



Guidance for Housing:

Protections for Survivors of Domestic Violence

Questions About Protections

If you have questions about the protections or if you may have experienced discrimination in Housing in Pittsburgh, please call, email, or message us using one of the methods below.

CONTACT

 414 Grant St, Suite 908
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

 human.relations@pittsburghpa.gov

 412-255-2600

 pittsburghpa.gov/chr/ch/forms



Protections for Survivors of Domestic Violence under the Pittsburgh City Code's Unlawful housing Practices

With the exception of “federally-funded housing programs, including mortgage programs regulated by the federal department of Housing and Urban Development” (“HUD”), in which “citizenship and immigration status” are specific conditions under federal law, housing providers* may not discriminate against persons because of their “Citizenship and Immigration Status.” The new protected class of “Citizenship and Immigration Status” means:

- “Perceived or actual matters regarding questions of citizenship” in the U.S. or any country,
- Someone’s authorization to be in the U.S.;
- How and when someone entered the U.S.; or “[A]ny other immigration matter enforced by” an authorized U.S. federal department or agency.

Additionally, without exception, Housing Providers cannot discriminate against someone because of their “Preferred Language.” The new protected class of “Preferred Language” means:

- “Perceived or actual spoken or written language or form of sign language most preferred by the individual as means of communication.”



NEW PROTECTED CLASSES FOR HOUSING IN THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH:

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION STATUS AND PREFERRED LANGUAGE

WHO MUST COMPLY WITH THE NEW PROTECTED CLASS PROVISIONS?

The following is a non-exhaustive list of housing providers who must comply with the citizen and immigration status* and preferred language protections:

- Individuals; Corporations, Partnerships, Limited Liability Companies (“LLCs”) and Other Business Entities
- Property Owners and Property Managers
- Landlords and Persons Who Sublet Their Apartment(s) (“Sublessors”)
- Homeowners Associations and Condominium Associations;
- Persons Who are Selling Their Property or Who are Advertising Property
- Lenders, such as Banks and Mortgage Brokerage Services
- Insurance Providers
- Realtors and Real Estate Agents

WHAT IS UNLAWFUL UNDER THE CITY CODE’S NEW PROTECTED CLASS PROVISIONS?

The following is a non-exhaustive list of unlawful acts that may not be done based on someone’s citizen and immigration status* and/or preferred language:

- Refuse to rent, sell, or insure or finance the purchase of housing, which includes but is not limited to an outright refusal and a refusal to negotiate terms
- Make housing unavailable or falsely deny someone housing that is available
- Steer someone to and/or away from particular areas, neighborhoods, or communities
- Set different terms, conditions, and/or privileges on the terms of sale or rental
- Use different qualification criteria
- Provide different services and/or facilities
- Fail to make repairs, delay in making repairs, and/or making inadequate repairs
- Make, print, and/or publish discriminatory statements
- Harass someone, which includes but is not limited to sexual harassment
- Threats or coercion, which includes but is not limited to threatening to call ICE
- Deny a reasonable accommodation or reasonable modification request based on a disability

**See the limited exceptions regarding citizenship and immigration status for certain federal programs*



NEW PROTECTED CLASSES FOR HOUSING IN THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH:

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION STATUS AND PREFERRED LANGUAGE

WHAT ARE SOME BEST PRACTICES FOR HOUSING PROVIDERS?

The following is a non-exhaustive list of best practices for housing:

- Unless the circumstances meet the exception for federally funded housing and HUD-regulated mortgage programs, do not ask about of someone's citizenship and immigration status or request or require documentation of someone's citizenship and immigration status.
- Develop uniform policies and practices, put them in writing, have them reviewed by legal counsel, train all staff and personnel on them, apply them universally, and share them with prospective and current tenants or buyers.
- Never offer a different security deposit, rent amount, or other services/terms to people based on their immigration/citizenship status or preferred language. Requiring only certain groups to provide information like their social security number is discriminatory. Proactively have documents, signs, advertisements, and websites written understandably and plainly (avoid complicated legalese and words and phrases that do not translate well).
- Proactively have documents (especially regularly used documents, such as leases and repair request forms), signs, advertisements, and websites translated into the most commonly used languages in your business/service area (have translations reviewed for accuracy).
- As much as possible, put all communication in writing in a person's preferred language; If the communication did not happen in writing, then 1) follow it up in writing; 2) keep a copy for yourself; and 3) give a copy the other party in their preferred language.
- To try to ensure mutual understanding and translation, if someone (including the housing provider) has a preferred language other than English, provide copies of all communications and documents in both their preferred language and English.
- In noticeable areas in your regular place(s) of business and common areas of multi-unit buildings, put up placards or posters with statements written in multiple languages that someone can read and use to indicate their preferred language; On things like applications and inquiry forms, give people the option to voluntarily disclose if they have a preferred language and what that language is, as well as to request an interpreter and translated materials.
- If someone makes a preferred language request based on a disability, follow the process in the HUD-DOJ written statement on Reasonable Accommodations, available at <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/FHEO/documents/huddojstatement.pdf>.
- If you have hired or contracted with someone to do something like maintain, manage, advertise, or sell your property, regularly monitor their work and interactions with people (if they discriminate against someone, even if you do not know about it, you may be held liable for it).
- If you are looking to hire or contract with someone new, look for someone with fluency in more than one language, as well as multicultural awareness.
- Take the time to learn about different cultures and languages.
- Offer training and incentives for training for employees to learn about things like language access, working with interpreters, learning a new language, cultural awareness, and disabilities.
- Keep with you at all times a means for someone to communicate with you in writing, such as a pen and notebook or an electronic tablet and stylus (during short, unexpected interactions, exchanging written notes may be acceptable); Before meeting with someone, if you 1) know that person's preferred language, 2) know their preferred language and if an interpreter is requested, 3) have enough time to get an interpreter, and 4) can afford an interpreter, then get an interpreter for the meeting.
- Never make assumptions about people, such as their preferred language.
- Know and understand the agreed upon lease or other contract terms agreed upon; make sure that both parties have the same copy of the lease or contract; and, if the other party loses their copy of the lease or contract, provide them with a copy of the one that you have.
- Keep complete housing files that include documentation of interactions.
- Do not give special privileges to only certain persons.
- To potentially reduce costs and increase accessibility and compliance, work with other housing providers to establish a pool or network of interpreters and resources.