Compliance

The Boston Fair Housing Commission monitors housing programs in Boston to measure compliance with fair housing law. The Commission may, as a result of investigation or research, take appropriate action to implement the City of Boston's policy to eliminate discrimination and promote equal access in housing.

How Can I File a Complaint?

If you have questions regarding the law, or have been the victim of housing discrimination in Boston, please contact:

The Boston Fair Housing Commission
Boston City Hall
One City Hall Plaza, Room 966
Boston, MA 02201
617-635-4408 TTY 617-635-2541
www.cityofboston.gov/bfhc

Boston Fair Housing Commission Programs

The Boston Fair Housing Commission promotes equal opportunity in housing through its programs.

Education and Outreach: The Boston Fair Housing Commission offers a range of activities and training to educate the public about fair housing law including:

- Training programs for housing providers and community agencies
- Publication of fair housing material, including brochures and newsletters
- Coordination of fair housing workshops, fairs and community events

Affirmative Fair Marketing Program: Promotes equal access to government-assisted housing for all persons by establishing standards for public outreach, advertising and tenant/buyer selection criteria. The Boston Fair Housing Commission oversees the development and implementation of affirmative marketing plans that promote housing opportunity and monitors compliance with fair housing law.

Metrolist Program: Facilitates housing access throughout metropolitan Boston by providing low and moderate-income households with housing counseling, referral services and comprehensive information about private market and government assisted housing in over 100 cities and towns.

Housing Choice Program: Provides workshops and search assistance to families with Section 8 vouchers to explore available housing options throughout Metropolitan Boston.

BOSTON FAIR HOUSING COMMISSION

It is the policy of the City of Boston to see that each individual, regardless of race, color, religious creed, marital status, military status, handicap, children, national origin, sex, age, ancestry, sexual orientation or source of income shall have equal access to housing; and to encourage and bring about mutual understanding and respect among all individuals in the City by the elimination of prejudice, intolerance, bigotry and discrimination in the area of housing.

THOMAS M. MENINO, *Mayor*
VICTORIA L. WILLIAMS, *Director*

BOSTON FAIR HOUSING COMMISSION

everyone deserves a fair chance!

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

What is the Boston Fair Housing Commission?

The Boston Fair Housing Commission (BFHC) was established in 1982 under City of Boston Code, Ordinances, Title 10-3. In 1994 the Commission was empowered with judicial enforcement authority and the ability to impose civil penalties pursuant to St. 1994, c.37, as amended by St. 1998, c.165.

The Boston Fair Housing Commission strives to eliminate discrimination and increase access to housing in Boston through investigation and enforcement, affirmative fair marketing, operating a metropolitan Boston apartment listing service, and facilitating interagency coordination.

What is Fair Housing Law?

In the City of Boston it is illegal to discriminate in the rental or sale of housing based on the following protected classes:

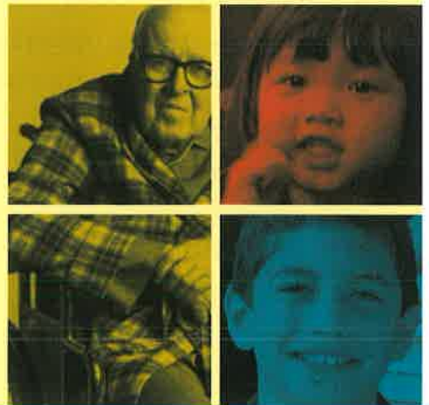
- Race
- Color
- Religion
- National Origin
- Ancestry
- Military Status
- Sex
- Gender Identity
- Sexual Orientation
- Marital Status
- Children
- Age
- Source of Income (Public Assistance, including Section 8)
- Handicap

What is Prohibited?

Landlords, sellers and agents must consider applicants on neutral criteria, such as the ability to pay and respect the rights of others. These standards must be applied uniformly to all applicants.

Discrimination may be subtle and take many forms.
It is against the law to:

- Discourage or refuse to allow a person to apply for an available unit
- Falsely deny that housing is available for inspection, sale or rental
- Charge or quote a higher rental or sale price for a dwelling
- Refuse a unit to an applicant on public assistance (including Section 8)
- Deny housing to a family with children because of the presence of lead paint
- Discriminate in advertising, written or oral statements
- Deny real estate services
- Spread rumors of racial change to stimulate property sales
- Harass, coerce or intimidate an individual because of their protected class membership
- Interfere with an individual's free exercise of their civil rights
- Retaliate against an individual for asserting their fair housing rights
- Deny mortgage loans or insurance to specific neighborhoods
- Discriminate in terms or conditions
- Deny a reasonable accommodation for a person with a disability
- Treat an individual unfavorably because of a disability



What Happens After a Complaint Has Been Filed?

Investigations: The Boston Fair Housing Commission investigates housing discrimination complaints. Trained investigators analyze information gathered from interviews and records to determine whether there is "probable cause" (whether it is more likely than not), to conclude that housing discrimination occurred.

Throughout the investigation, those charged with discriminatory conduct are given ample opportunity to present their case and settle the matter with the person filing the complaint.

To promote complaint resolution the Boston Fair Housing Commission conducts conciliation /mediation conferences which may result in financial settlements for complainants, securing the housing opportunity, and agreements to bring real estate practices into compliance with fair housing law.

Enforcement: When a discrimination complaint results in a Probable Cause finding that cannot be resolved through conciliation, the Boston Fair Housing Commission may hold a public hearing, award damages and assess fines, order and monitor actions to prevent further discrimination, and assist in court proceedings.

The Commission reviews compliance with settlement agreements and may, upon a finding of non-compliance, take enforcement action.