

CHICAGO AREA FAIR HOUSING ALLIANCE

Cook County: New Rights for Housing Choice Voucher Holders

Landlord Fact Sheet

The Cook County Human Rights Ordinance was amended on May 8, 2013 and now protects Housing Choice “Section 8” Voucher Holders from discrimination. Starting August 8, 2013 landlords can no longer legally refuse to rent solely on the basis of a household’s voucher status. What does this mean for landlords?

BACKGROUND

- Voucher holders are no longer exempted from source of income protection at the county level.
- Although this protection has been in place in the City of Chicago since 1993, the new county-wide protection goes into effect on August 8, 2013.
- 5% of the renters in suburban Cook County have housing choice vouchers.
- The majority of voucher holders are families with children, followed by people with disabilities, the elderly, and veterans.

HOW THE PROTECTION WORKS

- Residents with housing choice vouchers will have the right to be screened on the same basis as non-voucher tenants by prospective landlords.
- Landlords may not refuse to process a renter’s application simply because s/he has a housing voucher.
- Landlords may still conduct credit and background checks as long as they apply the same process to every tenant.
- The ordinance does not control rent rates. Landlords can set rent rates based on what the market will bear.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A LANDLORD ACCEPTS A VOUCHER HOLDER?

- After tenants pass the Housing Authority’s screening, they are responsible for finding and securing housing in the private market. Tenants undergo expansive screening by the Housing Authority before they get a voucher.
- Once a landlord approves the tenant, and fills out the Request for Tenancy Approval, the Housing Authority is alerted and an inspection is scheduled for the unit.
- The Housing Authority has a contract with a professional private inspection firm that will inspect the unit in no more than three to five business days after proper paperwork is filled out and turned in.
- Once the unit passes inspection and the rent negotiation is completed, the tenant can move in.
- The landlord will receive the Housing Authority’s portion of the rent through direct deposit, and the tenant pays the rest of it on the schedule that you agree on with the tenant.
- Just like any other tenant, voucher holders can be evicted for violation of lease terms.

REMEMBER

- Landlords will have the security of receiving guaranteed funds from the Housing Authority each month.
- Accepting voucher holders is not unduly burdensome on landlords and benefits both parties.
- If a landlord violates the ordinance, a complaint can be filed at the Cook County Human Rights Commission, which can result in paying actual damages, paying all or part of a complainant’s costs (including attorneys’ fees), as well as leasing the unit to a complainant. The Commission may also levy fines of \$100.00 to \$500.00 for each offense.

Don’t let this happen to you! Educate yourself on the law.



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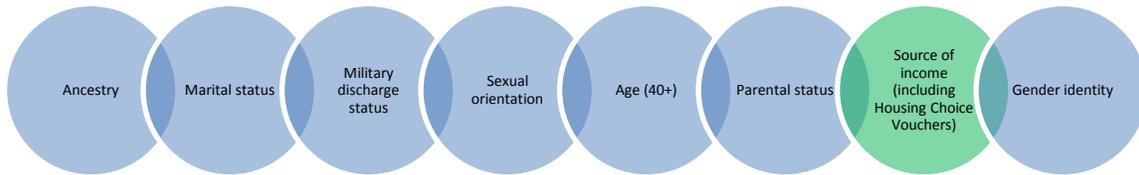
Cook County: New Rights for Housing Choice Voucher Holders Summary of the Amended Cook County Human Rights Ordinance

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.