

Fair Housing Challenge – Discrimination or Not?

Answers

- 1. Joshua, who is black, calls many times about a rental ad, but nobody calls back. His white friend Devin phones the same number and is called back.**

Fair housing laws say it's not legal to take someone's race into account when making rental decisions. Research has shown that most people can figure out your race just by hearing your voice. Joshua suspects that he was the victim of discrimination because Devin, who sounded white, got a call back. After hearing their voices, the manager might be deciding who to talk to because of what race he thinks they are. This is called "linguistic profiling" and it is discriminatory.

- 2. Apartment manager Ryan tells the Garcias that their family must live in Building C, where the other families with kids live.**

When a manager tries to make families with children live only in certain floors of buildings or in certain buildings, this is called "steering" and it is discriminatory. If Ryan tells the Garcias they have to live in one building, he is treating them differently than other applicants who have a choice of any vacant apartments.

- 3. Landlord Jessica has had problems with teens who belong to gangs and cause damage. She decides not to rent to families with teenagers.**

Fair housing laws don't allow discrimination against families with children, no matter what age the children are. Some local fair housing laws also don't allow discrimination because of age. Jessica cannot target a certain age group, such as teens, or limit rental only to families with kids of certain ages.

- 4. Daniel (who is disabled) and Alyssa (who is not) rent 1-bedroom apartments on the same day. Daniel is charged a \$300 damage deposit and Alyssa is charged \$200.**

All people who apply for rental should be treated similarly. Managers can't set special rules for some people, like charging people with disabilities higher deposits than others. Maybe Daniel and Alyssa rented apartments with different rent amounts and deposit rates. But if Daniel was charged a higher deposit just because he uses a wheelchair, this would be discriminatory.

- 5. The Rainbow Apartments swimming pool rules have different swim hours for children and for adults.**

Pool rules should be fair for the use and enjoyment of all residents. Under fair housing laws, "adult swim" hours are not permitted.

- 6. The West Sound Apartments do not allow residents to smoke.**

Smokers are not a protected group under fair housing laws. It is legal for this apartment community to have a no-smoking policy.

7. The Fir Tree Apartments doesn't allow anyone under 15 to use their fitness room equipment.

A rule that excludes everyone under 18 would be too strict. A rule that allows only people 15 and older to use fitness equipment is probably okay. This is because the equipment might be unsafe for younger, smaller kids.

8. Mr. al Bakar complains that the pool man from a hired company said offensive things about his accent and turban. The manager doesn't do anything because the pool man is not his employee.

The manager should not ignore the situation. He must do something because it seems that the reason behind the harassment is Mr. al Bakar's national origin – where he was born. The manager hired the pool company, so he's responsible for the pool man's actions.

9. Mrs. Tanaka has a state disabled parking permit for her car. She asks for a reserved parking space close to her front door. The manager says he has to treat all residents the same and can't give her special privileges.

Many people with disabilities have trouble getting around and use parking permits. The manager should give Mrs. Tanaka a reserved parking space near her door. Assistance like this is called "reasonable accommodation." The manager must also make sure that no one else parks in her spot, and tow their cars if they do.

10. Kaitlyn, who is low income, has a Section 8 voucher to help pay her rent. She calls about a rental, and the landlord says he won't accept Section 8.

Some fair housing laws protect people with Section 8 vouchers, but not all do. In Seattle, Bellevue, and unincorporated King County, a landlord must rent to someone with a Section 8 voucher if they are a qualified renter. Everywhere else in the state, landlords aren't required to rent to people with vouchers.

11. The apartment manager stops doing Matthew's repairs after finding out that Matthew is HIV positive.

Fair housing laws say that managers and maintenance staff must treat residents equally, no matter if they have a disability. The manager must do repairs for Matthew, the same as for other renters.

12. After the Franklins move out of Tyler's apartment, they file a discrimination complaint against him. Tyler tells his current residents that he'll evict them if he sees the Franklin's son Brandon visiting there.

Tyler has no good business reason to keep Brandon from visiting his friends. It sounds like Tyler is doing this because the Franklins filed a civil rights complaint against him. If so, then his action is retaliation, and they can file another complaint.