

## DISABILITY

If you are a person with a disability, whether visible or invisible (mental, emotional, or physical), a potential or current housing provider may not ask about the nature or severity of your disabilities, nor may anyone in the housing transaction ask about the disabilities of your family members, visitors, acquaintances, or friends.



If a tenant's disabilities require an exception to a policy/rule or a change to a structural element in order to fully use and enjoy the dwelling, the tenant may make a **reasonable accommodation** request (rule/policy) or a **reasonable modification** request (structural) to the housing provider. For example, in a complex with first-come, first-served parking, a person with mobility disabilities may ask for a reserved parking space. Generally, with accommodations, there is little to no cost involved. However, with modifications (installing a grab bar, ramp, etc.), the tenant is usually responsible for the cost of the modification (unless in HUD-subsidized housing).

## AGE

In Michigan, anyone 18 years or older may sign a contract such as a lease. Legally emancipated minors are also permitted to sign a lease. Although it is not illegal in most municipalities to deny housing to an individual because they are a student, be aware that "student status" discrimination may be a cover-up for illegal age discrimination\*. For example, landlords who state a "no undergraduates" policy may in fact make exceptions for older, non-traditional students.

\*Student status is protected in the Cities of Ann Arbor, East Lansing, Lansing, and Ypsilanti.

## SEX, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, & GENDER IDENTITY or EXPRESSION

Under the Fair Housing Act, a potential or current housing provider is prohibited from treating a renter differently because of their sex. It is also illegal to sexually harass, make sexual advances toward, or ask for sexual favors from tenants in exchange for housing, amenities (appliance upgrades, a parking space, etc.), or tenant services (such as getting repairs made or having a lease renewed). The Fair Housing Act & ELCRA also prohibit housing discrimination because of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.

## SOURCE OF INCOME

The Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act prohibits most rental housing providers from discriminating on the basis of source of income. If a landlord says they won't accept any of the following lawful sources of income, they may be in violation of state law: Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs), public assistance, veterans' benefits, Social Security, SSI or other disability benefits, child support, or other funds administered by any federal, state, local, or nonprofit entity.

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If you think your rights have been violated, please contact us at **877-979-3247** or **complaints@fhcmichigan.org**.

Our services are free and confidential.

**The Fair Housing Center of Southeast & Mid Michigan serves Clinton, Eaton, Hillsdale, Ingham, Jackson, Lenawee, Livingston, Monroe, Shiawassee, and Washtenaw Counties.**

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The Fair Housing Center of Southeast & Mid Michigan is solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication. 4/2025



# Fair Housing Rights for Renters



**The Fair Housing Center of Southeast & Mid Michigan**

[www.fhcmichigan.org](http://www.fhcmichigan.org)  
[complaints@fhcmichigan.org](mailto:complaints@fhcmichigan.org)  
**877-979-FAIR (3247)**

# Fair Housing: It's Your Right!

FEDERAL

- Race
- Color
- Religion
- National Origin
- Sex
- Familial Status
- Disability



MICHIGAN

- Age
- Marital Status
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity/Expression
- Source of Income

As a renter, the federal Fair Housing Act (FHA) provides you protection, equal opportunity, and the right to discrimination-free housing on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, familial status, and disability. In Michigan, the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act (ELCRA) gives you additional housing protections for age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and source of income, and the Persons with Disabilities Civil Rights Act enhances disability-based protections. These laws cover all housing transactions, including but not limited to: your housing search, application and screening, the rental agreement, obtaining renter's insurance, the terms and conditions of your tenancy, lease renewal, termination of tenancy, and the vacating process. If you pass the landlord's screening criteria\*, you should be free to choose the housing that best suits you and/or your family.



\*Per HUD Rule, landlords are obligated to evaluate every tenant on a case-by-case basis. Blanket denials based on criminal background are not permitted. City ordinances may provide additional protections.

## RACE & COLOR



Being denied housing because of your race or color, restricted to certain areas of an apartment complex, or steered to neighborhoods for "people more like you" is housing discrimination. If you are told over the phone that an apartment is available, but when you show up in person to see the unit it is suddenly no longer available, you may have an allegation of housing discrimination. Statements like, "I just rented the last unit," "I lost your application," or "Your credit isn't perfect," may be signs of discrimination. Once you are in housing, failure to make repairs, unequal use of the property/amenities, evictions, or harassment could be illegally motivated by your race or color.

## RELIGION & NATIONAL ORIGIN



It is illegal for a landlord to ask you to identify your religion. You cannot be forced to choose an apartment near other people who are from the same country, speak the same language, or are of the same religion as you. A landlord cannot ask you to remove your head scarf, hijab, burka, keffiyeh, kippah, other religious clothing, or other religious symbols; or evict, threaten, or harass you because of your religion, immigration status, or refugee status. If you see anything in writing or hear statements that could be perceived as the housing provider preferring, encouraging, or discouraging "types" of people from applying, contact the FHC. All calls are confidential.

## FAMILIAL STATUS

The Fair Housing Act makes it illegal for housing providers to discriminate against prospective or current renters who have children, are expecting a child, or are adopting or fostering children as members of their household. Contact us if you hear statements like: "No toys in the hallway," "We aren't set up for children," "Brother and sister can't share a bedroom," "The unit isn't safe for children," "We keep kids on the first floor," "We only allow two heartbeats per bedroom," or "We cater to students, you wouldn't be happy here."



Finally, housing that is specifically labeled for "Seniors Only" (55+, 62+) must meet very specific guidelines to qualify as exempt from this law. A private landlord who advertises for "adults only" or "active senior community" without meeting all of the guidelines violates the Fair Housing Act.

## MARITAL STATUS

Housing providers in Michigan are prohibited from denying rentals or imposing different terms or conditions for tenants because a person is single, partnered, married, widowed, separated, or divorced. If you hear something like, "Sorry, we would like to rent to you, but we'd prefer a nice, professional, married couple in our home," call the FHC.