

FAIR HOUSING UPDATE

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UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

The Fair Housing of the Dakotas has remaining on its schedule the following "Fundamentals of Fair Housing" workshops:

- May 24: 1:00-4:45 PM, Alerus Center, 1200 42nd Street South, Grand Forks, ND
- May 25: 1:00-4:45 PM, Ramada Plaza Suites, 1635 42nd Street, SW, Fargo, ND
- June 7: 1:00-4:45 PM, International Inn, 1505 N. Broadway, Minot, ND
- June 8: 1:00-4:45 PM, Days Inn, 532 15th Street West, Dickinson, ND
- June 22: 1:00-5:00 PM, Best Western Ramkota Convention Center, 2111 LaCrosse Street, Rapid City, SD

The North Dakota workshops have been approved for continuing education credits for real estate agents, attorneys and social workers. The South Dakota workshops have been approved for continuing education credits for real estate agents, appraisers and social workers.

For more information on

the workshops or to register, please contact the FHD at 1-888-265-0907 or visit our "Upcoming events" section on our web site at: www.ndfhc.org

RECENTLY FILED COMPLAINTS

The Fair Housing of the Dakotas (FHD) has assisted a number of North and South Dakotans in filing fair housing complaints this year. A brief description of the most recently filed complaints follows:

In January, the FHD assisted a Fargo, ND resident and filed a complaint alleging discrimination due to disability by a Fargo, ND housing provider. The complaint alleged that reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities who needed service animals were being denied. The FHD conducted an investigation which supported the allegation. Pending.

In January, the FHD assisted a Bismarck, ND family and filed a complaint alleging discrimination due to disability by a Bismarck, ND housing provider. The complaint alleged that reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities who needed service animals were being denied. The family had an autistic child whose doctor had recommended a service animal. The FHD conducted an investigation which supported the alle-

gation. Pending.

In April, the FHD assisted a West Fargo, ND resident in filing a housing discrimination complaint when she was denied a reasonable accommodation within the housing assistance program. Pending.

In April, the FHD filed a complaint alleging discrimination due to the denial of rental to families with children by a Grand Forks, ND housing provider who was advertising "PERFECT for single". The FHD conducted an investigation which supported the allegation and filed a complaint. Pending.

In April, the FHD filed a complaint alleging discrimination due to the denial of rental to families with children by a Sturgis, SD housing provider who was advertising "suitable for single". The FHD conducted an investigation which supported the allegation and filed a complaint. Pending.

In April, the FHD filed a complaint alleging discrimination due to the denial of rental to families with children by a Grand Forks, ND housing provider who was advertising "OLDER RESIDENTS Required". The FHD conducted an investigation which supported the allegation and filed a complaint. Pending.

RECENT RULING

The FHD and a Fargo family were recently issued

notices by the North Dakota Department of Labor that Probable Cause was found in two cases involving a Fargo, ND landlord's refusal to allow a reasonable accommodation for a service animal.

The complaints were filed with NDDOL in December, 2005. The parties have elected to have the cases heard in District Court. Pending.

DOJ INITIATIVE "OPERATION HOME SWEET HOME"

"As a Nation, and as individuals, we must be vigilant in responding to discrimination wherever we find it and ensuring that minority families have access to housing." -Pres. George W. Bush, April 15, 2003

Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales today announced Operation Home Sweet Home, a concentrated initiative to expose and eliminate housing discrimination in America. This initiative will focus on improved targeting of discrimination tests, increased testing, and public awareness efforts.

The Department of Justice currently operates a testing program dedicated to proactively uncovering housing discrimination. The program is conducted primarily through paired tests, an event in which two individuals-one acting as the "control group" (e.g., white male) and the other as the "test group" (e.g., black

male)-pose as prospective buyers or renters of real estate for the purpose of determining whether a housing provider is complying with the fair housing laws.

Key Components of Operation Home Sweet Home:

***Improved Targeting: Concentrated testing for housing discrimination in areas recovering from the effects of Hurricane Katrina and in areas where Katrina victims have been relocated. Hurricane Katrina has resulted in a large number of displaced persons, many of them minorities, who are seeking new housing. Concentrated testing in areas that, based on federal data, have experienced a significant volume of bias-related crimes like cross burnings or assaults on minorities. Outreach to local organizations to better target our testing to problematic areas.

***Expanded Resources and Increased Testing: Over the next two years, Operation Home Sweet Home will increase the number of paired test investigations, ensuring an all time high in testing since the testing program was created in 1991.

***Public Education and Tip Lines: A new website devoted to fair housing enforcement will have an online mechanism for citizens to submit tips and complaints, as well as obtain information about what constitutes housing-based discrimination. The new site will be launched on March 1, 2006, and will be found at (www.usdoj.gov/fairhousing). A toll-free tip line will be created for citizens who feel they have been a victim of housing discrimination. See <http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2006/>

February/06_opa_079.html for details.

ADVERTISING LAWSUIT

CHICAGO: On Feb. 6, 2006 the Chicago Lawyers' Committee For Civil Rights Under Law (CLCCRUL), a non profit civil rights organization, filed a lawsuit in federal court against the website www.craigslist.com for publishing housing advertisements which exclude prospective tenants on the basis of race, gender, family status, marital status, national origin, and religion. From July 2005 through the present, craigslist published over 200 such ads from metropolitan Chicago, with language such as "no minorities," "African Americans and Arabians tend to clash with me so that won't work out," "Ladies please rent from me," "Requirements: Clean Godly Christian Male," "Will allow only single occupancy," and "No children."

The CLCCRUL is represented by Laurie Wardell and Elyssa Winslow of the CLCCRUL and pro bono attorneys Stephen D. Libowsky and Louis Crisostomo of Howrey LLP. "Discriminatory housing advertisements contaminate the housing market, stigmatize the people who are discouraged or excluded from housing, and mislead people into thinking that it is normal and acceptable to select tenants on the basis of race, gender, religion or family status," said Laurie Wardell. "Discriminatory housing advertisements reduce the housing available to persons of color and to persons in other protected groups. Where we live determines our job opportunities, our neighbors and friends and communities,

our physical safety and the quality of our kids' education. Housing discrimination injures us all," said Elyssa Winslow.

For over 35 years, the CLCCRUL, through its 40-plus member law firms and staff, has fought to eliminate discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations. For further information about the CLCCRUL, contact Clyde Murphy or Laurie Wardell at 312-630-9744, or visit www.clccrul.org.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The FHD is seeking volunteers to assist in gathering information on alleged discriminatory housing practices. Volunteers are paid a stipend for their time and services and receive training. Please contact Stacy at 1-888-265-0907 or 701-221-2530 if you are interested or want more information.

FAIR HOUSING

The Federal Fair Housing Act makes it illegal to discriminate in the rental, sale or financing of housing due to a person's race, color, religion, national origin, gender, familial status and disability. North Dakota state law also protects age (40 and over) and status with respect to marriage and public assistance. South Dakota state law protects most of the federal protections and also protects due to creed and ancestry. For information on filing a housing discrimination complaint, contact the FHD (888-265-0907), ND Dept. of Labor (800-582-8032) or HUD (800-877-7353).



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