

My Landlord is Discriminating Against Me

Who is this for?

A tenant who believes that their landlord is discriminating against them.

What will you learn by reading it?

- What is illegal “discrimination” under the law?
- What to do if you believe your landlord is discriminating against you
- Where to find legal help

What does the law say?

All tenants have the right to be free from discrimination in housing and other public accommodations.

Discrimination means treating you differently than other tenants on the basis of your:

- race, color or national origin,
- creed or religion,
- sex
- sexual orientation or gender identity
- veteran or military status
- mental or physical disability
- marital status
- family status (whether you have kids or are expecting a child)

Washington’s Law Against Discrimination (WA LAD) can be found at [RCW 49.60](#).

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- ❖ Washington’s state laws are called the **Revised Code of Washington (RCW)**. The most important laws affecting tenants and landlords are found in the **Residential Landlord-Tenant Act** ([RCW 59.18](#)) and the **Manufactured/Mobile Home Landlord-Tenant Act** ([RCW 59.20](#)).
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What does illegal housing discrimination look like?

Discrimination means treating you different than other because of your membership in a protected class (race, disability, sex, veteran status, etc.).

- A landlord may refuse to rent to you or give you worse terms (like higher move in costs or different rules about guests) than another person just because of your national origin or because you have kids.
- A landlord may falsely deny that a rental unit is available after they find out about your religion or your sexual orientation.
- A property manager may give preference on repair requests to “favorite tenants” and neglect others based on their race or mental disability.
- A landlord may deny you a more accessible unit or parking space based on your disability, without showing that it would be an undue burden on them.

Not all differential treatment is illegal “discrimination”

Landlords often treat tenants differently. They may say that one person has to have a co-signer on the lease, while the next applicant does not.

This kind of differential treatment may not be illegal, if it is based on something like your credit score, or a prior eviction record. It may be illegal discrimination, if the additional requirement is based on your race or family status.

Or a landlord may say you are violating the rules in the lease, but let other tenants do the same behavior without punishment. If the landlord is targeting you because of your mental or physical disability, gender identity or religion, it may be discrimination.

It is also unlawful to retaliate against any individual who files a housing discrimination complaint.

What can you do if you think your landlord is discriminating against you?

WA HRC Complaint	US HUD Complaint
<p>You can file a complaint with the Washington State Human Rights Commission (WSHRC).</p> <p>You can call the WA HRC at 1-800-233-3247.</p> <p>Get more information and a complaint form: www.hum.wa.gov/file-complaint.</p> <p>You must file your housing discrimination complaint with the WSHRC within 1 year of from the date of the alleged violation.</p>	<p>You can also file a complaint with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).</p> <p>US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development Seattle Federal Office Building 909 First Avenue, Room 205 Seattle, WA 98104-1000 206) 220-5170 or 1-800-877-0246 TTY (206) 220-5185</p> <p>HUD investigates complaints about discrimination under the Fair Housing Act. HUD takes complaints about discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, family status, and disability.</p>
<p>Some cities also have their own offices to investigate civil rights violations.</p> <p>For example, Seattle residents can file complaints at the Seattle Office of Civil Rights at 206-684-4500 or www.seattle.gov/civilrights.</p>	

If you have a disability, you can ask for a reasonable accommodation.

People with disabilities have the right to equal access to housing. If you have a physical, sensory or mental disability, you can ask for a reasonable accommodation (like a change in the rules) or a reasonable modification of your rental unit. Check out our publication: "[Reasonable Accommodations & Modifications: A Guide for Residents with Disabilities](#)" on WashingtonLawHelp.org.

Get Legal Help

Outside King County: Call the CLEAR Hotline at 1-888-201-1014 weekdays from 9:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.

In King County: Call 211 for referral to an appropriate legal services provider Monday through Friday from 8:00 am – 6:00 pm.

Persons 60 and Over may call CLEAR*Sr at 1-888-387-7111 (statewide).

Deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired callers can call CLEAR or 211 (or toll-free 1-877-211-9274) using a relay service of their choice.

Apply online with [CLEAR*Online](https://nwjustice.org/get-legal-help) - nwjustice.org/get-legal-help

211 and CLEAR will provide a free interpreter.

This publication provides general information concerning your rights and responsibilities. It is not intended as a substitute for specific legal advice. This information is current as of November 2019.

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