



Get the facts!

Domestic Violence Is a Fair Housing Issue

Nationwide statistics show that a woman is abused every 10 seconds, and four women die each day at the hands of their husbands or partners. Since women have a greater risk of being the victim of domestic violence, the Federal Fair Housing Act protects women from housing discrimination based upon their sex when they are victims of domestic violence.

The Federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability, race, color, national origin, religion, sex, or familial status. In addition, Illinois protects individuals from housing discrimination on the basis of age, marital status, sexual orientation, order of protection status, ancestry, or military discharge status. Cook County adds source of income and housing status as protected classes.

What does housing discrimination due to domestic violence look like?

- A landlord tells a female domestic violence victim that he does not accept women with a history of domestic violence as tenants because they always go back to the men who abuse them.
- After learning that a woman is a victim of domestic violence, a landlord applies new rules to her that are not applicable to other tenants.
- Zero tolerance policies under which the entire household is evicted for the domestic violence reported to the police are discriminatory because women will be disproportionately affected.

Do I have any additional protections?

You may break your lease because of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, if you face a credible imminent threat of harm on the premises even if your abuser is in the household. You must give the landlord written notice within three days of formally moving out. Remove all your belongings and turn over your keys to your landlord or property



manager. This shows that you have given up the apartment. You do not need to provide third party proof to use this provision – your statement alone of future harm is sufficient. Sexual assault survivors can also end their lease within 90 days of a sexual assault occurring on the premises, even if there is no imminent threat of future harm. To use the 90 day provision, you must show third party proof. (IL Safe Homes Act)

You can also request an emergency lock change if there is an imminent threat of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking against you on the premises. If the abuser is on the lease or you have an oral lease, your written request (signed by all tenants to the lease except the abuser) for a lock change must be accompanied by a Plenary Order of Protection providing you with exclusive possession. If the abuser is not on the lease, your written request for an emergency lock change (signed by all tenants on the lease) must be accompanied by some form of third party proof. (IL Safe Homes Act)

You cannot be evicted from rental housing due to the fact that you are a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. (IL Forcible Entry and Detainer Act)

You cannot be denied admission to or evicted from public housing, project-based Section 8 housing, or the Housing Choice Voucher program because you are a survivor of domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking or due to an incident of violence. (Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 2005)

A landlord or PHA must keep your information confidential. (VAWA)

Voucher recipients may keep their voucher and move to another jurisdiction to keep themselves or a household member safe from domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking. (VAWA)

What can I do if I have been discriminated against?

If you believe you are the victim of housing discrimination, or would simply like to gain a better understanding of your fair housing rights and responsibilities, contact Open Communities at (847) 501-5760 or email info@open-communities.org. This service is free and confidential. You can also contact the Shriver Center at (312) 263-3830 for specific questions related to fair housing and domestic violence.

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Open Communities is a leading voice for housing, economic and social justice in north suburban Chicago, working to promote inclusive communities that are welcoming to all.