

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY POLICY OF THE COLUMBUS HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Columbus Housing Authority will comply with all applicable State and Federal laws and regulations including:

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;
- Section 3 of the Civil Rights Act of 1973;
- Title II of The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990;
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973;
- Age Discrimination Act of 1975;
- Executive Order 11063, Equal Opportunity in Housing of 1992;
- Or any other laws or requirements concerning equal housing opportunity.

This Housing Authority will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, familial status, disability, handicap, or ethnicity or national origin.

As conditions may require, the Housing Authority will advertise the availability of housing assistance to low income and very low income families. Advertising methods may include but not limited to the examples below:

- Local newspapers;
- Minority publications;
- Posters/flyers in neighborhoods or areas where developments are located or other low income areas of the community or county;
- Brochures or informational materials regarding programs and housing assistance;
- Providing local media with pertinent information;
- Outreach efforts to city and county governments, social service or other agencies that work with low income, elderly, disabled, minority, or homeless clients;

- Presentations by the Executive Director or members of the Board of Commissioners to civic clubs and other service organizations to make known to community leaders the housing opportunities and programs of the Authority;
- Liaison with neighboring housing authorities concerning vacancies in all categories of potential applicants.

Any applicant who feels he/she has been discriminated against or treated unfairly may request a hearing in accordance with the Authority Grievance Policy. Regardless of the outcome of the hearing, a decision of the Hearing Officer/Panel shall not constitute a waiver of, nor affect in any manner whatever, the rights to a civil court or judicial process by the aggrieved.

Nondiscrimination

Federal regulations prohibit discrimination against certain protected classes. State and local requirements, as well as Housing Authority policies, can prohibit discrimination against additional classes of people. The Columbus Housing Authority shall not discriminate because of race, color, sex, religion, familial status, age, disability or national origin (called “protected classes”). Familial status includes children under the age of 18 living with parents or legal custodians, pregnant women, and people securing custody of children under the age of 18.

The Columbus Housing Authority will not discriminate on the basis of marital status or sexual orientation and will not use any of these factors to:

- Deny to any family the opportunity to apply for housing, nor deny to any qualified applicant the opportunity to participate in the public housing program
- Provide housing that is different from that provided to others
- Subject anyone to segregation or disparate treatment
- Restrict anyone’s access to any benefit enjoyed by others in connection with the housing program
- Treat a person differently in determining eligibility or other requirements for admission
- Steer an applicant or tenant toward or away from a particular area based on any of these factors
- Deny anyone access to the same level of services

- Deny anyone the opportunity to participate in a planning or advisory group that is an integral part of the housing program
- Discriminate in the provision of residential real estate transactions
- Discriminate against someone because they are related to or associated with a member of a protected class
- Publish or cause to be published an advertisement or notice indicating the availability of housing that prefers or excludes persons who are members of a protected class

Discrimination Complaints

If an applicant or tenant family believes that any family member has been discriminated against by the Columbus Housing Authority, the family should advise the Columbus Housing Authority immediately. The Columbus Housing Authority will make every reasonable attempt to determine whether the applicant's or tenant family's assertions have merit and take any warranted corrective action.

Applicants or tenant families who believe that they have been subject to unlawful discrimination may notify the Columbus Housing Authority either orally or in writing. If such complaint was made orally, the complaint will be documented by the Columbus Housing Authority for further examination. The Housing Authority will attempt to remedy discrimination complaints made against it.

If requested by the complainant, The Columbus Housing Authority will also provide a copy of a discrimination complaint form to the complainant and provide them with information on how to complete and submit the form to HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO).

Our Commitment to the Promotion of Fair Housing

The Columbus Housing Authority is fully committed to the concept of Fair Housing Opportunity for all. In an effort to further the goal of availability of fair housing, the Authority will coordinate with Federal, State, County, and Local governmental authorities to Promote Fairness in Housing opportunities by partnering with others in the development of an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing for the area served by the Authority.

The Columbus Housing Authority will also Promote Fair Housing through the use of:

- Local newspapers;
- Minority publications;

- Posters/flyers in neighborhoods or areas where developments are located or other low income areas of the community or county;
- Brochures or informational materials regarding programs and housing assistance;
- Providing local media with pertinent information;
- Outreach efforts to city and county governments, social service or other agencies that work with low income, elderly, disabled, minority, or homeless clients;
- Presentations by the Executive Director or members of the Board of Commissioners to civic clubs and other service organizations to make known to community leaders the housing opportunities and programs of the Authority;
- Liaison with neighboring housing authorities concerning vacancies in all categories of potential applicants.

Our Commitment to Equal Access

The Columbus Housing Authority has created a policy and procedures to ensure that persons with disabilities have full access to the Columbus Housing Authority's programs and services. This responsibility begins with the first inquiry of an interested family and continues through every programmatic area of the public housing program.

The Columbus Housing Authority shall provide notice to each tenant that they may, at any time during their tenancy, request a reasonable accommodation for a household member, including a reasonable accommodation so that the tenant can meet lease requirements or other requirements of tenancy

What is a REASONABLE Accommodation?

A "reasonable accommodation" is a change, exception, or adjustment to a rule, policy, practice or service that may be necessary for a person with a disability to have an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling, including public and common use spaces. Since rules, policies practices and services may have a different effect on persons with disabilities than on other persons, treating persons with disabilities exactly the same as others will sometimes deny them an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling [Joint Statement of the Departments of HUD and Justice: Reasonable Accommodations under the Fair Housing Act].

Federal regulations stipulate that requests for accommodations will be considered reasonable if they do not create an "undue financial and administrative burden" for the CHA, or result in a "fundamental alteration" in the nature of the program or service

offered. A fundamental alteration is a modification that alters the essential nature of a provider's operations.

Types of Reasonable Accommodations

When it is reasonable, the CHA shall accommodate the needs of a person with disabilities. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Permitting applications and reexaminations to be completed by mail or at an alternative location
- Conducting home visits
- Modifying or altering a unit or physical system if such a modification or alteration is necessary to provide equal access to a person with a disability
- Installing grab bars in a bathroom
- Installing visual fire alarms and door bell flashers for hearing impaired persons
- Allowing an approved live-in aide to reside in the unit if that person is determined to be essential to the care of a person with disabilities, is not obligated for the support of the person with disabilities, and would not be otherwise living in the unit.
- Providing designated handicapped-accessible parking spaces where applicable
- Allowing an assistance animal
- Permitting an authorized designee or advocate to participate in the application or certification process and any other meetings with Columbus Housing Authority staff
- Displaying posters and other housing information in locations throughout the Columbus Housing Authority's office in such a manner as to be easily readable from a wheelchair

How can applicants or residents obtain a reasonable accommodation?

If an applicant or participant indicates that an exception, change, or adjustment to a rule, policy, practice, or service is needed because of a disability, HUD requires that the CHA treat the information as a request for a reasonable accommodation, even if no formal request is made [Joint Statement of the Departments of HUD and Justice: Reasonable Accommodations under the Fair Housing Act].

Once a request is made verbally and/or in writing, the tenant/applicant will be required to complete a standardized form, "Request for Reasonable Accommodation" Once the form is completed in its entirety, the Columbus Housing Authority will forward a verification form to a licensed professional who can verify that such a disability requires the specific accommodation requested. Before providing an accommodation, the Columbus Housing Authority must determine that the person meets the definition of a person with a disability, and that the accommodation will enhance the family's access to the Columbus Housing Authority's programs and services. If a person's disability is obvious or otherwise known to the Columbus Housing Authority, and if the need for the requested accommodation is also readily apparent or known, no further verification will be required [Joint Statement of the Departments of HUD and Justice: Reasonable Accommodations under the Fair Housing Act]. Otherwise, third-party verification must be obtained from an individual identified by the family who is competent to make the determination. The Housing Authority will only request information that is necessary to evaluate the disability-related need for the accommodation.

Once this form is returned to the Columbus Housing Authority, the Housing authority will have 10 business days to make a determination as to the feasibility of requested accommodation. The Columbus Housing Authority must approve a request for an accommodation if the following three conditions are met.

- The request was made by or on behalf of a person with a disability.
- There is a disability-related need for the accommodation.
- The requested accommodation is reasonable, meaning it would not impose an undue financial and administrative burden on the Columbus Housing Authority, or fundamentally alter the nature of the Columbus Housing Authority's operations.

Requests for accommodations will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The determination of undue financial and administrative burden must be made on a case-by-case basis involving various factors, such as the cost of the requested accommodation, the financial resources of the Columbus Housing Authority at the time of the request, the benefits that the accommodation would provide to the family, and the availability of alternative accommodations that would effectively meet the family's disability-related needs.

If the Columbus Housing Authority denies a request for an accommodation because there is no relationship, or nexus, found between the disability and the requested accommodation, the notice will inform the family of the right to appeal the decision through an informal hearing (if applicable) or the grievance process.

If the Housing Authority denies a request for an accommodation because it is not reasonable (it would impose an undue financial and administrative burden or fundamentally alter the nature of the Housing Authority's operations), the Housing Authority will discuss with the family whether an alternative accommodation could

effectively address the family's disability-related needs without a fundamental alteration to the public housing program and without imposing an undue financial and administrative burden.

If the Housing Authority believes that the family has failed to identify a reasonable alternative accommodation after interactive discussion and negotiation, the Columbus Housing Authority will notify the family, in writing, of its determination within 10 business days from the date of the most recent discussion or communication with the family. The notice will inform the family of the right to appeal the decision through an informal hearing (if applicable) or the grievance process.

Revised and approved by Board Action: April 13, 2010