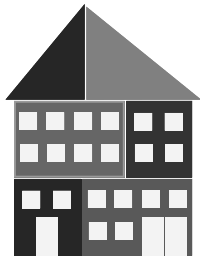


## USEFUL TIPS

What you should do if you believe you have experienced housing discrimination:

- Contact the Fair Housing Project and report the discrimination to us.
- Keep a journal of incidents of discrimination.
- Write down what you experienced, including names, dates, addresses, rental terms, and any other details about your interaction.
- Keep any documents related to the discrimination, including all emails and text communications.
- Following the incident, you have one year to file an administrative complaint or two years to file a lawsuit in court.



## THE FAIR HOUSING PROJECT

**T**he Fair Housing Project of Legal Aid of North Carolina is available to provide information concerning a person's rights under the federal Fair Housing Act. If you believe you are a victim of housing discrimination, contact us for assistance at **1-855-797-3247**. A project staff person will discuss the situation with you and help you to decide what to do next. Your response to us will be kept confidential.

When necessary, our staff can assist you in filing a complaint with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), local human relations commissions, or in court.

### Fair Housing Project

LEGAL AID OF NORTH CAROLINA

**(855) 797-FAIR**

**(855) 797-3247**

[www.fairhousingnc.org](http://www.fairhousingnc.org)

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## HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

# Fair Housing & Religion



LEGAL AID  
OF NORTH CAROLINA

Fair Housing Project



## HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

The federal Fair Housing Act (“FHA”) prohibits discrimination in housing based on a person’s race, color, religion, national origin, sex, familial status, and disability.

## RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION

Housing providers cannot treat renters or buyers differently because of their religion or because they wear religious clothing or engage in religious practices and rituals. “Religion” includes the practice and non-practice of religion, such as atheism, as well as religions that are outside the mainstream.

Discrimination includes refusing to rent or sell, charging more, or offering different terms to someone because of their religion.

Harassing, retaliating against, or interfering with someone who is attempting to exercise their fair housing rights is also prohibited.

A housing provider is not required to provide an accommodation from a neutrally applied rule for a person with religious needs.

## RELIGIOUS ITEMS

People may display religious items or symbols in their units so long as they do not violate reasonable safety or sanitation rules or laws.

If tenants are allowed to display secular items or other decorations on their apartment doors or in windows, they should also be allowed to display religious items or decorations on their doors or windows, such as a Jewish mezuzah (religious ornament on a doorframe) or a Christian wreath or cross.

## ADVERTISEMENTS

Housing providers are prohibited from making discriminatory statements or publishing discriminatory advertising, as well as from making false statements about availability.

Advertisements for housing should not contain an explicit preference based on religion. If the name of an organization has a religious reference (“Roselawn Catholic Home”), it may indicate an unlawful religious preference. However, such advertisements will not generally violate the FHA if they include a non-discrimination policy.

Advertisements with descriptions of properties (neighborhood with chapel) or services (kosher meals available) do not on their face state an unlawful preference and therefore do not generally violate the FHA. Secular terms or symbols relating to religious holidays, such as Santa Claus or St. Valentine’s Day, or phrases, such as “Merry Christmas” “Happy Hanukkah,” or similar do not violate the FHA.

## WHAT PROPERTIES ARE COVERED?

The FHA covers most residential units, such as: houses, apartments, condominiums, group homes, shelters, migrant housing, and long term transient housing. There are limited exceptions for *some* housing. A religious institution or affiliated organization providing housing may give a preference to persons of the same religion if: 1) housing is offered for non-commercial purposes; and 2) the religion does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin. Housing providers that receive HUD or other federal funds cannot discriminate on the basis of religion.

## EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE DISCRIMINATION

*Harassing tenants because of their religious practices or dress.*

*Refusing to rent to women who wear hijabs (religious headscarves) or Sikhs who wear turbans.*

*Calling Muslims “terrorists,” telling them they are not welcome, or that they should go back to where they came from.*

*Allowing tenants to put up Christmas lights, but telling others they cannot put up decorations for their non-Christian holidays.*

*Telling tenant applicants that they will not like a neighborhood because there is not a mosque, synagogue or church nearby.*

*Prohibiting use of a community room for religious purposes, while allowing it for secular gatherings, such as parties.*

*Prohibiting tenants from displaying religious items or decorations, but allowing tenants to display secular or other decorations.*

*Giving rental incentives only to applicants of certain religions.*