

Virginia Fair Housing Office

Federal and state fair housing laws protect people from discrimination when trying to rent an apartment, buy a house, obtain a mortgage, or purchase homeowner's insurance. Fair housing requirements apply to all housing providers: property managers, owners, landlords, real estate agents, banks, savings institutions, credit unions, insurance companies, mortgage lenders, and appraisers.

The [Fair Housing Board](#) administers and enforces the Fair Housing Law, although the [Real Estate Board](#) is responsible for fair housing cases involving real estate licensees or their employees. Each Board investigates housing discrimination through the Fair Housing Office, which receives an average of 180 complaints each year. The majority of complaints involves disability and racial discrimination, while familial status complaints continue to rise.

- [Guidance Document](#): *Housing Discrimination on the Basis of Source of Funds*
- [Guidance Document](#): *Reasonable Accommodation Requests for Assistance Animals*

Who is Covered by the Law?

[Virginia's Fair Housing Law](#) makes it illegal to discriminate in residential housing on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, disability, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, and veteran status. The law prohibits applying one standard to one class of individuals while applying a different standard to another class of individuals.

For example, it would be illegal to ask an applicant with a disability to provide a credit report if applicants without disabilities do not have to provide one.

WARNING: Websites and organizations offering assistance animal registrations may suggest that purchasing such certification will qualify individuals to bring their animals into pet-free housing or to be exempt from pet deposit fees. **The ability to receive a reasonable accommodation is not based on one's ownership of an assistance animal, but rests instead on the existence of a disability as defined by the fair housing law.** Ownership of an assistance animal—even if registered or certified as such—does not automatically qualify an individual as “disabled” under fair housing law. Fair housing law also prohibits the housing provider from *requiring* special training or certification for assistance animals. Read [Guidance Document](#) or [view brochure](#) to learn more.

Virginia's Fair Housing [Law](#) and [Regulations](#) apply to rental transactions (trying to rent an apartment or house), to sales transactions (trying to purchase a home), to financing

transactions (trying to obtain a mortgage), to insurance transactions (trying to obtain homeowners or rental insurance), and to advertising transactions (how individuals, companies and newspapers advertise about rental vacancies or homes for sale).

What Happens When a Fair Housing Complaint is Filed?

The Fair Housing Office is responsible for investigating housing discrimination complaints.

Complaints must be filed in writing within one year after the alleged discriminatory housing practice occurred or terminated.

Once the Fair Housing Office accepts a complaint for investigation, the complaint is assigned to an investigator. The purpose of the investigation is to gather facts about the complaint. An investigator generally interviews the complainant, the respondent, and relevant witnesses. The investigator may also review documents and records.

During the investigative process, a trained professional from the [Alternative Dispute Resolution Section](#) coordinates the conciliation process. Conciliation is a voluntary process in which the parties attempt to resolve the complaint by agreeing to mutually acceptable terms. If conciliation is successful, the investigation will be suspended. If conciliation is unsuccessful, or if one of the parties does not want to attempt conciliation, the investigation continues until it is complete.

After the investigation is complete, the investigator writes a final investigative report (FIR). The FIR summarizes the information obtained during the investigation, including contacts with the complainant and respondent, witnesses' statements, and records obtained and examined during the investigation. The FIR is presented to the Fair Housing Board (or the Real Estate Board for complaints involving real estate licensees or their employees) at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

If conciliation is successful and both parties reach an agreement, the Board may vote to accept the conciliation agreement. If conciliation is unsuccessful in resolving the complaint, or if the Board fails to accept an agreement, the Board will either dismiss the complaint or determine if reasonable cause exists to support a charge of discrimination. In cases where the Board determines reasonable cause and issues a charge of discrimination, the Attorney General's Office brings civil suit in circuit court seeking relief for the complainant. If the Board dismisses the complaint, both parties will be notified in writing that no further action will be taken.

If the Board issues a charge of discrimination, the charge is immediately referred to the Attorney General's Office for further action, and both parties will be notified accordingly in writing.

How to File a Fair Housing Complaint

If you believe you are the victim of housing discrimination, you may file a complaint by downloading the Housing Discrimination Complaint Form.

Housing Discrimination Complaint Form

**Make sure to download the application and open the document using the [Adobe Reader](#) software.*

Spanish-language version available here: [FORMULARIO DE QUEJA DE DISCRIMINACIÓN DE VIVIENDA de Virginia](#)

Problems opening interactive forms?

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