



The Vermont Human Rights Commission and Fair Housing Enforcement

Presented By:

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April 1, 2025

Agenda

- HRC Overview
- Fair Housing Protections Under Vermont Law
- Common Fair Housing Cases
- HRC Fair Housing Data - FY24 and FY25
- Fair Housing Enforcement

HRC Overview

Our Mission

The Mission of the HRC is to promote full civil and human rights. The HRC seeks to protect people from discrimination by investigating complaints, helping to resolve complaints, filing lawsuits, and educating the public.

State Agency

The HRC is an independent agency of the State of Vermont, consisting of 7 employees. About 90% of our funding comes from the General Fund and the other 10% is federally funded through a HUD contract.

Our website: www.hrc.vermont.gov

State Law

Anti-Discrimination Protections



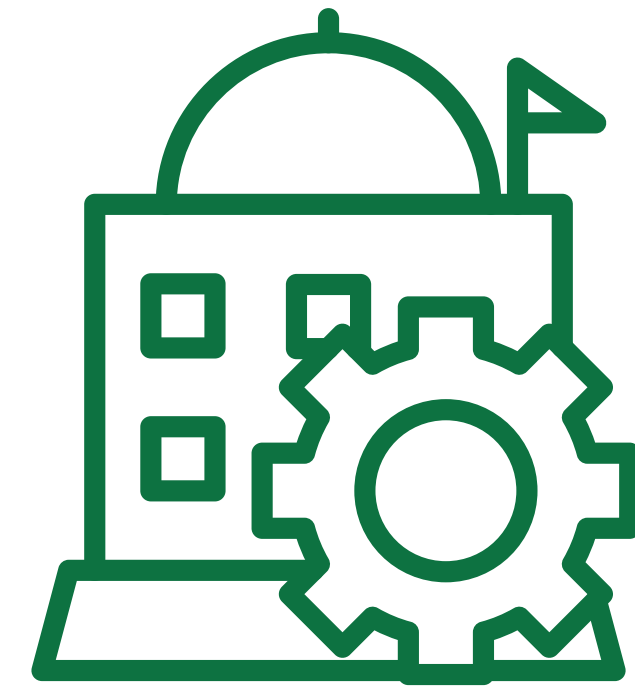
Fair Housing

9 V.S.A. § 4503



Public Accommodations

9 V.S.A. § 4502



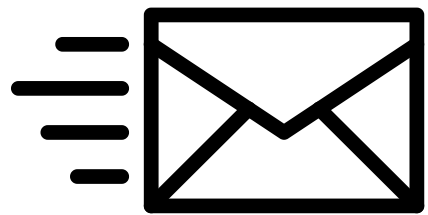
Employment

21 V.S.A. § 495 et seq.

The HRC Complaint Process

Complaints can be resolved any time throughout the process

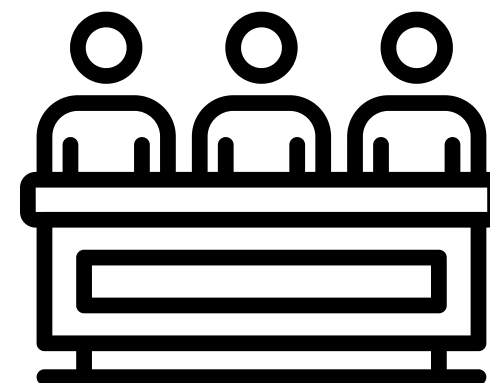
Intake



Investigation



Commission Meetings



Litigation





Fair Housing Law

“Unfair housing practices” happen when someone is treated differently or unfairly because they are a member of a legally protected category.

See 9 V.S.A. § 4503

Legally Protected Categories

- Disability
- Race and Color
- National Origin
- Religion
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity
- Marital Status
- Age
- Having Children
- Receiving Public Assistance
- Victims of Domestic and Sexual Abuse



Common Fair Housing Complaints

- Disability Discrimination - Reasonable Accommodations
- Race/Color Discrimination - Disparate Treatment
- Harassment/Hostile Housing Environment - Based on race, color, disability, sex
- Retaliation - After asserting rights under the Fair Housing Act
- Refusal to rent - Based on receipt of public assistance

The HRC will often refer to HUD's guidance and documents when interpreting Vermont's Fair Housing law.

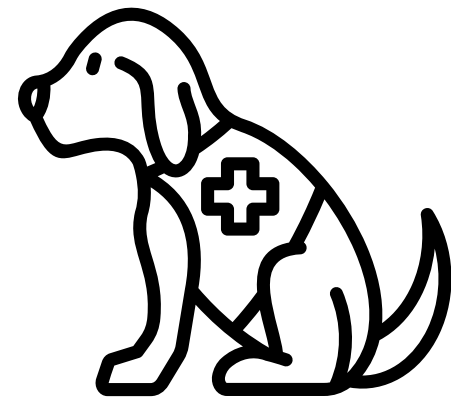
Defining Reasonable Accommodations in Housing:

A change to any rule, practice, or service that is needed to give a person with a disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling

Common Reasonable Accommodations Requests in Housing



A request to be assigned an accessible parking spot



A request to be allowed to have a service dog in a building that has a “no dogs” policy



A waiver of a “pet fee” for an emotional support animal



A request that communications from the landlord be made in writing

Fair Housing Complaints are on the rise

- At least half of all our inquiries relate to fair housing
- In FY24, the Commission heard 16 fair housing cases, and 7 of those had “reasonable grounds”
- So far in FY 25:
 - we logged 97 new fair housing intakes so far in FY25
 - 17 of those have become complaints (12 active investigations)
 - we have heard or closed 22 fair housing complaints, and 7 of those have had “reasonable grounds”
 - HRC currently has 48 housing cases open – 33 of those are actively being investigated

Fair Housing Discrimination Enforcement

- HRC has 11 cases currently filed in Superior Court involving fair housing discrimination.
- These are all cases in which the HRC determined that there were “reasonable grounds to believe discrimination occurred” and attempts to resolve the complaint through conciliation were unsuccessful
- They involve primarily landlords, owners, and property managers
- Most cases involve more than one legally protected category
- Many allege disability discrimination and denial of housing based on receipt of public assistance, as well as race, color, and sex
- Some allege retaliation as well as discrimination