

# What *is* Fair Housing?

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## What is Fair Housing?

One of our most fundamental rights is to live peaceably where we choose. Fair Housing is the right of all people to buy, sell or rent residential property, and to live where they wish without discriminatory criteria. Having chosen a place to live, we are guaranteed the right to reside there peacefully, without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, familial status, disability or sexual orientation.

## The Law Against Housing Discrimination

Maryland law has been modeled after federal law under Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968:

It is the policy of the State of Maryland to provide for fair housing for all its inhabitants regardless of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin, marital status, disability or sexual orientation "in order that the peace, health, safety, prosperity, and the general welfare of all the inhabitants of the State may be protected and insured."

## What the Law Means

Housing discrimination laws make it illegal to:

- Refuse to sell or rent a dwelling to any qualified buyer or renter;
- Use discriminatory terms and conditions in selling or renting;
- Set terms and conditions of home loans in such a way as to discriminate;
- Use discriminatory notices or advertisements indicating any preference or discriminatory limitation;
- Say that a dwelling is not available for inspection, sale, or rental, when in fact it is available;
- Attempt to steer persons into or away from neighborhoods or apartment complexes that are racially segregated;
- Treat a person differently from everyone else because of race, disability, familial status (parent or legal custodian with

children, pregnant) religion, sex, marital status, national origin or sexual orientation;

- Request information about birth control practices;
- Refuse to consider both applicants' income when seeking to buy or rent;
- Commit acts of prejudice, violence, harassment, intimidation, or abuse directed against families or individuals or their residential property.

## Persons With Disabilities Have Equal Rights to Accessible Housing

If you have a disability, you are protected under the law. It is against the law to:

- Refuse to permit, at the expense of the renter, reasonable housing modifications that are necessary for the daily life of a person with a mental or physical disability;
- Refuse to adjust the rules, policies, services or practices that hamper the use of an apartment, condominium, or house by a person with a mental or physical disability;
- Have multi-family housing that is not accessible to people with disabilities. Multi-family housing is required to have accessible units and access routes (wide doors and hallways), accessible public and common areas, and management must provide for effective communication as needed by a disabled person.

## Fair Housing for Families

Parents or legal custodians living with children under 18 have a right to live where they choose, including pregnant women and any one securing legal custody of a child under 18. It is unlawful to prohibit families from renting or owning an apartment, house or condominium, unless the building or community qualifies as housing for older persons.