



# **YOUR RIGHT TO EQUAL HOUSING**

## **HOUSING DISCRIMINATION**

Housing discrimination occurs when the right to equal housing access is denied. Under the Illinois Human Rights Act (IHRA) you are entitled to choose where to live and to fully enjoy the use of the facilities in the unit or premises without unlawful discrimination.

## **THE ILLINOIS HUMAN RIGHTS ACT (IHRA)**

The IHRA provides protection from discrimination in real estate transactions when it is based upon race, color, religion, sex (including sexual harassment), national origin, ancestry, age (40 and over), marital status, physical and mental disability, military status or unfavorable military discharge, familial status (including pregnancy and children under 18), sexual orientation (including gender identity) and order of protection status (for victims of domestic violence).

## **WHAT IS COVERED?**

Federal and State fair housing laws apply to sales or rental agents, brokers, managers, maintenance personnel, property managers, owners or any other agents or employees of the owner. Newspapers can be charged with discrimination based on discriminatory advertising. Houses, apartments, condominiums, mobile home parks, vacant land, offices, stores and other types of residential and commercial property are covered.

## **EXAMPLES OF DISCRIMINATION:**

- Refusal to engage in a real estate transaction;
- Changing the terms or conditions of a real estate transaction;
- Refusal to receive or transmit a bona fide offer (such as a bid or security deposit);
- Racial steering;
- Lying about the availability of a property or unit;
- Denial of housing or restrictions on the use of property amenities to families with children under the age of 18; and
- Refusal to allow someone to make a reasonable modification based on disability.
- Retaliation (taking negative action because a person reported a fair housing violation).

## **EXAMPLES OF REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS:**

- Allowing an exemption to a “No Pets” policy for a tenant with an assistance animal;
- Accommodating behaviors directly related to a person’s mental disability, where those behaviors can be relieved by treatment and medication;
- Providing an assigned parking spot near the unit of a person with a mobility disability; and
- Assigning a mailbox to an accessible location.

## **ADDITIONAL PROTECTIONS**

**Interference/Intimidation:** It is a civil rights violation to coerce, intimidate, threaten, or interfere with any person in the exercise of their fair housing rights under the fair housing law.

## **HOW TO FILE A COMPLAINT (“CHARGE OF DISCRIMINATION”)**

A person or organization that believes they have been discriminated against may initiate a charge of discrimination by writing, calling, or visiting the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) within 1 year of the act of discrimination. A form to initiate the filing process, called a *Housing Intake Form or Complainant Information Sheet (CIS)* can be found on the fair housing page at [www.illinois.gov/dhr](http://www.illinois.gov/dhr). There is no fee for filing and an attorney is not required.

IDHR is accessible to persons with disabilities in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Illinois Human Rights Act. IDHR provides language assistance to individuals with limited or no English proficiency seeking to file a charge.

## **WHAT MAY BE AWARDED IF HOUSING DISCRIMINATION IS FOUND:**

A person may be awarded the housing unit in question and any damages incurred due to the discrimination, including relief for emotional distress, attorney's fees and costs. Injunctive relief such as reasonable accommodation can be ordered by the court. A respondent found to have violated the law may be required to pay civil penalties up to \$50,000 for multiple violations.

## **HOW TO GET MORE INFORMATION about the Illinois Department of Human Rights:**

James R. Thomson Center, 100 W. Randolph Street, Suite 10-100, Chicago, IL 60601

Visitors are subject to security screening; a government-issued picture ID is required.

Office Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm; no intake interviews on Fridays.

IDHR’s website has links to the Illinois Human Rights Act and Rules and Regulations, Procedures for Housing Cases, posters, fair housing videos, and a Housing Intake Form to initiate the charge filing process.

Website: [www.illinois.gov/dhr](http://www.illinois.gov/dhr) (click on fair housing)

Email Inquiries: [IDHR.FairHousing@illinois.gov](mailto:IDHR.FairHousing@illinois.gov)

Housing Inquiries: 312-814-6229

Toll Free: 800-662-3942

TTY: 866-740-3953