



## Fair Housing & Advertising



Fair housing is the right of individuals to obtain the housing of their choice (rent an apartment, buy a home, obtain a mortgage, buy homeowners' insurance, etc.), free from discrimination based upon classes protected by law. The federal Fair Housing Act and Michigan state law protect against housing discrimination based upon the following protected classes: race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, disability status, marital status, and/or age. In addition, communities across the state have added protected classes at the local level, such as sexual orientation and source of income. Under law, housing discrimination includes discriminatory advertising.

Both the federal and state fair housing laws prohibit discriminatory advertising by making it illegal to make, print, or publish, or cause to be made, printed, or published any notice, statement, or advertisement, with respect to the sale or rental of a dwelling that indicates any preference, limitation, or discrimination based on one or more of the protected classes. Affirmatively, the federal law also states that all advertising for the sale, rental or financing of residential real estate should contain the Equal Housing Opportunity slogan, logo or statement. These indicate to the public that the property is available to everyone under the provisions of the Fair Housing Act.

Here are a few fair housing ideas for advertisers, provided by the Fair Housing Center of West Michigan:

- Advertisements should be free of words, phrases, symbols or visual aids which indicate or convey any preference, limitation or discrimination based upon race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, disability, marital status and/or age. Protected classes under local fair housing ordinances also need to be considered.
  - Advertisements should **not** contain phrases such as, "No wheelchairs," "Prefer white male," "Singles or couples only," "Not for Christians," etc.
- Advertisements should **not** describe people (i.e. prospective/preferred tenants or buyers), but rather only the property and its amenities.
  - Advertisers should avoid using phrases such as, "Perfect for," "Looking for," "Ideal for," "Suited for," "Great for," etc. in conjunction with personal descriptions as the resulting phrase may be exclusionary and/or imply an unlawful discriminatory preference.
  - Advertisements should **not** contain phrases such as, "Married couple preferred," "Looking for two adults," "Great for females," "Ideal for Hispanics," etc.
- Advertisements should be free of any reference to landmarks or areas that could imply an unlawful discriminatory preference.
- Advertisements should be free of discounts or promotions that include an unlawful discriminatory preference.
- Any logos used in advertisements should be free of unlawful discriminatory preference and include Equal Housing logos.
- Advertisements should use models and model graphics in a nondiscriminatory way.
  - All protected classes should be adequately represented in reasonable proportion to their population in the metropolitan area and should be used for all, and not just some, of the properties advertised.
  - The model and model graphics should be clearly definable as representing minority and majority populations and should be represented in equal social settings.
- The advertisements should include an equal housing opportunity logo, statement or slogan. Equal Housing Opportunity logos are available in a variety of sizes and formats at <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/library/bookshelf11/hudgraphics/fheologo>.

The Fair Housing Center of West Michigan is a private, non-profit organization established in 1980 to ensure equal housing opportunity as guaranteed under federal, state, and local fair housing laws. Please call 616-451-2980 or 1-866-389-FAIR for more information and training opportunities. You can also visit our website at [www.fhcwm.org](http://www.fhcwm.org).