



What is Fair Housing?

Fair housing is the right to live in the place of your choosing, have access to housing, and enjoy the full use of your home without unlawful discrimination, threats, coercion, or intimidation.


Fair housing protections were made possible by the passage of the 1968 Fair Housing Act. Today federal, state, and local laws protect all people from discrimination in the buying, renting, and selling process.

Founded in 1968, HOPE Fair Housing Center is the oldest and largest fair housing center in Illinois. HOPE works to create greater housing opportunities for all. We accomplish this through education, outreach, enforcement, training, and advocacy.

HOPE provides free assistance to victims of housing discrimination. (HOPE does not provide legal representation nor legal advice.)




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You are Protected from Housing Discrimination

Understanding Your Fair Housing Rights



What is Housing Discrimination?

Housing discrimination can take shape in many forms, some of which may not be obvious. You may have encountered discrimination if:

- You were lied to about the availability of housing, a home loan, or home insurance
- Your home was undervalued during an appraisal
- You were told or saw an advertisement that stated "no children allowed" or "no vouchers accepted"
- You were offered different terms and conditions than others
- You have a disability and your request for a reasonable accommodation (a change in rules, practices, or services) or modification (a structural change) was denied
- You were denied the right to a service or emotional support animal due to a "No Pets" policy

There are legitimate reasons for someone not to rent or sell a home, but your membership in a protected class should not be a contributing factor.

What is a Protected Class?

You are protected against housing discrimination. A "protected class" refers to a group of people who share a common characteristic that the law makes illegal to discriminate against.

The Federal Fair Housing Act

Prohibits discrimination in housing based on these protected classes:

- Race
- Color
- National Origin
- Religion
- Sex
- Disability
- Familial status (households with children under 18)

The Illinois Human Rights Act

Provides additional protections:

- Ancestry
- Marital status
- Age (+40)
- Military status
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity
- Order of Protection status
- Unfavorable military discharge
- Pregnancy
- Arrest record
- Source of Income
- Immigration Status (effective 1/1/2024)

Your county, municipality, or city may have additional protections. To learn more, contact your local government.

If you think you have faced housing discrimination:

Contact HOPE Fair Housing Center.

Document meetings, phone calls, and requests made with landlords, property managers, real estate agents, and other involved parties.

Save all email, mail correspondence, receipts, copies of applications, business cards, and other documents.

When appropriate, HOPE can:

- Investigate potential discrimination
- Advocate on your behalf with a housing provider
- Assist in filing a housing discrimination complaint
- Refer your case to attorneys that are experts in fair housing litigation