

Reasonable Accommodations/Reasonable Modifications **FAIR HOUSING HIGHLIGHT #3**

What does fair housing mean to persons with disabilities?

Fair housing laws give persons with disabilities protection from discrimination that they may encounter in housing related transactions, such as renting or buying a housing unit, obtaining mortgages or purchasing insurance. The Act also provides for accommodations and modifications that allow a disabled person equal access to services and housing.

What are “reasonable accommodations”?

Reasonable accommodations are changes in rules, policies, practices, and the way services are provided in order to ensure equal opportunity to fully enjoy one’s living unit. Examples of these changes would be waiving parking and ‘visitors’ fees for a person who has a home care aid, designating a disabled parking spot in front of a building, giving an oral reminder when rent is due to someone whose disability affects their memory, or allowing service animals despite a ‘no pets’ rule. There are typically no costs associated with reasonable accommodations.

What are “reasonable modifications”?

Reasonable modifications are physical changes made to a dwelling or common area to make the space accessible. Examples of reasonable modifications would be implementing a ramp in front of the entrance of the building, adding a handle bar in the shower, installing an automatic shut-off water faucet for someone who has a disability that allows them to forget to turn off the water, or installing pictures or color coded signs to help a person who has a cognitive disability and has difficulty with written signs.

Who is “responsible to pay for “reasonable modifications”?

Payment will depend of the type of housing and laws that apply to it. If the landlord receives federal funds she/he may be responsible for the modification as long as it does not produce a great financial or administrative hardship. If a landlord is only subject to the Fair Housing Act she/he may not have to pay for the changes that are requested. However, the FHA requires new multi-family housing built for first occupancy after March 13, 1991 be accessible. Therefore, each case will differ.

How do I prove that I have a disability without releasing too much information?

Generally, a landlord may not ask you if you have a disability. Also, you may not be asked for information about yourself that relates to your disability unless you are seeking housing that is designated for persons with disabilities. However, a landlord may ask for proof if you ask for a reasonable accommodation or modification. This proof that you need the accommodation can come from a doctor but does not have to disclose details of the disability nor medical history or records.

How do I get an accommodation or modification?

A person with a disability must request an accommodation. As a tenant, you are responsible to specify the type of accommodation or modification needed. You should make the request in writing and make sure to keep a copy for yourself.

**Questions? Call the Fair Housing Rights Center in Southeastern Pennsylvania at 215 576-7711
or visit us online at www.fairhousingrights.org.**