



125 LINCOLN STREET, 5TH FLOOR, BOSTON, MA 02111-2503
Phone: (617) 859-0400 | Toll Free: (800) 272-0990 (MA Only)
www.mbhp.org

Fair Housing Rights for Veterans Fact Sheet

1. What is fair housing and how does it relate to veterans?

Fair housing is a set of principles, civil laws and regulations which provide equal access and opportunity to housing for protected class members. It impacts the property owner's policies, practices, procedures and services in terms of advertising, application, tenant selection, amenities, and termination. Under Massachusetts fair housing law, Chapter 151B, military status, which includes veterans is a protected class. Protected classes are designated groups of people and their families that are covered under fair housing law. The military status protected class covers veterans, those individuals on active duty, and those persons enrolled in the Reserves.

2. Are there other protected classes under fair housing laws?

In Massachusetts, the other protected classes are race, religion, national origin, gender, disability, familial status, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic information, and receipt of government assistance (including veteran's benefits and rental vouchers such as Section 8).

3. What types of housing activities are covered under fair housing?

Most housing-related activities are covered to some extent by fair housing laws and regulations. Below are some of the more typical activities but this is not an all-inclusive list.

- Advertising
- Tenant screening
- Determination of eligibility
- Leasing including policies and procedures that restrict protected class members from receiving, completing or submitting applications
- Policies and their implementation such as "no pets", "deposits" or "terms and conditions of tenancy", "housekeeping standards"
- Relations between residents
- Provision of amenities
- Provision of reasonable accommodations and reasonable modifications for persons with disabilities and individuals associated with persons with disabilities
- Eviction and other termination of residency actions

4. Who must follow fair housing laws?

Property owners, developers, condo associations, and homeowner associations are covered parties under fair housing laws. Their employees, such as property managers, clerical staff, maintenance workers and all others are responsible for performing their duties in a manner consistent with fair housing. Attorneys and real estate agents must act and advise their clients in a compliant manner. Other residents in the building or development can be held responsible under fair housing laws and regulations if their behavior is considered to be discriminatory, such as harassment of you due to your veteran status. Developers, architects and contractors can be held liable under the accessible design and construction fair housing mandates for units built for persons with disabilities and their families.

5. If a veteran has a disability are there other fair housing protections available?

In addition to military status fair housing protection, a veteran with a disability, service related or not, also would be covered as a person with a disability. Persons with disabilities, including

A reasonable accommodation is a request for a change or waiver to a policy, practice, procedure or service to allow housing access and opportunity for a person with a disability. Common examples of reasonable accommodations are a request for a designated, accessible parking space, assistive animals in a no-pet policy building, and alternative references.

A reasonable modification is a physical modification to allow greater accessibility and use of the property for a person with a disability. Common examples of reasonable modifications are the installation of bathroom grab bars, ramps and stair railings. If the unit is located in a building or development of 10 contiguous units or more or if the property owner is receiving government assistance, then all costs of the reasonable modification are assumed by the property owner. If the unit does not meet those specifications, then the person making the requests assumes the costs as well as the costs to restore the unit to its original state. There is some financial assistance available through the Home Modifications Program at MBHP. Information regarding that program is available on our web site www.mbhp.org, or call (617) 425-6637.

6. What happens when a veteran is labeled as a person with a disability because of the assumption that he/she has a mental illness or substance abuse problem due to past military service?

The definition of disability used by both the state and federal fair housing laws includes protection for those persons who are presumed to be disabled and are discriminated against due to that presumption. So in the example used in the question, the fair housing laws would protect a veteran who is denied housing because the property owner believes he/she have a mental illness or substance abuse issue.

7. Where can I get more information on my fair housing rights?

You can contact the MBHP Fair Housing Manager (617) 425-6681. He/she will discuss with you your protections under both the state and federal fair housing laws. He/she can also refer you to agencies for advocacy assistance or to file a complaint.

8. What can I do if I think that I have been discriminated against?

You can file a fair housing complaint with the federal or state authorities listed below or file a civil action law suit. You also can contact the Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston for advocacy assistance. If you file with the federal or state fair housing authorities, you do not need an attorney and there are no filing fees.

MA Commission Against Discrimination

One Ashburton Place
Rm. 601
Boston, MA 02108
Phone: (617) 994-6000
TTY: (617) 994-6196

Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston

59 Temple Place #1105
Boston, MA 02111
Phone: (617) 399-0491
www.bostonfairhousing.org

Cambridge Human Rights Commission

51 Inman Street, 2nd Floor
Cambridge, MA 02139
Phone: (617) 349-4396
TTY: (617) 492-0235
www.cambridgema.gov/HRC

Boston Fair Housing Commission

1 City Hall Plaza
Boston, MA 0220
Phone: (617) 635.4408
www.cityofboston.gov/civilrights

HUD FHEO Region I

10 Causeway Street
Boston, MA 02222-1092
Phone: (617) 994-8300 or
(800) 827-5005
TTY: (617) 565-5453