

HARASSMENT & YOUR FAIR HOUSING RIGHTS

Federal fair housing law prohibits discrimination based upon 7 protected characteristics: race, color, religion, national origin, sex, familial status and disability. **Under the Fair Housing Act, harassment in housing or housing-related services based on a protected characteristic constitutes unlawful discrimination.** Sexual harassment is one such form of unlawful discrimination prohibited by fair housing law. Harassment can be written, verbal, or other conduct and does not require physical contact to be considered discrimination.

“One’s home is a place of privacy, security, and refuge (or should be), and harassment that occurs in or around one’s home can be far more intrusive, violative and threatening than harassment in the more public environment of one’s work place.” - 81 Fed. Reg. at 63,055 (Sept. 14, 2016).

RESPONSIBILITY OF HOUSING PROVIDERS

Housing providers are responsible, not only for their own conduct, but also for the conduct of their employees and agents. Housing providers must take action to investigate and stop harassment if it occurs. Housing providers can also be held liable for the actions of one of their tenants against another, if it can be shown that they knew or should have known about the harassing behavior based on a protected class and did not take any action to correct it when they had the ability to do so.

The Fair Housing Act covers two types of harassment: **quid pro quo** and **hostile environment**.

QUID PRO QUO HARASSMENT

Quid pro quo (meaning, “this for that”) involves an unwelcome request or demand (e.g., a proposition) and making submission to the request or demand a condition related to accessing or maintaining housing because of a protected characteristic (e.g., refusal to rent or threat of eviction if the tenant does not comply). Quid pro quo harassment can still occur even if a person submits to the unwelcome request or demand. Just one incident of quid pro quo harassment is enough to constitute unlawful harassment.

Quid pro quo harassment may include but is not limited to:

- A housing provider or employee of a housing provider demanding sexual favors in exchange for obtaining housing, reductions on rent, or making repairs.

Or statements such as:

- “If you go on a date with me, then I will lower your rent next month.”
- “I’ll fix your door lock, only if you let me take you to dinner.”

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

If you think you have experienced harassment in housing or in a housing-related transaction because of your race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, disability, or another reason, please contact The Fair Housing Center for assistance at 216-361-9240 and ask to speak to an advocate or email us at advocates@thehousingcenter.org. You can also contact the Ohio Civil Rights Commission at 1-888-278-7101 or online at www.civ.ohio.gov.

HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT HARASSMENT

Hostile environment harassment involves unwelcome conduct that is so severe or pervasive, such that it interferes with or deprives a person of the right to access, maintain or equally enjoy housing. Physical or psychological harm is not required to prove that hostile environment harassment has occurred. A single incident of harassment may establish hostile environment harassment if it is severe enough to interfere with the use and enjoyment of housing. Unwelcome offensive or sexual conduct, remarks of a sexual nature, or unwelcome touching by a housing provider or a housing provider’s employee or neighbor constitute a hostile environment and are unlawful.

Hostile environment harassment may include but is not limited to:

- A property manager uses slurs or derogatory comments about a tenant with a disability.
- A resident deliberately damages or defaces their neighbor’s door because of their race or national origin.
- A housing provider sends a tenant unwelcome sexually explicit text messages and photos.
- Maintenance staff engages in unwelcome touching of a tenant.



**Fair Housing Center
for Rights & Research**

(216) 361-9240 | www.thehousingcenter.org

This pamphlet is intended to convey information. Nothing in this pamphlet should be relied upon as legal advice, nor should this pamphlet be regarded as creating an attorney-client relationship.

© 2026 Fair Housing Center for Rights & Research