Human Relations Commission

The Winston-Salem Human Relations Commission is a city advisory board with the power to enforce the city’s Fair Housing Ordinance. The Commission is staffed by the Human Relations Department. If there is a violation, the department can assist you in obtaining certain legal remedies to which you may be entitled. Most of the time, the department can settle housing discrimination complaints quickly and easily. If necessary, the department and/or commission can take discrimination cases to court.

If you believe that you are being discriminated against, you have the right to file a complaint. No one may take any action against you for doing so, even if discrimination is not proven or found. If you think you have been discriminated against, Human Relations wants to hear from you.

Did you know that it is illegal to discriminate in housing because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, physical or mental handicap, or family status (families with children)?

Contact Us

City of Winston-Salem
Human Relations Department
(336) 734-1227
101 N. Main Street
Winston-Salem, NC 27101
CityLink 311

Fair Housing
Know your rights
Know your rights about Fair Housing in Winston-Salem

The Fair Housing Ordinance of the City of Winston-Salem prohibits the following acts based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, handicap or family status:
- Refusing to sell or rent housing
- Lying about the availability of housing
- Evicting someone from housing
- Discriminating in the terms or conditions of housing, such as rent, security deposits, house sale prices, the use of facilities or financing

The Fair Housing Ordinance applies to the sale, rental and financing of residential housing. Apartments, houses, mobile homes and even vacant housing lots are covered by the Fair Housing Act. With a few exceptions, anyone who has control over residential property and real estate financing must obey the law. This includes rental managers, property owners, real estate agents, landlords, banks, developers, builders and individual homeowners who are selling or renting their property.

Examples of housing discrimination:

Here are a few common scenarios of discrimination:

- An African-American person answers a newspaper ad for an apartment. The landlord tells him the apartment has already been rented. It turns out that the apartment has not really been rented, and the landlord later rents it to a white applicant who answers the same ad.
- A real estate agent tries to persuade someone not to buy or rent a house in a certain neighborhood because of the racial makeup of the neighborhood. This is called steering.
- A landlord refuses to rent an apartment to a man because he is mentally disabled.
- A landlord evicts a white tenant from her mobile home because friends of another race visit her there.
- A resident landlord refuses to rent an apartment to a family with children, will only allow families with children to live in certain buildings or on certain floors, or charges families higher security deposits.
- A landlord checks the credit records of all African-American and Hispanic applicants by using small credit problems as an excuse to refuse to rent apartments to them; however, the landlord does not always check White applicants' credit records or overlooks small credit problems in their records.
- A female tenant and her family are evicted from their apartment because the woman refuses the landlord's sexual advances.

What to do if you think it is discrimination:

- Call the Winston-Salem Human Relations Department and tell them exactly what happened.
- If discrimination is indicated, you will be asked to come to the office and fill out a complaint form.
- The person against whom the complaint is filed will be notified of the charge and asked to submit an answer.
- The investigation will begin, and if evidence of discrimination is found, the Human Relations Department will try to resolve the complaint.
- If attempts at resolution fail, the case may be referred to a hearing board, who can also subpoena evidence, witnesses, and records. The hearing board can, then, issue an order that can be enforced in a court of law.

Are you being discriminated against?

Discrimination can be very subtle. Often people may suspect they have been discriminated against, but are not sure they can prove it.

If this happens to you, call the Winston-Salem Human Relations Department. Our investigators will conduct an in-depth, thorough, objective investigation to determine whether discrimination has occurred.