



Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California

1314 Lincoln Ave., Ste. A, San Rafael, CA 94901 ← (415) 457-5025 ← TDD: (800) 735-2922
www.fairhousingnorcal.org ← fhanc@fairhousingnorcal.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Caroline Peattie, Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California
(415) 483-7552, peattie@fairhousingnorcal.org

Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California settles two housing discrimination cases and offers free training for landlords in light of investigation revealing high rates of disability discrimination.

San Rafael, CA — Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California (FHANC) is offering a free fair housing training for landlords after recently settling two disability discrimination cases and conducting a large scale “testing” investigation of 111 properties that revealed significant rates of disability discrimination (55%) among Marin, Sonoma, and Solano County landlords, particularly those operating small rental properties.

FHANC is dedicated to ensuring equal housing opportunity. The agency provides education to housing providers through fair housing training as well as courtesy notices when it flags rental listings that include discriminatory language. Of the 62 discriminatory rental listings flagged last year, 29% contained language or policies that discriminated against people with disabilities. Additionally, 79% of the fair housing complaints FHANC received last year were from individuals alleging disability discrimination or seeking assistance with a disability-related housing need.

FHANC conducts “testing” investigations to assess the extent of discrimination in a particular area or to investigate specific complaints. Trained testers pose as prospective renters and respond to rental listings in order to determine how applicants with protected characteristics, such as disability, are treated in comparison to those without protected characteristics. FHANC releases the results of these investigations to the public and, in some cases, files complaints or lawsuits against housing providers where evidence of discrimination is uncovered.

FHANC recently settled two complaints that it filed with California’s Civil Rights Department (CRD) against landlords for failing to accommodate tenants with disabilities. In both cases FHANC initially reached out to the housing providers after flagging rental listings that stated “no animals.” FHANC provided courtesy notices explaining that landlords have an obligation to provide exceptions to rental policies, or reasonable accommodations, to people with disabilities who need such accommodations and that a policy that excludes all animals is discriminatory if the landlord is unwilling to make exceptions for assistance animals. After FHANC sent these notices, one rental listing remained unchanged while the other was amended to explicitly state that exceptions would *not* be made for emotional support animals. FHANC subsequently conducted “tests” at both properties, all of which revealed evidence of discrimination. Both housing providers told testers posing as

A local non-profit helping communities eliminate housing discrimination



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prospective renters with disabilities, that they would not rent to applicants who required emotional support animals. Consequently, FHANC filed complaints with CRD, both of which resulted in settlement agreements in which the housing provider agreed to attend fair housing training at their own expense. One of the settlements required the housing provider to take two years of training, send future rental listings to a local organization that serves people with disabilities, and pay FHANC \$2,000 in monetary damages.

“Both these complaints were easily avoidable,” said Caroline Peattie, Executive Director of FHANC. “We find that discrimination occurs more often at smaller properties, and both these complaints were at small properties. We conducted an investigation to test for disability discrimination in our service area back in 2021 and one of the most significant findings was the extremely high rate of discrimination uncovered at properties owned by ‘mom and pop’ landlords.” The [investigation](#) revealed that properties with 10 or fewer units evidenced discrimination 73% of the time versus the relatively low rate of discrimination at properties with more than 50 units (20%). “This points to a clear need to increased education and outreach to smaller housing providers,” said Peattie, “so they understand their obligation to provide reasonable accommodations under fair housing laws. That’s why we’ll be offering a [free fair housing training for housing providers](#) so that smaller landlords will have the opportunity to learn and understand the fair housing laws they must adhere to so they can put sound, legal policies in place.” Registration for the free fair housing law and practice training is open now on FHANC’s [website](#). ([Link: https://www.fairhousingnorcal.org/events--workshops](https://www.fairhousingnorcal.org/events--workshops))

Peattie noted that a systemic investigation conducted earlier this year tested for national origin and familial status; a press release and report of the findings will be released soon. “We noticed the same pattern as our other investigations: tests conducted at small properties (1-4 units) and medium sized properties (5-50 units) showed the most evidence of discrimination – 72% and 67% respectively – while only 21% of tests conducted at large properties showed evidence of discrimination. We encourage housing providers to make sure they understand fair housing law and run a fair, legal business.”

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About Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California

Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California is a non-profit organization serving several Bay Area counties that provides free counseling, enforcement, mediation, and legal or administrative referrals to persons experiencing housing discrimination. Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California also offers foreclosure prevention counseling, pre-purchase education, seminars to help housing providers fully understand fair housing law, and education programs for tenants and the community at large. Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California is a HUD-Certified Housing Counseling Agency. Please visit www.fairhousingnorcal.org and [submit an intake](#) form or call Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California at (415) 457-5025 or TDD: (800) 735-2922 for more information.