

CHICAGO AREA FAIR HOUSING ALLIANCE

Cook County: New Rights for Housing Choice Voucher Holders

Tenant Fact Sheet

The Cook County Human Rights was amended on May 8, 2013 and now protects Housing Choice “Section 8” Voucher Holders from discrimination. **What does this mean for voucher holders?**

BACKGROUND

- In the past, voucher holders were not protected in Cook County and landlords could legally refuse to rent to them because they had a voucher.
- A The City of Chicago has had this protection since 1993, the new county-wide protection goes into effect on August 8, 2013

The voucher program allows families to pay rent in units throughout the county, and with this new protection housing options for voucher holders will be expanded – Tenants with vouchers can no longer be denied housing just because they have a voucher.

HOW THE PROTECTION WORKS

- Tenants can be screened by prospective landlords just as all other tenants are screened.
- Landlords may not refuse to process a renter’s application simply because s/he has a housing voucher.
- Tenants will still have to meet the criteria of the landlord—for example, pass credit and background checks.
- The voucher program is essentially a three-way agreement between the renter, landlord, and housing authority. Required paperwork includes the, Request for tenancy Approval, the lease, and the housing assistance payment contract (a contract between the landlord and housing authority). Landlords can receive direct deposit of the housing authority’s rent portion, and the tenant pays the remainder of the rent to the landlord.

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY FOR VOUCHER TENANTS

- Tenants with housing vouchers will have increased opportunities to move to communities with more opportunities.
- Tenant advocates should work to inform tenants of this new protection and encourage voucher holders to search for housing outside of traditional voucher neighborhoods. With this new protection, tenants with housing vouchers have better protections to allow them to move into areas with better jobs, schools, and other opportunities.
- Tenants with disabilities have an especially hard time finding housing, because there are very few accessible units. This amendment enables voucher holders with disabilities to have more accessible housing options.

REPORTING DISCRIMINATION

If a landlord refuses to rent because a tenant has a voucher, or if they set different terms or conditions,, advertises or communicates that s/he does not accept vouchers, or treat HCV holders differently from tenants without vouchers, file a complaint.



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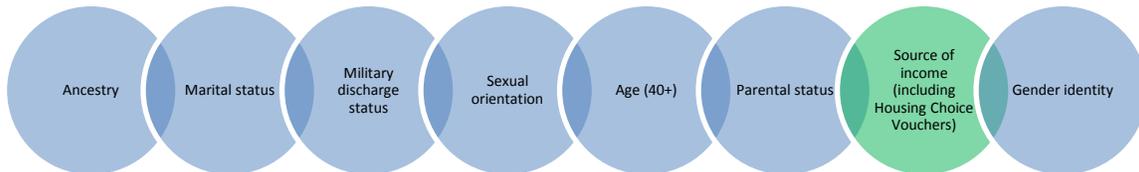
Cook County: New Rights for Housing Choice Voucher Holders Summary of the Amended Cook County Human Rights Ordinance

The Cook County Board of Commissioners adopted the Cook County Human Rights Ordinance on March 16, 1993. The Ordinance is designed to protect all people who live and work in the County from discrimination and sexual harassment in employment, public accommodations, housing, credit transactions, County services and County contracting.

WHAT IS PROTECTED?



In addition to the 7 classes protected by the Fair Housing Act of 1968, the Cook County Human Rights Ordinance also protects against discrimination based upon:



WHAT IS PROHIBITED?

- Refusing to sell or rent, negotiate for sale or rental, or otherwise making unavailable or denying a dwelling because of a person's protected status.
- Imposing different terms, conditions, privileges, or services because of a person's protected status.
- Making discriminatory statements or publishing discriminatory communications with respect to the sale or rental of a dwelling.
- Lying about the availability of a dwelling because of a person's protected status.
- Blockbusting and steering.
- Retaliating against, interfering with, or intimidating a person exercising his/her fair housing rights.
- Aiding and abetting

YOU HAVE WITHIN 180 DAYS OF THE ALLEGED VIOLATION TO FILE A COMPLAINT

If you believe fair housing rights have been violated, contact:

Cook County Commission on Human Rights
69 W. Washington, Suite 3040 Chicago, IL 60602
312-603-1100 312-603-1101 (TDD)
human.rights@cookcountyil.gov

For additional info or for assistance with filing a complaint, visit the CAFHA website at www.cafha.net.