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# Fair Housing for Maintenance

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## Covering the Basics What is Fair Housing?

- Fair Housing is a Federal Law
- Guarantees prospective and current residents to be treated equal in all leasing procedures and the services residents receive
- Every team member is responsible for Fair Housing Compliance including contractors



## The Seven Protected Classes

- Race
- Religion
- Color
- Sex\Sexual Harassment
- National Origin
- Families
- Handicapped

## Explanation of Protected Classes

- **Race:** People unified by community of interests, habits or characteristics (African American, Asian, Caucasian, Indian)
- **Color:** The shade or depth of a person's skin color
- **Religion:** Commitment or devotion to a religious faith
- **Sex\Sexual Harassment:** Male or Female – any interaction between staff and residents or prospects that may be deemed inappropriate by another person
- **National Origin:** People having a common origin, tradition or language, this include non US citizens
- **Familial Status:** Individuals under the age of 18 living with a parent or guardian
- **Handicapped:** A person with a physical or mental impairment that limits one or more major life activity, not all handicaps are visible.

## Fair Housing Terms for Handicap

- **Modification:** A physical change to an apartment or common area that allows REASONABLE access for residents with disabilities.  
Example: Accessible\Reserved Parking, widened doorways, grab bars.
- **Accommodations:** A waiver of standard policies that allows a resident with a disability to live at the property.  
Example: Service or Companion animals, (your property must allow a service or companion animal even if there is a no pet policy).

## Accommodations & Modifications

- Regardless of when the apartment community was built, an owner\manager is required to make REASONABLE accommodations and modifications to the property and or apartment home if requested by a person with disabilities.
- Request for parking spaces, service animals, ramps and wider doorways are considered reasonable requests, unless there is some unusual aspect of the request which makes allowing it difficult or expensive to achieve.
- Remember all the rule do not go out the window when someone request for an accommodation or modification

## Handicap Parking Space

- If a parking space is requested by someone with a disability, that space must be near the resident apartment home and must be marked for his or her unit. If the resident does not drive and request for the space for caretakers etc. you must accommodate.

## **Service & Companion Animal Guidelines**

- If the disability is obvious no verification is needed.
- If the disability is not obvious management requires verification
- Service and Companion animals are allowed in common areas. (pool, fitness center, business center, etc.)
- No deposit, pet rent or higher deposits are required.
- Damage can be charged over normal wear and tear.
- Nuisance or dangerous animals should be reported to management
- The size and breed accepted is broader.

## **Maintenance, Residents & Prospective Residents, Is it Ok For Me To...**

- I'm Friendly with residents. Is it ok for me to talk with them about personal stuff?
- It is sometimes tricky being on the front line working with residents, if you are not friendly and take the time to chat you may be thought of being rude. If you are too friendly and talk with residents about personal stuff you possibly could be accused of "favoritism" or prying into their personal lives.

### Is it Ok for me To???

- For example, it is generally against the law to make any inquiries about whether or not someone has a disability, meaning you should avoid conversations with residents about the nature or severity of their disability.
- Many residents share information without being asked and tell you far more than you ever want to know about their medical situation. Without being rude, do not engage in discussions about a person's disability.

I'm Friendly with Residents and have Worked at my property for A long time. Is it Okay for me to talk with residents like I would my Friends?

- The short answer is no. You are a professional and work at the property. You have to remember that things you might joke with your friends about or say, you are not allowed to say to residents.

**Are there Certain Terms\Descriptions that are better not to use when I am talking about someone in a protected class?**

- Unless a person's protected class is relevant, don't refer to it at all.
- Example: YOU SHOULD NEVER SAY: "I fixed the stove in unit 223 where the deaf woman lives"
- Or "I helped the black guy in unit 225"
- The fact that the resident is deaf or black is irrelevant to you being in the unit and repairing the stove or helping a person

**Can I choose not to answer a Maintenance Request because I think the resident has communicable disease?**

- No, you cannot choose to ignore the maintenance request of residents because they have a disability or the nature or severity of their disability. Nor can you discriminate them by refusing to do work in their unit because you think they have a disability.
- Your management company should have procedures in place to protect from blood borne contagious diseases. Just remember how you gear up to repair something in one unit you must do the same in other units.

**When working in a unit where the resident has a clutter or compulsive hoarding problem, what should I do?**

- Always be aware of using non-judgmental verbal and non-verbal (body language) when speaking about health/safety violations in a unit
- If a residents personal items needs to be moved in order for you to complete repairs ask the resident to move the item or ask if you may move it.
- Do not discuss the hoarding or clutter problem with the resident, take the situation to the management office.

### **Fair Housing Terms You Should Know**

- **Occupancy Standards:** The number of people allowed per bedroom is usually two (2). It must be reasonable.
- **Steering:** *When your actions or words communicate that a person is not welcome in your community or should live in a certain section of the property.*



## Entering Occupied Apartment Homes

- Know and follow your company policy on entering occupied apartment homes.
- Always knock twice and announce yourself before entering
- If you have permission to enter proceed with your task
- Limit contact with the resident
- Always conduct yourself in a professional manner
- If contact with the resident or any other occupant in the apartment, leave the apartment and report the incident to the property manager
- If an underage child is in the apartment follow the policy of your company and report the situation to the manager.

## Your Best Defense

- Do not show favoritism
- Document everything, any unusual comments, questions or situations
- Property policies must be for all residents, except in cases where danger may exist.
- Avoid becoming friends with residents
- Perform service request on a first come first serve basis
- Do not enter an apartment without a service request except for emergencies
- Be careful no to "steer" a resident or prospective resident by actions or words that they are not welcome or should reside in a certain area of the property

## Complaints & Suits

- If a complaint is filed, all parties are named, property owners, managers and any team member involved.
- A claim can be filed up to one year after the incident. A suit up to two years
- First offense is \$16,000.00
- The property insurance may not cover your costs

## Fair Housing Review

- Always be aware of your actions and words and how they may be interpreted
- Treat everyone the same in the same situation
- Make sure your relationship with residents is always professional
- Follow your company policies regarding entering occupied apartment homes
- A discrimination complaint can be filed against you personally
- Fair Housing is your responsibility