

Dear LVCIL Community:

LVCIL has partnered with the PA Human Relations Commission (PHRC) to bring you important news about housing discrimination and your fair housing rights. Last year, 28,181 complaints of housing discrimination were filed with local, state and federal agencies across the nation. Discrimination based on disability accounted for more than 55 percent of the complaints filed. This newsletter is your source for information regarding housing discrimination and your rights. I encourage you to read and, if appropriate, act on the information in this newsletter.*

- Amy C. Beck, LSW, Executive Director

**National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA)'s 2017 Fair Housing Trends Report. The Case for Fair Housing*

What is the PHRC and What Do They Do?

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) is the state agency that protects people's civil rights. PHRC enforces laws that ensure all people are treated equally in the areas of employment, **housing**, commercial property, public accommodation and education. If someone believes they are being treated differently based on their protected class (sex, color, age, religion, national origin, ancestry, disability, familial status, retaliation or having a GED) they can file complaints with the PHRC.

Potential Remedies Available in Housing Discrimination Cases

- Ability to lease or rent a desired property
- Modify a housing unit or area around the building
- Provide reasonable accommodations like accessible parking or allowing a support animal on the premises
- Change the terms of the housing agreement
- Stop an eviction
- Receive money for humiliation and embarrassment

Reasonable Accommodation vs. Reasonable Modification

A **reasonable accommodation** is a change to a normal practice, rule or policy that can be made to allow a person with a disability to obtain and/or enjoy their housing. An example of this would be allowing a tenant who receives disability payments on the 15th of the month to pay his/her rent at that time even though everyone else's rent is due on the first of the month.

A **reasonable modification** is a physical change that could be made to the property to allow a person with a disability to safely live there. An example of this would be adding grab bars to a shower or lowering a thermostat control.

If the property owner receives federal funding, he/she is financially responsible for making these modifications.

If the property owner does not receive federal funding then the tenant may be responsible for paying for the modifications. In this case, the tenant would also be responsible for restoring the housing unit back to the original state when he/she vacates the property.

Service or Support Animals

In Pennsylvania, anyone with a disability has the right to have a support or service animal so long as it is directly related to the person's disability. The term "animal" is used because a service or support animal does not just apply to "dogs."

A person with a disability cannot be charged a pet fee for a service or support animal because the animal is not considered a pet, nor can a person with a disability be denied a service or support animal because of its breed or weight. The animal is considered an extension of the person so the animal is permitted to go or be wherever the person is so long as the person maintains control of the animal at all times.

A landlord may require a person with a disability to provide a note from his/her medical provider stating the need for the animal and its relationship to the disability.