

Vermont Fair Housing News

A Publication of

Vermont Human Rights Commission & Fair Housing Project of CVOEO
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What Is Your Fair Housing IQ?

Lack of fair housing knowledge can result in discrimination charges against landlords

The Vermont Human Rights Commission (HRC) investigates dozens of fair housing complaints each year that stem from property owners not knowing the fair housing laws. HRC and CVOEO both offer free fair housing training or speakers to any group interested in attending training or having a speaker at their gathering. (Neither organization provides legal advice on specific situations; that is why you should have an attorney.) We thought this quiz may be a helpful tool for our readers especially property owners and managers. This quiz addresses some basic fair housing issues and some of the most frequently received tenant complaints.

1. An apartment complex owner, who rents to people of all ages, decides that it would be best to put all families with young children in the apartment building that is near the playground and away from the single and older residents. The result is that when he has an opening in another building, applicants with minor children are turned down. Does this violate fair housing law?

Fair Housing IQ continued on page 4...

FAIR HOUSING TRAINING HELPS EVERYONE

By Rachel A. Batterson of Vermont Legal Aid's Housing Discrimination Law Project

Vermont Legal Aid investigates housing discrimination and represents individuals and organizations in federal and state courts and in Human Rights Commission (HRC) proceedings. Since January 1, 2009, Legal Aid has advised over 100 people of their fair housing rights and has represented more than 50 complainants through lawsuits in courts and at the HRC. We have represented members of every protected class from all over Vermont. Our clients have included an African immigrant family, an African-American man, many families with children, a Jewish woman whose landlord told her that she should "think of me as Hitler," a Hispanic man, and numerous people with physical and mental health disabilities. Legal Aid's housing discrimination clients have received monetary damages and attorneys' fees. Property owners and managers we have filed suit against have had to attend fair housing training, provide reasonable accommodations, and have been subject to monitoring of their later practices.

Many landlords are confused about or unaware of laws prohibiting discrimination in housing. When it comes to housing discrimination, ignorance is not bliss. Failure to understand and abide by fair housing laws exposes landlords to litigation. Many landlords are confused or ill-informed about laws governing the landlord/tenant relationship and real property law in general.

Fair Housing Training continued on page 9...



Around the Nation

HUD ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE ORDERS PUERTO RICO CONDO ASSOCIATION TO PAY \$35,000 FOR HOUSING DISCRIMINATION AND TO PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE PARKING

On September 17, HUD announced that an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) found that a Puerto Rico condominium association violated the fair housing rights of a disabled couple by failing to provide them with a reasonable accommodation and by harassing the couple.

In 2008, HUD charged the Astralis Condominium Association of Carolina, Puerto Rico, with violating the federal Fair Housing Act for refusing to grant Carlos Garcia Guillen and Sonia Velez Aviles the use of two designated accessible parking spaces. The charge further alleged that the Association harassed and intimidated the two residents, who have physical disabilities that impair their mobility.

The ALJ's decision found that the Condominium Association violated the Fair Housing Act by denying Guillen and Aviles's request to use two designated accessible parking spaces that were close to their unit. The ALJ further found that the Condominium Association harassed the couple by, among other things, placing stickers on their car windows and filing a court action to prevent them from using the parking spaces. The complainants said that they "felt humiliated and ashamed while removing the parking stickers from their cars with razor blades." The decision requires the Association to pay Guillen and Aviles \$25,000 in damages and to allow them to use the requested parking spaces. The Association also must pay a \$10,000 civil penalty to the United States.

HUD ACCUSES NEW YORK APARTMENT OWNERS OF DISCRIMINATION

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced in August that it is charging two Queens, New York apartment owners with violating the Fair Housing Act by allegedly making discriminatory statements, including objecting to an African-American individual becoming a tenant in a "white neighborhood."

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits landlords from making statements regarding the sale

or rental of housing that indicate a preference or discrimination based on race, color, or national origin. HUD's Charge of Discrimination, issued on behalf of the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA) and Long Island Housing Services Inc., (LIHS) alleges that Vyacheslav Uvaydov made several statements to testers for NFHA and LIHS that discriminated based on race, color and national origin.

According to HUD's charge, when testers called to inquire about renting, apartment co-owner Vyacheslav Uvaydov made repeated inquiries about the race and national origin of the callers and their roommates. For example, he asked testers whether they were Greek, Indian or Italian. When one tester responded that her roommate would be African American, Uvaydov allegedly told her that would be a problem because the neighborhood is white, and that if he rented to a black person there would be complaints. He further stated that he had received several other calls from "people of different colors" and he just could not rent to them.

U.S. JUSTICE DEPARTMENT OBTAINS \$35,000 IN DISABILITY-BASED HOUSING DISCRIMINATION SETTLEMENT

The U.S. Justice Department announced in August that it had reached a settlement with the former owners and managers of Valley View Apartments in Longview, Washington regarding allegations that they violated the federal Fair Housing Act by intentionally discriminating against an individual with a disability. Under the settlement, which must be approved by the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington, the defendants would pay a total of \$35,000 to the complainant.

The lawsuit originated from charges filed by HUD on behalf of a tenant of Valley View Apartments. In 2004, the tenant, who has a mobility impairment that limits his ability to enter or exit a car, asked to use two contiguous parking spaces in the apartment complex's parking lot until an accessible space became available. The complaint alleged that the owners and managers of the apartments violated the Fair Housing Act when they intentionally discriminated against the tenant by refusing his request and by initiating retaliatory eviction proceedings. The complaint also alleged that the tenant's request was reasonable and necessary to afford him an equal opportunity to use and enjoy his dwelling.

"Individuals with disabilities have the basic right to expect reasonable accommodations that allow them access to housing. This settlement is a significant award for a case involving housing discrimination against a lone individual, and it should send a strong message to landlords that they must take all requests for reasonable accommodations very seriously," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Loretta King.

U.S. JUSTICE DEPARTMENT RESOLVES DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION LAWSUIT AGAINST INDIANA RETIREMENT HOUSING PROVIDER

On August 19, 2009, a United States Federal District Court in Indiana entered a consent order resolving United States v. Rathbone Retirement Community, Inc. The United States' complaint alleged that the Defendants discriminated in housing on the basis of disability in a retirement home for persons age fifty-five and older. Rathbone Retirement Community allegedly adopted and maintained a policy prohibiting the use of motorized wheelchairs and scooters in residents' apartments and in the common dining room. Under the terms of the consent order, the corporate operator of the Rathbone Retirement Community, and the facility's manager, will have to pay a total of \$70,000 to three former residents of the home, establish a \$25,000 settlement fund, and pay the government a \$21,000 civil penalty. The consent order also requires the Defendants to provide fair housing training for employees, adopt nondiscrimination and reasonable accommodation policies, and submit records related to the settlement to the United States for the two year term of the order.

MASSACHUSETTS ATTORNEY GENERAL SETTLES WITH REAL ESTATE COMPANY ACCUSED OF DISCRIMINATING AGAINST FAMILY WITH YOUNG CHILD

In August 2009, Massachusetts Attorney General Martha Coakley's office obtained a consent judgment against ABG Residential, a Cambridge-based realty company, and its agent, Georgina Zala, resolving claims that the company refused to rent an apartment to a couple because they had a nine-month old child whose presence would require abatement of lead paint hazards under state law.

According to the complaint, the couple responded to an apartment rental advertisement posted on Craigslist by contacting an agent at ABG

Residential. The complaint alleges that when the couple spoke with ABG Residential's agent, the agent told them that the company would not rent to anyone with a child under the age of six and cancelled the couple's appointment to view the apartment. Further investigation revealed that the advertised apartment was not de-lead and therefore would have required the property owner to abate the lead prior to renting the apartment to a family with a young child.

The consent judgment orders the defendants to pay \$3,500 to the couple and bars the defendants from future acts of discrimination. The settlement also requires the defendants to attend fair housing training and implement non-discriminatory policies. The consent judgment further requires the defendants to advertise as equal housing opportunity real estate agents and maintain records of those apartments that they advertise that contain lead paint.

"It is illegal to refuse to rent an apartment to a family with young children or to steer prospective tenants away from properties that may contain lead paint," said Attorney General Coakley. Note that the Vermont Human Rights Commission has interpreted Vermont's fair housing laws to contain the same prohibitions.

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT OBTAINS \$134,000 IN DISCRIMINATION SETTLEMENT WITH ALABAMA MOBILE HOME PARK

In September 2009, the U.S. Justice Department and HUD jointly announced an agreement with the owners and managers of Pina's Mobile Home Park in Daphne, Ala., settling allegations of discrimination against families with children. Under the consent decree, the defendants must pay up to \$104,130 to victims of the mobile home park's discrimination and an additional \$30,000 to the government as a civil penalty.

The lawsuit originated from a charge filed by HUD on behalf of a woman who tried to rent at Pina's Mobile Home Park, but was told she had too many children (three) to live in the park. The lawsuit also alleges that numerous tenants were charged extra monthly fees for having children in their mobile homes.

"Limiting how many children a tenant can have and charging extra fees for children are discriminatory, and families are protected from this kind of discrimination by the Fair Housing Act," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Loretta King of the Civil Rights Division. "The Civil Rights

Yes, this is a fair housing violation. First, an owner cannot “steer” housing applicants to a specific area of a housing complex or neighborhood because of a person’s membership in a protected group (sex, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, race, color, national origin, age, marital status, disability, families with children or recipients of public assistance), no matter how well intended the rationale for doing so may be. Second, as the question points out, the property owner would at times have openings in the “no children” building, but refuse to rent to families with minor children. Refusal to rent to people based on membership in a protected category violates fair housing law.

Helpful advice – Never make a housing decision based on a person’s membership in a protected category.

2. A property owner of a duplex places an ad in the local newspaper that reads, “2-bedroom apartment for rent. Non-smoker, no animals. Perfect for couple.” Does this ad violate fair housing laws? Why or why not?

Yes, this ad violates fair housing advertising laws. The phrase “perfect for couples” indicates that families with children need not apply. This phrase is one of HUD’s examples of illegal ad language. Note that, although it is not illegal to say “no pets,” a property owner cannot bar service/assistance animals from their property. If a person with a disability has an “assistance animal” or a service animal the property owner would have to make an accommodation to its no pet or no animal rule when someone with a qualifying disability made a request to move in with his/her service or assistance animal. Service animals are not pets.

Helpful advice – When placing an ad, describe the property and not who can live in the unit. Also since there are a number of names for animals that persons with disabilities use to assist in dealing with disabilities do not treat a reasonable accommodation request as invalid because a person refers to the animal as an assistance, or emotional support or companion animal.

3. A tenant who has lived in one of your rental units for years is in a bad car accident. As a result she now uses a walker and cannot bend at her waist to pick things up. She has asked you if she can install a ramp on the side of her unit because

there are two steps and she cannot climb steps. She has also asked to have a service dog that will be able to pick things up and hand them to her. She has a letter from her physician stating that she needs both the ramp and the dog. You say no to both requests. You think the ramp will create an eyesore and when you asked for a training certificate for the dog she told that she did not have any certification. You also told her you did not want to talk about it any more. Does your response violate fair housing laws?

Again, yes. This scenario violates fair housing laws on several levels. If you are a private landlord and a tenant with a disability requests a modification such as a ramp or grab bars, you are required to grant such a request, unless it would create an undue financial burden or alter the nature of your business. Since private landlords are not required to pay for modification requests and the tenant pays the costs, it would be difficult to imagine a situation when a ramp would create an undue financial burden for a property owner or when it would alter the nature of the business. Not liking the looks of it is not an acceptable reason to deny this request. In many cases the tenant is also required to restore the property to its pre-modified condition at the end of his/her tenancy.

Regarding the dog, assistance animals do not have to have special training to be an assistive aid for a person with a disability. You cannot ask the person what their disability is or for their medical records. A property owner or manager may ONLY ask a tenant to provide a note from the tenant’s therapist, doctor, counselor, or another qualified professional verifying that the person has a disability and that the animal will help address limitations resulting from the tenant’s disability. That is all you can ask. You can require that the dog is well behaved, that the owner clean up after the dog and that the dog has shots and licenses required by local ordinances.

Finally, never cut off the conversation when someone requests a “reasonable accommodation or modification.” You are required to engage in an interactive process with the person to address his/her request.

Helpful advice –Read the US Department of Justice guidelines regarding reasonable accommo-

dations and modifications. (Link at hrc.vermont.gov) These documents are written in an easy to understand question and answer format. Of course, never retaliate against a person for making a reasonable accommodation or modification request.

4. You are the property manager of a large apartment complex. A female tenant comes to you and tells you that one of her male neighbors is bothering her. He allegedly knocks on her door several times every day, even in the middle of the night. He has made sexually explicit comments that are insulting and scaring her. He has left notes on her door insisting that she date him. Once he even blocked her from passing him in the hall. She wants you to do something about this because it is interfering with her quiet enjoyment of her apartment. You say this is just something between two adults and you do not want to get involved. Do you have an obligation to address this issue?

You might. Case law is unsettled on this issue but since you are in a position that can determine whether or not this person stays in his rental unit you may have an obligation to act. Housing law and most leases state that tenants cannot interfere with other tenants' quiet enjoyment of their dwelling. The tenant came to you and informed you that her tenancy is being disrupted. Best practices encourage you to treat this type of disruption just as you would if a tenant were too loud or violating any other rule. Because this complaint is clearly based on sex it can become a fair housing issue.

VERMONT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The mission of the Vermont Human Rights Commission is to promote full civil and human rights in Vermont. The Commission protects people from unlawful discrimination in housing, state government employment and public accommodations. The Commission pursues its mission by:

- Enforcing laws
- Mediating disputes
- Educating the public
- Providing information and referrals
- Advancing effective public policies on human rights

Helpful advice – Document the situation, stating when the tenant contacted you and what you did in response. If you speak with the harasser and give him a warning, follow it up in writing. You may want to also suggest that she contact the local police. Do not ignore this situation. The same would be true if one tenant were creating problems for someone because they were Black or Latino or disabled.

5. A person with a sight disability cannot read the notices you, the property owner, place on his door or the bulletin board because the print is too small. He has asked you to provide him with a copy of all notices in 30 pt type. This will cost you a little extra money and time. Do you really have to do this?

Yes, this is a reasonable accommodation request even though the exact words “reasonable accommodation request” have not been used by the tenant – he does not have to use those words. He also does not have to fill out a special form for a reasonable accommodation request, even if that is your policy. You cannot ask for money from him to cover the extra costs. If you do not grant this request and/or ignore it, he would have grounds to file a discrimination complaint.

Helpful advice – Whenever someone asks for a reasonable accommodation because of a possible disability, engage in a discussion with that person – do not ignore it. Try to reach a mutually agreeable solution that addresses the person's needs.

HOW DID YOU DO?

If you got **5** out of 5 correct, please contact the HRC and you can help us with our fair housing trainings!

If you got **4** correct, you are in pretty good shape. Do some research in the area in which you missed the answer. Call HRC if you have questions about it.

If you got **3** correct, consider signing up for some fair housing training. The trainings are free and take only a couple of hours to complete.

If you got only **1** or **2** correct – engage in some fair housing training ASAP! You are probably violating fair housing law and it is likely you could end up with a discrimination charge against you. ■

RECENT VERMONT HRC FAIR HOUSING CASES

Recent Reasonable Grounds Determinations:

The Vermont Human Rights Commissioners found reasonable grounds to believe that a housing authority had discriminated against a person with a disability because it did not provide a sufficient number of accessible parking spaces to meet the needs of its tenants with disabilities. The housing authority immediately added additional accessible parking spaces to meet the needs of its tenants. A post-determination settlement was reached when the housing authority agreed to pay the charging party \$5000, provide fair housing training for its staff and its tenants, and continue to allocate the same number of accessible parking spaces as the number of tenants with disability placards.

In another reasonable grounds case, the parties reached a post-determination settlement that required the responding party to pay the charging party \$15,000. This charge involved a property owner who did not rent an apartment to a person of color; the apartment remained available after the African American applicant had been turned down and was ultimately rented to a White person.

Pre-determination Settlements:

HRC is always interested in helping parties find resolutions to their situations whenever possible. In the past six months, the Commission approved five pre-determination settlement agreements. These pre-determination agreements included:

- A case involving a mobile home park owner refusing to allow a potential home purchaser with an emotional disability permission to have two assistive dogs. The landowner, after learning more about reasonable accommodation laws, agreed to allow the assistive animals.
- A family who wanted to become foster parents was denied permission by their landlord to add a fourth person to their household because the property owner alleged that the lease only allowed three persons to live in the unit. (The unit included three sleeping rooms.) The property owner agreed to the following terms; to allow the family to have foster children, to designate the apartment as a five-person-occupancy unit and to not increase the tenant's rent for five months.
- A woman who has not worked because of her disability alleged that the property owner refused to rent to her because she could not provide work references. The property owner agreed to issue a letter of apology to the charging party for his actions and to attend fair housing training.
- There were two cases involving tenants with disabilities alleging they were refused their reasonable accommodation requests for service animals. Both property owners agreed to allow the service animals as long as the tenants agreed to follow a list of reasonable rules regarding the care and control of the animals.

No Reasonable Grounds Determinations:

HRC staff investigated four fair housing cases that resulted in the Commission finding that there were no reasonable grounds to believe that discrimination had taken place. The factual settings for these complaints were as follows:

- A person alleged that he was discriminated against based on his color and race when the property owner took away one of his assigned parking spaces.
- A person with a disability requested that the property managers allow her to keep four cats as a

reasonable accommodation for her disability. The property manager offered to allow her to keep two cats if she would properly care for the cats.

- A person with a disability alleged that her lease was terminated because of problems with her reasonable accommodation request. The property owner showed that the lease was terminated because the tenant never paid money owed to the property owner.
- A person who applied to rent an apartment alleged that she was discriminated against because of her marital status, her desire to occupy a rental unit with a minor child and her sex when a property owner refused to rent to her. The property owner provided HRC with a legitimate business reason for his decision to not rent to her.

The full text of HRC settlement agreements and reasonable grounds cases can be read at hrc.vermont.gov. ■

This newsletter is supported by funds provided by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development

ON-LINE RESOURCES FOR FAIR HOUSING

There are many online resources for information about fair housing issues. Here are some useful websites that will provide you with information and instruction.

Vermont Human Rights Commission

hrc.vermont.gov

CVOEO Fair Housing Project

www.cvoeo.org

Click on HOUSING, then FAIR HOUSING PROJECT

National Fair Housing Advocate On-Line

www.fairhousing.com

News, resources, cases, statutes and a lot more information about fair housing issues across the country.

National Fair Housing Alliance

www.nationalfairhousing.org

An organization devoted to promoting fair housing laws nationwide.

Fair Housing Law

www.fairhousinglaw.org

A site with information about fair housing laws and enforcement resources.

National Association of Realtors Field Guide to Fair Housing

www.realtor.org/libweb.nsf/pages/fg705

A guide to fair housing specifically aimed toward realtors.

Vermont Department of Housing & Community Affairs Fair Housing Page

www.dhca.state.vt.us/Housing/fairhousing.htm

A discussion of fair housing as it applies to Vermont communities and municipalities.

Department of Housing & Urban Development Office of Fair Housing & Equal Opportunity

www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/index.cfm

Connects to HUD resources about enforcement of federal fair housing laws.

Federal Fair Housing Act

www.usdoj.gov/crt/housing/title8.htm

The text of the federal Fair Housing Act.

Vermont Fair Housing & Public Accommodations Act

[www.leg.state.vt.us/statutes/sections.cfm?](http://www.leg.state.vt.us/statutes/sections.cfm?Title=09&Chapter=139)

[Title=09&Chapter=139](#)

The text of the Vermont Fair Housing & Public Accommodations Act.

Findlaw

www.findlaw.com

Findlaw is a general resource and search engine for legal issues, including civil rights issues, federal and state statutes and court cases.

Bazon Center for Mental Health Law

www.bazon.org/issues/housing/index.htm

Bazon has extensive resources and informational documents regarding aspects of mental health law, including extensive information about reasonable accommodations and service animals.

There are many other webpages for nationwide, state and local fair housing organizations. Just type "fair housing" into any search engine to locate these other resources.

Removing Barriers to Strengthen Communities: Affordable Housing and Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing at the Local Level

January 14, 2010*

Sponsored by Southern Windsor and Windham County Regional Planning Commissions

**Exact time and location to be determined.*

Designed to provide relevant information to realtors, lenders, affordable housing developers, property managers, and municipal officials, this workshop will:

- provide an introduction to Vermont and federal fair housing laws;
- address the current regulatory barriers to fair housing choice in Vermont;
- examine the legal requirements impacting municipal zoning practices;
- review available tools that enable municipalities to comply with those requirements; and
- explore planning concepts designed to encourage the development of affordable housing.

All municipalities receiving community development grants from the Vermont Community Development Program must complete a fair housing training as a condition of funding. Any municipality dealing with issues such as affordable housing, group homes, residential care facilities, requests for accessibility modifications, or seeking VCDP funding, cannot afford to miss this workshop. This training is free and open to the public.

Presented by:

Ellen Maxon: Investigator, Vermont Human Rights Commission

Julie Kelliher: General Counsel, Vermont Department of Economic, Housing, and Community Development

Kevin Stapleton: Director, CVOEO Fair Housing Project

How to Register – Call Dani Fuoco, CVOEO Fair Housing Project, 802-864-3334 x 109 or email dfuoco@cvoeo.org

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Division will vigorously enforce the law to prevent such discrimination."

"People do not lose their rights to fair housing because they have children," said John Trasvina, HUD Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity.

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT SETTLES RACE DISCRIMINATION ALLEGATIONS AGAINST FLORIDA APARTMENT COMPLEX

The U.S. Justice Department announced in August 2009 that it had reached an agreement with the owner of College Square Apartments, in Davie, Fla., settling allegations of discrimination against African Americans.

The lawsuit alleged that the College Square Apartments property manager, acting under the direction of the owner, falsely told African Americans that no apartments were available and discouraged African Americans from applying. The property manager also allegedly offered to waive the application fee or other costs for white applicants, and told white testers that a selling point of College Square Apartments was the absence of black tenants. The allegations were based on evidence obtained through the Justice Department's fair housing testing unit, where individuals present themselves as potential renters to gather information about possible discriminatory practices. This settlement resolves the government's claims against the owner of the apartment complex.

"This type of housing discrimination undercuts decades of progress in our nation's efforts to ensure equal rights for all Americans. The fair housing testing program enables the Justice Department to aggressively root out blatant discrimination. Housing providers who break fair housing laws should view this case as a reminder that they will be sued," said Loretta King, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division.

Under the consent decree, approved by the U.S. District Court in Miami, the defendants must pay a total of up to \$140,000 to victims of College Square's discrimination and a civil penalty of \$74,000 to the government. The settlement also requires the owner to implement and publicize a nondiscrimination policy and provide periodic reports to the Justice Department. It further requires that the owner's employees undergo training on the requirements of the Fair Housing Act. ■

Many people believe that real estate ownership gives the owner an absolute right to use his/her land in any way he/she wishes. This is incorrect. This type of property ownership does not exist in the United States. Yet the belief of a real property owner's right to do exactly what he/she wishes on or with his/her land is a commonly-held belief about real estate. This mistaken belief contributes to confusion about housing discrimination and tenants' rights generally. The truth is that since the invention of real property in the law, land has been restricted in various ways. Land use restrictions include deed restrictions, eminent domain, rights of way for roads and utility lines, shared use of river or ground water, setback and septic requirements, and minimum acreage and subdivision rules.

Renting a dwelling to another person is a business. Every business has laws that govern its operation. When a property owner seeks to sell or lease a home, specific laws govern that activity. Federal and state fair housing law is one such body of law. Any person who engages in housing transactions—including realtors, landlords, lenders, and/or property managers—should attend fair housing training and should also speak with his/her attorney.

Vermont Legal Aid has represented tenants and advanced tenants' rights throughout the State of Vermont for more than forty years. No other law firm has more experience than Vermont Legal Aid in representing tenants. Ignorance of or failure to comply with the law is the single biggest cause of litigation in landlord and tenant matters. If you are considering renting a home to another person, or if you already do so, you should consult your attorney to ensure that the landlord business is a good fit for you and your property. Not all residences and not all property owners are well suited to residential rental. Attend a fair housing training if you lease, or plan to lease, dwellings to others. In addition to fair housing laws, there are many other laws that a residential landlord must follow.

In its broadest sense, fair housing is the ideal that we can all live in vibrant and integrated communities and that every person can live wherever he/she chooses. Anti-discrimination, or fair housing, laws incorporate this goal and also specifically set out landlords' and other housing providers' duties. Housing anti-discrimination laws require that every person has the same opportunity to have, use and enjoy a home. If you rent or sell housing, not understanding fair housing law could be a costly mistake. Avoid problems before they happen—get training and consult your attorney. ■

Rachel A. Batterson, Esq. is the Project Manager of Vermont Legal Aid's Housing Discrimination Law Project which investigates housing discrimination throughout Vermont and represents victims in suits in federal and state courts and at the Vermont Human Rights Commission. Vermont Legal Aid's work to eliminate housing discrimination in Vermont is funded by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

CONTACT US!

The Vermont Fair Housing News is published twice annually, in the spring and fall. Please contact us if you would like to:

- Receive the Vermont Fair Housing News
- Submit ideas for articles
- Give us feedback
- Request a free fair housing speaker, training or workshop

You may contact us through:
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HRC GOES ELECTRONIC ONLY!

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Limited printed copies available upon request.