



## HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

### WHAT KINDS OF DISCRIMINATION ARE ILLEGAL?

In Minnesota, no one connected to your housing should treat you differently because of:

- Race
- Sex
- Color
- Religion
- Family Status (having kids or being pregnant)
- Public Assistance (MFIP, GA, SSI, etc.)
- Sexual Preference
- Marital Status (being single or divorced)
- Disability
- National Origin
- Age (St. Paul only)
- Creed (beliefs)

### WHAT ARE COMMON EXAMPLES OF DISCRIMINATION?

#### Application Denials

- When you call on the phone, the apartment is available. But when the landlord sees the color of your skin, it is “already rented.”
- The landlord says “no MFIP” or “no welfare.”
- You get turned down because you have a disability, even though your disability would not keep you from following the lease. See our fact sheet [H-9 Reasonable Accommodations](#).
- The landlord says “no kids,” but it is not a seniors-only building or an owner-occupied building with 4 units or less.
- The apartment manager treats the people who apply differently. For example, they tell people who get welfare they need an income of 3 times the rent, but they do not tell that to people with jobs.
- Your application is never processed because of your religion.



#### Different Treatment

- The caretaker makes repairs for white tenants before tenants of color.
- The manager punishes lease violations more strictly if they are by people of color.
- The landlord will not make a simple change in the rules to let a person with a disability live there successfully. Like allowing a companion animal. See our fact sheet [H-7 Can I Keep a Pet?](#)
- There are special rules for children.
- The manager only shows you apartments in certain areas but there are other apartments available.

#### Harassment

- The caretaker pressures you to date him, and lets himself into your apartment. See our fact sheet [H-24 Sexual Harassment in Housing](#).
- The security guard treats your visitors differently, because they are American Indian.
- The neighbors try to force you out of the neighborhood with racial insults or threats.

## WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

If you are turned down for an apartment and you suspect discrimination, call the numbers below for help right away. You can have someone you know call the landlord and apply, and see how the landlord treats that person. For example, if you suspect discrimination based on race, see if a white person gets treated better. Keep notes on what happened each time and who you and your friend each talked to.

If you are being treated badly or harassed where you live, write a letter to the owner. Keep a copy of it and of any evidence of the discrimination. Try to have witnesses who can see or hear it and keep their contact information. Write down notes every time something happens. If the discrimination does not stop, or if you are in danger, call for help.

## LAWSUITS AND AGENCY COMPLAINTS



You can start a lawsuit to stop the discrimination and sometimes get money damages. If you need quick action to get an apartment you were denied, to stop harassment, or to avoid an eviction, a lawsuit may be your best bet. If you have a low income, call your legal aid office.

**If you have a low income, call:  
Housing Discrimination Law Project (612) 334-5970 or  
Housing Equality Law Project, (651) 222-4731.**

You can also look for help from government agencies that enforce housing discrimination laws. They will investigate at no charge to you. If they find discrimination, they will see if an agreement can be reached. If no agreement is reached, the agency may file a case against the person who discriminated against you. 2 of these agencies are:

### **Housing and Urban Development**

77 West Jackson Boulevard  
Chicago, IL 60604-3507  
Phone: (800) 424-8590  
TDD: (800) 543-8294

### **MN Department of Human Rights**

Freeman Building  
625 Robert St North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
Phone: (651) 539-1100 or 1(800) 657-3704  
TTY: (651) 296-1283

Whatever you do, act fast. In most cases, you need to file a complaint or lawsuit within 1 or sometimes 2 years.

To find other Legal Aid Society materials, including any fact sheets mentioned in this document, go to [www.lawhelpmn.org/LASMfactsheets](http://www.lawhelpmn.org/LASMfactsheets).

---

*Minneapolis Legal Aid – CLE  
MN Legal Services Coalition  
2324 University Avenue W. – Suite 101B  
St. Paul, MN 55114*

---

*Do not use this fact sheet if it is more than 1 year old.  
Write us for updates, a fact sheet list, or alternate formats.  
Fact Sheets are not a complete answer to a legal problem.  
See a lawyer for advice.*