



HOUSING RIGHTS INITIATIVE

Know your rights as a rental voucher holder!

The Virginia Fair Housing Law prohibits discrimination and harassment in housing based on the source of lawful income you plan to use to pay rent, including subsidies or vouchers provided by federal, state, or local rental assistance programs. In other words, you cannot be treated differently by a broker or a landlord simply because you will use a voucher, or another source of lawful income, such as welfare, alimony, or child support, to cover some or all of your rent. A broker or a landlord cannot refuse to rent to you or discourage you from renting because you plan to pay your rent with a voucher, or any other source of lawful income.

As a voucher holder, there are important steps you can take to help enforce your rights should you be discriminated against based on your source of income. While searching for an apartment as a voucher holder, always:

1. Document where you found the listing, preferably by taking a picture or a screenshot.
2. Record the complete address of the unit you are seeking, including the apartment number.
3. Record the full name, title, and phone number, and/or email address of the person you speak with.

If you suspect that you have been discriminated against by a landlord and want to file a complaint, you should contact the **Virginia Fair Housing Office: (804) 367-8530 or (888) 551-3247 / FairHousing@dpor.virginia.gov** within one year of the date of the alleged violation to file a claim.

Remember, it is illegal for landlords and real estate agents to refuse to show or rent an apartment to you because you have a voucher. While source of income discrimination is very common, it is often difficult to detect because it is not always explicit. See the chart below for common examples of source of lawful income discrimination.

For more information please feel free to contact us at va@housingrightsus.org.

Examples of Unlawful Source of Income Discrimination:

Overt Discrimination	Covert Discrimination
<p>If a landlord or broker says or the rental listing includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● No government programs● We do not take Section 8● The owner of this building does not work with programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Landlord says they have a minimum income requirements that are impossible for a voucher holder to meet (ie. 3.5 or 4 times the monthly rent)● Landlord refuses to consider the voucher amount as a source of income● Landlord requires multiple months of rent to be paid upfront● Landlord requires a minimum credit score regardless of a prospective tenant's ability to pay rent● Landlord or broker says they are <i>"unsure of the policy"</i> with regards to accepting vouchers and then never gets back to the prospective tenant