

Families with Children Experience Housing Discrimination – Know Your Fair Housing Rights and Protect Your Family

Everyone has the right to equal housing opportunity, yet families with children are frequently victims of housing discrimination. A report by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) reveals that only 38% of the respondents in a national survey were aware that treating families with children any differently from households without children is generally illegal. The Federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination because of familial status (generally, the presence of children under 18 in the family) in the sale or rental of housing.

Know your rights and how to respond so that this doesn't happen to you:

- “No Home”: A real estate agent refused to sell a home to a woman because she has a child; owners of a house for rent told a couple that it was unavailable to them because they had a baby; a mother called about an advertised apartment and was told that children are not accepted in the buildings.
- “Wrong Rent Increase”: An apartment complex increased a family’s rent by \$150 upon the birth of their first child.
- “Children Not Preferred”: Rental websites published advertisements that stated preferences based on family status, including “children not preferred,” “no children,” and “adults.”
- “No Dogs, No Children”: Owners of mobile home communities posted signs stating “No Dogs, No Children” and discouraged families with children from applying to rent units or spaces.
- “Your Family is Too Big”: Owners and managers denied a family with children because they had “too many people” (according to HUD guidelines, housing providers should allow at least 2 people per bedroom for families).
- “Family Section”: Families with children were required to live in units on the “family” side of an apartment complex.
- “Don’t Go Outside”: An apartment complex did not allow children to play outside, and families were evicted when they violated the rules.
- “Family Unfriendly Environment”: An apartment owner unduly restricted children’s access to the playground and common areas – kept the playground closed virtually all the time except while children were at school, barred children under 10, restricted times children could use the pool, and prohibited the use of wheeled toys.

These are examples of housing discrimination based on familial status. The Fair Housing Act prohibits housing discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, and familial status. If this or something like it has happened to you or someone you know, contact a fair housing specialist at Piedmont Housing Alliance at 434-817-2436. Fair housing is the law – support it; the only way to stop housing discrimination is to report it.