

FACT SHEET: INTRODUCTION TO FAIR HOUSING



Fair Housing Center
of West Michigan

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What is fair housing?

Fair housing is the right to choose housing free from unlawful discrimination. Federal, state and local fair housing laws protect people from discrimination in housing transactions such as rentals, sales, lending, appraisals, and insurance. Specifically, the federal Fair Housing Act and Michigan's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act protect against housing discrimination based on the following "protected classes":

- Race
- Color
- Religion
- Sex, including Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation
- National origin
- Familial status
- Disability
- Marital status
- Age

Some communities in west Michigan also protect people from discrimination in housing based on their source of income or other protected classes. Visit www.fhcwm.org/laws to learn more.

When people are denied housing, mortgages, or insurance because of discrimination, it's not just a personal insult. It also makes our neighborhoods less diverse and welcoming, and it can force people into housing that may not meet their needs. Whether you are a homeseeker looking for information on your fair housing rights or a member of the housing industry looking for information and best practices on fair housing responsibilities, the Fair Housing Center of West Michigan (FHCWM) can help!

About the Fair Housing Center

The FHCWM is a private, non-profit fair housing organization committed to providing comprehensive fair housing services, including education, outreach, research, advocacy and enforcement. The Fair Housing Center is the front door to housing choice, ensuring that everyone in our community has equal opportunity to choose housing that's right for them. Through education, research and advocacy, we prevent housing discrimination, remove barriers that allow it to persist, and restore housing choice when discrimination happens.

Who We Serve

We work with tenants, homeowners, and homeseekers as well as professionals, companies, and social service agencies related to housing. These include landlords, realtors, lending institutions, insurance agents, and more.

Our Service Area

We currently serve 12 counties in western Michigan: Allegan, Grand Traverse, Ionia, Isabella, Kent, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Ottawa.

SIGNS OF POSSIBLE DISCRIMINATION, IF BASED ON A PROTECTED CLASS

- Refusing to rent or sell to you or your family
- Being restricted to a certain floor or area of a complex
- Being charged extra fees or higher rent
- Charging rent per bedroom in a single family home
- Being told the unit just rented, even though it has an 'available' sign
- Being told you won't be safe, neighbors won't want you there, or the neighborhood is not 'right' for you
- Terms, conditions, or availability change between phone contact and an in-person visit
- Filling out an application and waiting an unreasonable time for a decision