Pet-Inclusive Housing Initiative

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Understanding the Fair Housing Act

Pet-owning renters, did you know?*

- The Fair Housing Act (FHA) is a federal law that prevents discrimination against tenants in their rental homes. The FHA requires rental housing owners to make a "reasonable accommodation" to allow pets who serve as assistance animals or emotional support animals.
- Even if a rental is advertised as not allowing pets or has size, breed, species or number restrictions, you should still contact the property owner or manager and have a friendly conversation about your pet in person or over the phone.
- If the property owner or manager agrees to allow your pet, make sure this is documented in the lease - a verbal agreement is not sufficient.
- Make sure any pet deposits, fees, or rent are clearly written in the lease and that you understand them. We encourage you to have a friendly conversation with your property owner or manager on these costs and whether there is any flexibility.
- Unless there is already language in the lease that allows the change, a property owner or manager cannot suddenly change the terms of a lease. Both parties need to agree on any changes made.
- Try to prevent and quickly address any concerns your property owner or manager or neighbors have about your pet. Make sure your pet is happy and healthy with activities and enrichment, positive-reinforcement training, and if recommended by a veterinarian, behavioral medication.
- Rental housing owners must follow a legal process to evict tenants or have pets removed. A property owner or manager cannot simply go into your apartment, and remove your pet. Since 86% of property managers say they would work with their residents if they discovered they had an unapproved pet, it is important to try to reach an agreement with your property owner or manager about any pet issues.
- If you are unable to come to a compromise or agreement with your property owner or manager, you can seek a community mediation or legal aid service in your area.

**Please note: This information does not constitute legal advice.*