

hud **MEDIA ADVISORY**

Department of Housing and Urban Development – Alphonso Jackson, Secretary
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HUD CHARGES SOUTH DAKOTA LANDLORD WITH VIOLATING THE FAIR HOUSING ACT

Vermillion apartment owner refuses to rent to families with children

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- A South Dakota landlord was charged today with violating the Fair Housing Act for refusing to rent to families with children and for advertising in a discriminatory manner.

The charges allege that Paul Hasse, owner and manager of an eight-unit apartment building in Vermillion, South Dakota, refused to rent to families with children and advertised that discriminatory preference several times in a newspaper.

HUD's investigation of showed that Hasse placed ads in the Vermillion Broadcaster newspaper that specified, "no smokers, pets, minors, or deadbeats." Similarly, when a fair housing watchdog group had a tester with children contact Hasse to inquire about renting the apartment, Hasse informed her of his policy, "no pets, no smoking, no kids." Hasse reiterated the same policy to another tester, and current tenants also confirmed the policy.

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

Housing discrimination charges heard before an administrative law judge carry a maximum civil penalty of \$11,000 for a first offense, in addition to actual damages for each complainant, injunctive or other equitable relief, and attorneys' fees. Sanctions can be more severe if a respondent has a history of housing discrimination. Parties also have the right to elect to have their cases heard in federal district court.

FHEO and its partners in the Fair Housing Initiatives Program and the Fair Housing Assistance Program investigate approximately 9,000 housing discrimination complaints annually. People who believe they are the victims of housing discrimination should contact HUD at (800) 669-9777 (voice) 800-927-9275 (TTY) or the Department of Justice at (800) 896-7743 or 202-514-4713. Additional information is available at www.hud.gov/fairhousing and www.usdoj.gov.

For more information call Jerry Brown at #202-708-0980 or #202-285-7704.