



## Fair Housing Newsletter 2017

### **Dear Friend:**

*I am excited to announce a great collaboration between the Northeast Pennsylvania Center for Independent Living and the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission.*

*The CIL and the Commission advocate for the rights of people with disabilities, including the removal of architectural and attitudinal barriers. We also promote the full inclusion of people with disabilities into the community. One critical aspect is equal opportunity to affordable housing.*

*This newsletter is the first in a series we're helping to distribute to people with disabilities, service providers, and legislators. You will learn about the rights of tenants and gain information which can help you fight discrimination.*

*Remember, we can be independent when we do it together.*

*Tim Moran, Chief Executive Officer of Center for Independent Living*

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### **What is the PHRC and What Do They Do?**

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) is the state agency that protects people's civil rights. PHRC enforces laws that ensure all people are treated equally in the areas of employment, **housing**, commercial property, public accommodation and education. If someone believes they are being treated differently based on their protected class (sex, color, age, religion, national origin, ancestry, disability, familial status, retaliation or having a GED) they can file complaints with the PHRC.

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### **Potential Remedies Available in Housing Discrimination Cases**

- Ability to lease or rent a desired property
- Modify a housing unit or area around the building
- Provide reasonable accommodations like accessible parking or allowing a support animal on the premises
- Change the terms of the housing agreement
- Stop an eviction
- Receive money for humiliation and embarrassment



If you think you are or have been the victim of housing discrimination call the PA Fair Housing HOTLINE at 855-866-5718 (or for TTY users only (717) 787-7279) or visit us online at [www.phrc.pa.gov](http://www.phrc.pa.gov). This newsletter was funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

## Reasonable Accommodation vs. Reasonable Modification

A **reasonable accommodation** is a change to a normal practice, rule or policy that can be made to allow a person with a disability to obtain and/or enjoy their housing. An example of this would be allowing a tenant who receives disability payments on the 15th of the month to pay his/her rent at that time even though everyone else's rent is due on the first of the month.

A **reasonable modification** is a physical change that could be made to the property to allow a person with a disability to safely live there. An example of this would be adding grab bars to a shower or lowering a thermostat control.

If the property owner receives federal funding, he/she is financially responsible for making these modifications.

If the property owner does not receive federal funding then the tenant may be responsible for paying for the modifications. In this case, the tenant would also be responsible for restoring the housing unit back to the original state when he/she vacates the property.

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## Service or Support Animals

In Pennsylvania, anyone with a disability has the right to have a support or service animal so long as it is directly related to the person's disability. The term "animal" is used because a service or support animal does not just apply to "dogs."

A person with a disability cannot be charged a pet fee for a service or support animal because the animal is not considered a pet, nor can a person with a disability be denied a service or support animal because of its breed or weight. The animal is considered an extension of the person so the animal is permitted to go or be wherever the person is so long as the person maintains control of the animal at all times.

A landlord may require a person with a disability to provide a note from his/her medical provider stating the need for the animal and its relationship to the disability.