

FAIR HOUSING UPDATE

NOTICE: The work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by funding under a grant with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. The author and publisher are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretation does not necessarily reflect the views of the government.

HUD GRANT ANNOUNCEMENT

The Fair Housing of the Dakotas (formerly the North Dakota Fair Housing Council) was pleased to be recently notified that it had received funding through a US Department of Housing & Urban Development-Fair Housing Initiatives Program-Private Enforcement Initiative (PEI) Grant. The grant period is December 1, 2005-November 30, 2006. The grant will provide services to eliminate housing discrimination through enforcement efforts and also provides funding to educate the public on Fair Housing Laws in North and South Dakota.

The FHD was one of only sixty-one PEI recipients nationwide and the only recipient in North or South Dakota.

APRIL IS FAIR HOUSING MONTH & UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

Mark your calendars: April is Fair Housing Month and this year's theme as announced from HUD is: "Fair Housing, It's Not an Option—It's the Law."

Each year, the Fair Housing

of the Dakotas hosts a number of fair housing workshops and attempts for several to be scheduled in April in honor of Fair Housing Month.

The Fair Housing of the Dakotas anticipates hosting its "Fundamentals of Fair Housing" workshops across North & South Dakota in April and May of this year. Dates have not been confirmed. We'll update our web site when dates are confirmed and also announce in future newsletters.

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 October, the FHD assisted a Fargo, ND resident in filing a complaint alleging discrimination due to disability. The complainant was denied a reasonable accommodation. The complainant was being hospitalized following a serious car accident. Due to the extent of her injuries, she needed to move to Fargo to be closer to her parents while she completed therapy. The housing provider stated that the complainant could not rent the apartment unless she appeared

on-site to view. Due to the extent of her injuries and hospitalization, she was unable to comply with this request. The complainant's parents requested reasonable accommodations for them to sign the lease as co-signors, offered to pay the six month's lease up front in cash or have the lease be put in their name. All requests were denied. The FHD conducted an investigation which supported the allegation. Pending.

In October, the FHD assisted a Mandan, ND resident in filing a complaint alleging discrimination due to the presence of children. The complaint alleges the complainant was verbally told of rules and also had written rules in the lease which were discriminatory against children. The FHD conducted an investigation which supported the allegation. The complaint was also later amended to include retaliation for having filed a complaint. Pending.

In October, 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. In this case, the family was being required to pay a non-refundable deposit of almost two times the rent for their service animal.

The FHD conducted an investigation which supported the allegation. Both cases settled with damages to the client and reimbursement of the FHD investigative costs.

In December, the FHD filed a complaint alleging discrimination due to the denial of rental to families with children by a Sioux Falls, SD housing provider. The FHD had received an allegation of housing discrimination from a Sioux Falls, SD family who had attempted to rent the property but were denied due to the presence of their children. The FHD conducted an investigation which supported the allegation and filed a complaint when the client chose not to go forward. Pending.

In December, the FHD assisted a Fargo, ND family 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 December, the FHD filed a complaint alleging discrimination due to the denial of rental to families with children by a Spearfish, SD housing provider. The FHD had received an allegation of housing discrimination from a Rapid

City, SD resident who had viewed an ad which included the language "not suitable for children" and found it discriminatory. The FHD conducted an investigation which supported the allegation and filed a complaint. Pending.

In January, the FHD filed a housing discrimination complaint against a Mandan, ND housing provider alleging discrimination due to disability, religion, familial status and national origin. The complaint alleged that the housing provider discriminated through the distribution of a holiday letter to tenants which included discriminatory statements about tenants of different national origins and those with disabilities. The complaint also alleges that the housing provider is intimidating tenants from exercising their fair housing rights and discriminating against families with children through discriminatory rules and conditions. Pending.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Fair Housing of the Dakotas 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.

TWO MEN SENTENCED FOR CRIMINAL INTERFERENCE WITH HOUSING RIGHTS

WASHINGTON, DC—The Justice Department today announced the sentencing of two North Carolina men

convicted of conspiring to drive an African-American family out of an all-white neighborhood. Chase Hobbs and Jeremy Kratzer were each sentenced to 21 months incarceration by Judge James C. Fox in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina. Both were previously found guilty by a jury of conspiring to interfere with the housing rights of Deborah Edwards and her children.

"These deplorable and cowardly acts cannot be tolerated," said Bradley J. Schlozman, Acting Assistant Attorney General of the Civil Rights Division. "All American families have the right to live where they choose, undisturbed by intimidation and racist threats."

According to the evidence introduced to the jury, the Edwards family moved to the previously all-white Nine Mile neighborhood of Richlands, North Carolina in March of 1999. Immediately thereafter, they were the victims of a series of racially harassing incidents: a cross was burned on their property, a noose was hung from their doorknob, and a dead raccoon was thrown on their front yard.

Two other co-conspirators pleaded guilty prior to trial regarding their roles in the conspiracy. A fifth defendant, Chance Hobbs, pleaded guilty to obstruction of justice in connection with the investigation of this matter.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation investigated this matter, with the assistance of the Onslow County Sheriff's Office. The Criminal Section of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division prosecuted the case with the assistance of

the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of North Carolina.
(www.usdoj.gov)

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Each year, the Fair Housing of the Dakotas reminds newsletter recipients of FHD publications available free-of-charge. If you are interested in any publications, enclosed with your newsletter is a Publications Form for ordering publications. Please print clearly when completing the form.

The FHD is also in process of drafting a new Fact Sheet dealing with issues related to domestic violence in housing and as it relates to discrimination. We will announce in future newsletters when available for ordering.

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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