

HUD Statement on Fair Housing and COVID-19

“Every year, April is the time we honor history’s fair housing heroes and celebrate our nation’s civil rights progress. Though our national attention is now fiercely focused on overcoming the public health threat of COVID-19, the principle and promise of Fair Housing for All must still guide us,” said HUD Secretary Ben Carson. “There’s a fair housing hero in all of us...in the kindness and care toward a vulnerable neighbor, in the compassion and empathy for those who have contracted the virus, in the celebration of the tireless caregivers serving on the front line of the disease, and in the simple sacrifice made by the rest of us to stay home, stay safe and slow the spread.”

During this national emergency, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development wants to remind housing providers and the public at large of important federal fair housing laws that protect persons from discrimination, including harassment and intimidation, in housing and related services on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, familial status, and disability. The Fair Housing Act and other federal, state, and local laws collectively prohibit discrimination in nearly all housing transactions and residential settings across the nation, including rental housing, nursing homes, permanent shelters, and other places where people live and receive services together. Now, as always, HUD is here to enforce federal fair housing laws and to ensure that housing and services are available free from discrimination.

As the CDC has said, viruses do not target specific racial or ethnic groups. Be aware that the Fair Housing Act and other federal laws prohibit the eviction, turning away or harassment of a person in housing because they are profiled, on the basis of race, national origin or other protected class, to be associated with COVID-19. The Fair Housing Act also prohibits retaliation and intimidation against persons who report acts of discrimination they have witnessed to law enforcement authorities, like HUD, or who aid someone who has been the victim of discrimination.

There is much still to learn about COVID-19. We know, however, that persons with disabilities, including those who are older and have underlying medical conditions, are vulnerable and at high risk for a severe, life-threatening response to the virus. HUD recognizes that these persons may face unique fair housing and civil rights issues in their housing and related services. Housing providers are required to make reasonable accommodations that may be necessary to deliver housing and services to persons with disabilities affecting major life activities.

We all must be vigilant to take protective measures recommended by public health officials to prevent the spread of COVID-19, knowing that many individuals with COVID-19 show no symptoms and have no awareness of exposure to the virus. Regardless of specific laws, now is not the time to evict people from their homes. If a housing provider is concerned that a person has COVID-19 and may pose a threat to the health or safety of others, the housing provider should set aside fear and speculation, and rely on objective medical information and advice from public health officials to determine steps that could mitigate or prevent the risk of transmission.

“The Fair Housing Act embodies the spirit of this great nation where everyone is entitled to equal opportunity and respect,” said Secretary Carson. “We need to guard against the irrational blame that fuels discrimination and harassment against people who, because of racial and ethnic profiling, are perceived to be associated with this disease. We need to be attentive to the heightened protections and needs of family, friends and neighbors who are older, have disabilities or pre-existing medical conditions. We also need to honor and support, not evict out of fear, the medical professionals and caregivers who selflessly go to the front line to serve and heal, and we must be creative and compassionate to keep each other safely sheltered, healthy and prepared. Right now, in the spirit of fair housing, we need to be the best neighbors we can be for one another.”

Persons who believe they have experienced housing discrimination may file a complaint of discrimination by contacting HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at (800) 669-9777 or visiting [How to File a Complaint](#) on HUD's website. Materials and assistance are available for persons with limited English proficiency. Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing may contact the Department using the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339.