

# Vermillion landlord charged with violating housing act

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A Vermillion landlord has been charged with violating the Fair Housing Act for refusing to allow tenants with children to rent from him.

Paul Hasse faces a maximum \$11,000 fine for telling two women, who said they were seeking apartments, about his "no pets, no smoking, no kids" policy.

Hasse is also accused of advertising in a discriminatory manner for placing newspaper ads in the Vermillion Broadcaster that specified "no smokers, pets, minors or deadbeats," according to a federal Department of Housing and Urban Development investigation.

Hasse said that indeed his policy at the time specified no children, but has since changed the policy.

Hasse said he was ignorant of the law at the time. His eight-unit complex now allows children.

"There's a baby in one of them," he said.

Hasse said he had told the callers he did not allow children, but said they lied to him, since they were not really seeking an apartment. He said that during later calls, someone he could not identify said the complaint would be dropped for \$2000.

"They were trying to rip me off," he said. "They were asking for a couple thousand at first, then they got down to eight hundred."

Bryan Greene, HUD's deputy assistant secretary for enforcement and programs, said attempting to settle such complaints was required under the Fair Housing Act.

"Any landlord who advertises in a discriminatory way is discouraging people from seeing those properties," Greene said. "Testers are private watchdogs making sure their communities aren't segregated."

The Fair Housing Act makes it illegal to discriminate against persons based on their race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability or familial status.

Hasse said he preferred to take the matter before a judge. His court hearing is scheduled for Oct. 11 in Sioux Falls.

For more information go to [www.hud.gov/fairhousing](http://www.hud.gov/fairhousing).