



Seattle Office for Civil Rights

Jenny Durkan, Mayor
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What is the Seattle Office for Civil Rights?

The Seattle Office for Civil Rights (SOCR) works to advance civil rights and end barriers to equity. SOCR enforces laws against illegal discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations and contracting within Seattle city limits. SOCR leads the Race and Social Justice Initiative, a citywide effort to end institutional racism in City government and to achieve racial equity across our community.

What is Housing Connector?

Housing Connector is a business to business organization with the mission of partnering with property owners and managers to lower barriers and increase the Puget Sound region's affordable housing capacity. Housing Connector does this by providing property partners with free referrals to ready-to-rent residents as well as financial risk mitigation and customer support. In return property partners agree to apply alternative screening criteria to applicants referred through Housing Connector. What results are win-win outcomes that see businesses meeting their bottom lines and households having a place to call home.

What is fair housing?

Seattle's fair housing laws prohibits discrimination in advertising, screening, and in all housing-related transactions based on:

- race
- national origin
- sex
- the use of a service animal
- gender identity
- marital status
- creed
- military status or veteran
- use of a Section 8 certificate or other rental subsidy
- color
- religion
- disability
- sexual orientation
- age
- ancestry
- political ideology
- alternative source of income

Do fair housing laws allow housing providers to partner with Housing Connector?

Yes. In fact, property owners and managers partnering with Housing Connector are affirmatively furthering fair housing by:

- Affirmatively marketing to diverse and inclusive communities by identifying groups that are least likely to apply
- Removing housing barriers for individuals and families experiencing homelessness
- Expanding housing opportunities for members of protected classes, including families with children, veterans, and domestic violence survivors.

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An equal opportunity - affirmative action employer. Accommodations for people with disabilities and language interpretive services provided upon request.

Do fair housing laws allow housing providers to use alternative screening criteria for Housing Connector residents?

Yes. Fair housing laws allow housing providers to use alternative screening criteria for Housing Connector residents as long as the policy or practice does not directly or indirectly discriminate based on a protected class(es). Housing providers should establish eligibility for housing by verifying that they can and will:

- Pay rent on time
- Care for the property
- Be good neighbors

Fair housing laws allow the use of alternative criteria to allow applicants to establish eligibility for housing. For example, a landlord may agree to use alternative screening criteria for applicants who will be supported by a service provider during their tenancy. Such support can reassure the housing provider that the rent will be paid, the property will not be damaged, and the lease will be followed. So, when partnering with Housing Connector, the housing provider may use alternative screening criteria instead of strict, standardized criteria.

Do fair housing laws allow housing providers to market available units to ready-to-rent residents?

Affirmative marketing promotes diverse and inclusive communities by identifying groups that are least likely to apply and by affirmatively marketing to these target groups. Affirmative marketing also ensures that barriers to fair housing choice are identified and analyzed, and appropriate actions to overcome these barriers are identified, implemented, and recorded. Affirmative marketing strives to achieve a scenario in which individuals of similar income levels in the same housing market area have a like range of housing choices available to them regardless of their protected class(es).

What are examples of affirmative marketing?

Affirmative marketing activities include, but are not limited to, advertising and community outreach that are designed to reach persons who are least likely to apply for the project. Demographic data and community input should inform affirmative marketing plans. Specific strategies to market the buildings vary but may include providing marketing materials in formats accessible for persons with disabilities and in languages other than English. Methods of advertising include, but are not limited to, placing advertisements in television programs, radio programs, newspapers, and websites. Community organizations, religious groups, advocacy groups, and community centers also provide opportunities to advertise to those least likely to apply.

Assistance with applications and adjustments to screening processes or criteria also increase access to housing opportunity for least likely to apply groups.

How can I get more information and support?

Contact SOCR at: (206) 684-4500 or discriminationquestions@seattle.gov. SOCR can provide property owners and managers with more information about fair housing, technical assistance, and technical trainings to ensure landlords are successful and in compliance with fair housing laws.