

FAIR HOUSING REVIEW IMMIGRATION STATUS

Fair housing for all

Every person in the United States is protected by the Fair Housing Act. A person's immigration status does not affect his or her federal fair housing rights or responsibilities. The Act prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of dwellings, and in other housing-related transactions, based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, and disability. Housing discrimination is illegal regardless of the victim's immigration status.

Different treatment in housing because of a person's ancestry, ethnicity, birthplace, culture, or language is illegal. This means that people cannot be denied housing opportunities because they or their family are from another country, because they have a name or accent associated with a national origin group, because they participate in certain customs associated with a national origin group, or because they are married to or associate with people of a certain national origin.

Does HUD inquire about immigration status?

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity **DOES NOT** ask about immigration status when people file fair housing complaints

Examples of national origin discrimination:

- Refusing to rent to persons whose primary language is other than English;
- Offering different rent rates based on ethnicity;
- Steering prospective buyers or renters to or away from certain neighborhoods because of their ancestry; and
- Failing to provide the same level or service or housing amenities because a tenant was born in another country.

Can landlords request documentation?

Landlords are allowed to request immigration documentation and conduct inquiries to determine whether a potential renter meets the criteria for rental, so long as the same procedure is applied to all potential renters. Landlords can ask for identity documents and institute credit checks to ensure ability to pay rent. However, procedures to screen potential and existing tenants for citizenship and immigration status may violate the Fair Housing Act's prohibitions on national origin housing discrimination. Landlords should remember that their policies must be consistent. If they ask for information from one person or group, they must ask for the same information from all prospective applicants and tenants.

What can I do if a landlord or neighbor is threatening me?

It is illegal to coerce, intimidate, threaten, or interfere with a person's exercise or enjoyment of rights granted or protected by the Fair Housing Act. This includes threats to report a person to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) if they report housing discrimination to HUD. HUD does not inquire about immigration status when investigating claims of housing discrimination.

Is HUD assistance available in other languages?

Yes. HUD has documents and informational brochures translated into 18 languages and uses phone interpreter services to assist people in over 175 languages.

How can I report housing discrimination?

If you believe that you may be a victim of housing discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability or familial status, then you have a right to file a discrimination complaint. If you live in the City of Philadelphia, Southeast PA or Lehigh Valley, contact the Housing Equality Center at **(267) 419-8918**. We can help investigate your complaint and assist in determining what action can be taken.

You can also call HUD: **(800) 669-9777** or submit a complaint online at **www.hud.gov**. Written complaints can be mailed to: *Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street, SW, Room 5204 Washington, DC 20410-2000*. Include your name and address, the name and address of the person your complaint is about, the address of housing that you tried to rent or buy, the date the incident occurred and a short description of what happened.

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The Housing Equality Center is a nonprofit organization leading the effort to eliminate housing discrimination in Pennsylvania through education, advocacy and enforcement of fair housing laws. We provide victims of discrimination with legal help, perform testing to determine the existence of discrimination, educate the public, consult with and train housing providers, and work with housing and related service providers to ensure compliance with anti-discrimination laws. We assist housing discrimination victims and conduct testing investigations in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton, and Philadelphia Counties.



Visit online:

equalhousing.org

For information and assistance, contact:

info@equalhousing.org

(267) 419-8918

(866) 540-FAIR