



(image description: SouthCoast Fair Housing logo)

SouthCoast Fair Housing



(image description: Smiling Black family with two young children in a bright room)

LEAD PAINT & FAIR HOUSING FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

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



(image description: a smiling family of color with two young children standing in front of a new looking house)

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS & 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 for use in housing in the United States 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 US 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, but pregnant people and children under age six are at higher risk of being poisoned and suffering serious medical consequences. The following symptoms of lead poisoning are most common in children: loss of appetite, abdominal pain, vomiting, weight loss, constipating, irritability, lack of energy, learning disabilities, and behavioral problems.

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

The federal Fair Housing Act and Massachusetts and Rhode Island lead paint and fair housing laws protect children's right to live in healthy homes of their family's choosing. Under these laws, it is illegal to refuse to rent or otherwise deny access to, steer, or evict families with children due to the presence of lead paint in the dwelling. Exemptions for owner-occupied properties may apply in certain situations.

In both Massachusetts and Rhode Island, property owners are required to remove or cover lead paint hazards in homes built before 1978 where any child under six resides.

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 paint in the dwelling.



(image description: close-up of peeling, cracked blue paint on the outside of a house)

HOUSING DISCRIMINATION & LEAD PAINT

The following actions are examples of discrimination:

- A housing provider refuses to rent to a family with a child under 6 years old because the unit does not have a lead certificate.

- A woman receives an eviction notice after her landlord finds out she is pregnant.
- An applicant is told the unit is no longer available after the housing provider finds out they have children.

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.



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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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