

FAIR HOUSING UPDATE

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FAIR HOUSING TRAININGS

The Fair Housing of the Dakotas (FHD) is beginning to schedule its yearly series of "Fundamentals of Fair Housing" workshops. The workshops are expected to be held in the North Dakota communities of Bismarck, Fargo, Grand Forks, Minot and Williston and the South Dakota communities of Aberdeen, Chamberlain, Rapid City and Sioux Falls. Other cities may be added.

Dates are still being confirmed but expect to have the workshops spread out from April-August, 2007. A registration flyer with the confirmed dates and locations will be posted on the FHD web site and mailed to those who receive the FHD newsletter once dates and locations are confirmed.

The workshops will be provided free-of-charge and be open to the public. We will once again be seeking continuing education credits for appraisers, real estate agents, social workers and attorneys. Expect confirmation of dates in late February, 2007.

RECENTLY FILED COMPLAINTS IN NORTH & SOUTH DAKOTA

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 November, the FHD assisted a Rapid City, SD family in filing a housing discrimination complaint against a local builder and developer. The complaint alleged that the family was discriminated against due to disability in the building and sale of new construction. Pending.

In January, the FHD filed a housing discrimination complaint against a Minot, ND landlord alleging discrimination due to disability and familial status. The FHD had received an allegation from a Fargo resident who was denied an accommodation for her service animal. The FHD investigation found evidence of discrimination and also found that families with children were being denied housing. Pending.

In January, the FHD filed a housing discrimination complaint against a Fargo landlord alleging discrimination due to the denial of reasonable accommodations for service animals. A Fargo resident had contacted the FHD to complain about the treatment

he had received. The FHD investigation found evidence that discrimination was occurring and filed a complaint. Pending.

HUD TRANSLATES HOUSING FORMS TO ASSIST LANDLORDS AND MANAGERS

Agency publishes Limited English Proficiency (LEP) guidance: WASHINGTON - The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) published guidance in the Federal Register today to assist housing providers in ensuring that people with limited English proficiency (LEP) have an understanding of housing documents.

The guidance was published in response to President Bush's Executive Order (EO) 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with LEP," which requires all federal, local and state agencies that receive federal funding ensure that people with limited language skills have meaningful access to government programs and services.

The policy is not a regulation but rather guidance. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in all HUD-assisted programs, and its implementing regulations, require that housing providers take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access by LEP persons. The guidance

provides an analytical framework that housing providers may use to determine how best to comply with statutory and regulatory obligations to provide meaningful access to the benefits, services, information, and other important portions of their programs and activities for individuals who have limited English proficiency.

"The goal of the LEP guidance is to eliminate the disparities in access to housing between those with a limited comprehension of English and fluent English-speakers," explained Kim Kendrick, HUD's Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. "When signing a lease for an apartment or a contract for a new home, people regardless of their nationality should have access to forms, brochures and other important housing information they can understand."

HUD currently has discrimination complaint forms in Arabic, Vietnamese, Russian, Chinese and Spanish, and one model lease in Spanish. These documents are currently available on HUD's website for free to the public. In the future, HUD, an agency that offers a Spanish-language website, also plans to translate a model apartment lease into French, Portuguese, Korean, Amharic, Russian and Chinese.

"From the battered immi-

grant women and their children, to the low-wage immigrant worker, to the owner operating a business in an economically distressed neighborhood, language barriers confront so many Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (APPI) and limit their ability to improve their economic situation," said Lisa Hasegawa, Executive Director of the National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development. "Over half of Vietnamese, Hmong, Cambodian, Bangladeshi, Laotian, and Taiwanese are limited in their English proficiency. This guidance is an important tool to ensure that HUD programs are accessible to all people living in the United States, regardless of the language they speak."

HUD will hold a meeting at HUD Headquarters on February 13, 2007, to brief interested members of the public on the LEP Final Guidance and respond to questions about the guidance. The LEP Guidance meeting will be held from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm (Eastern time) at HUD Headquarters, for which the address is the Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20410.

FHEO and its partners in the Fair Housing Assistance Program investigate approximately 10,300 housing discrimination complaints annually. People who believe they are the victims of housing discrimination should contact HUD at 1-800-669-9777 (voice), (800) 927-9275 (TTY). Additional information is available at www.hud.gov/fairhousing. The full guidance is also available on the FHD web site.

PUBLICATIONS

New publications have been added and are now available from the Fair Housing of the Dakotas (FHD): (1) The Perfect Home: Resources and Options for People with Disabilities in North Dakota (available via mail requests) and (2) Know Your Rights in North Dakota housing cards (available on the FHD web site).

The FHD web site located at www.ndfhc.org has several publications online regarding fair housing. Choose our "What is Fair Housing" link to view the list of publications. Publications are also available through postal mail by completing our Publications Form.

SETTLEMENT REACHED IN FAIR HOUSING CASE

In December, 2006, final settlement was reached in the housing discrimination case filed by the State of North Dakota and the Fair Housing of the Dakotas against Alois Vetter of West Fargo, ND.

The case stemmed from a 2003 housing discrimination complaint filed by the North Dakota Fair Housing Council (now Fair Housing of the Dakotas) alleging sexual harassment of a female tenant. In 2004, the ND Department of Labor issued a Probable Cause finding that discrimination had occurred and the case proceeded forward in District Court. A trial was scheduled for late November, 2006; however, a settlement was reached prior to trial.

Terms of the settlement include reimbursement of the FHD's investigative and related costs, reimbursement of attorney's fees, fair housing training, distribution

of fair housing booklets to tenants, posting of fair housing poster and development of a fair housing policy. (Case No. 09-04-C-02924/NDDOL Case No. ND03-12-111)

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).

LEGISLATION

The FHD is tracking state legislation related to housing and/or discrimination in North and South Dakota. For more information, visit the FHD web site at www.ndfhc.org and choose "Legislation" link.



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