the federal and state fair housing laws. For example, a landlord cannot accept housing vouchers only from white applicants. This would be discrimination on the basis of race.

What is a Housing Voucher?

A housing voucher represents a direct payment from the voucher administrator to the landlord for all or a portion of the tenant's rent. The tenant then pays the landlord the difference between the actual rent and the amount paid by the voucher program. Housing vouchers are generally administered by local public housing authorities or regional housing agencies. Different rules apply to the various housing voucher programs.

What actions do the fair housing laws prohibit?

The fair housing laws prohibit actions such as denying housing, limiting access to housing, discouraging homeseekers, making or publishing discriminatory statements, or creating different rules, fees or standards because of one's membership in a protected class.



SIGNS OF POSSIBLE DISCRIMINATION:

- You see an advertisement that says "No Section 8" for an apartment in Massachusetts. (Does not apply in RI).
- A housing provider tells you a higher rent amount after they find out you have children.
- A housing provider refuses to accept your voucher because it requires them to delead their unit due to the presence of children under 6 years old in your household.
- You are told the apartment is no longer available after you make an in-person visit.