

IF YOU HAVE BEEN HARASSED

If you or someone you know has been harassed in violation of fair housing laws, contact the Fairfax County Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs. The agency investigates fair housing complaints and can explain your rights to you.

If you are harassed after filing a fair housing complaint or participating in the investigation of such a complaint, contact the agency at once. You must file your complaint in writing with the agent within 365 days after the alleged harassment occurred or terminated.

The Fairfax County Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs produced this publication in conjunction with the Equal Rights Center, a national non-profit organization dedicated to advancing civil rights for all. To learn more about the Equal Rights Center, visit, www.equalrightscenter.org

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Fairfax County is committed to non-discrimination on the basis of disability in all county programs, services, and activities and will provide reasonable accommodations/alternative information formats upon request.

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HARASSMENT FREE HOUSING

IT'S YOUR RIGHT



Fairfax County
Office of Human Rights and
Equity Programs

WHAT IS HARASSMENT?

Harassment is a form of discrimination, and can be exhibited in many ways. Under the Fairfax County Fair Housing Act and Human Rights Ordinance it is illegal to harass an individual based on his or her race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status (including pregnancy and the presence of children), handicap (disability), elderliness (55 or older), or marital status.

Harassment can include:

- Threats
- Coercion
- Intimidation
- Prank telephone calls
- Vandalism
- Hate mail or email
- Physical or verbal attacks
- Interfering with efforts to live or try to live in one's home or help others live where they want to live
- Other actions meant to influence a person to leave, or not move into a dwelling.

All forms of harassment outlined in this brochure are illegal and may be criminal. Threats and violence are crimes and should be reported to the local police.

I. NEIGHBORHOOD HARASSMENT

Fair housing laws and the ordinance prohibit any person or group – including neighbors – from harassing residents, prospective residents, or visitors because of their race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, disability, elderliness, or marital status.

II. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Any unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature is sexual harassment. A housing provider who sexually harasses someone violates fair housing laws. Anyone can be targeted for sexual harassment, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

- The harasser can be a landlord, real estate agent, building manager, maintenance person, loan officer, insurance agent, or any other person involved in providing housing, or involved in a real estate-related transaction.
- The harasser's conduct must be unwelcome.
- The victim can be anyone affected by the harassment, not just the person harassed. For example, a child may be victimized because a parent has been harassed.
- Sexual harassment is illegal even without economic injury or loss of housing by the victim.

III. RETALIATION

It is illegal to retaliate against anyone who files a complaint or who participates in the investigation of a complaint regarding harassment or any other fair housing violation. Families, associates, and roommates of those who have lodged a fair housing complaint are also protected from retaliation. Even if the complaint results in a determination that there has been no violation of fair housing laws, retaliation is still prohibited.

FORMS OF RETALIATION INCLUDE:

1. **Eviction**—Landlords cannot evict tenants for filing fair housing complaints. However, tenants can be evicted for not paying rent. If there is a dispute with a landlord, the General District Court can hold rent in escrow, but the tenant must make the arrangements and follow the Court's rules.
2. **Rent Increases**—Landlords cannot increase rent because a tenant complains about a fair housing issue.
3. **Refusing Repairs**—Landlords cannot refuse to maintain or repair a unit because a tenant has made a fair housing complaint.
4. **Restrict Use of Facilities or Services**—Landlords cannot restrict people from using facilities or services associated with their housing unit, or assign a tenant to a less desirable unit because of a fair housing complaint.
5. **Threats and intimidation**—Landlords are prohibited from threatening or intimidating someone in response to a fair housing complaint.