Your Rights to Fair Housing in Seattle

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City of Seattle’s Housing Protections - Selected

- Require landlords to cooperate with subsidy programs, and to accept written pledges of payments within 5 days from subsidy programs to settle bills.

- Set new requirements for the way landlords screen housing applicants for income.

- Set new “first-in-time” rules for applicants, requiring landlords to take the first qualified applicant who meets their screening criteria.
Landlords Must Accept Written Pledges of Payments from Subsidy Programs Pay Rent

- No Seattle landlord can discriminate against someone who uses a short-term subsidy.

- No Seattle landlord can refuse to rent to someone simply because they are using a short term subsidy to pay for rent.

- No Seattle landlord can offer different terms to a person who uses a short term subsidy to pay for rent.
Sources of Income to Pay Your Rent

- Payment for rent – no longer limited to WAGES from employment

- Any short or long term subsidy offered by a government program, a private nonprofit, or any other assistance program that pays all or part of a tenant’s rent (via direct arrangement between the program that is paying and the owner/lessor of the property)
Examples of Sources of Income to Pay Rent

- Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8)
- US Housing & Urban Development-Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers
- Housing & Essential Needs (HEN) funds
- Short-term Assistance provided by Rapid Rehousing subsidies
- Social Security Benefits
- Unemployment Benefits
- Child Support
- Retirement programs
- The Aged, Blind or Disabled Case Assistance Program
- Refugee Cash Assistance
Requirements Concerning Income Screening Criteria

- Landlords can still require income screening criteria to determine a possible renter’s eligibility for renting a house or property, but it must be applied to the tenant’s portion of the rent (not the entire monthly rent).

- Of the example below, only Person one meets the landlord requirement to have income that is equal to \( 3 \times \) the tenant’s portion of the rent?

Monthly rent = $1200/month
- - Housing Subsidy = $949/month
- = Tenant’s portion = $251/month (3 x $251 = $753)

- Person 1
  - Employment = $600/month
  + State subsidy = $332/month
  = Total income = $992/month

- Person 2
  - Employment = $600/month
  - State subsidy = $100/month
  = Total income = $700/month
Landlord Must Accept Pledge from a Subsidy Program for Payment of a Tenant’s Delinquent Housing Costs

But the pledge must meet 4 requirements:

1. The pledge, in addition to any verifiable source of income and subsidy amount, must be large enough to make the tenant current on all housing costs owed by the tenant.

2. The pledge must be received prior to the expiration or issuance of a 3-day or 10-day notice.

3. The pledge cannot commit the landlord to any additional conditions.

4. The subsidy program must commit to paying the pledge within 5 days.
“First-in-time, First-in-line” Requirements

- Landlords must offer tenancy to the first qualified applicant who submits a completed application. The landlord is also required to provide the applicant with 48 hours to accept tenancy.

- Landlords must provide notice of their screening criteria to prospective tenants.

- The ordinance requires that landlords screen completed applications in chronological order.
Enforcement of Fair Housing Rules in Seattle

For Complaints

- City of Seattle Office for Civil Rights (SOCR)
- Call 206-684-4500 or go to
- http://www.seattle.gov/civilrights/file-complaint

Possible Remedies if Violation of Rules by Housing Provider Determined

- Elimination of the unfair practice
- Rent refunds or credits
- Reinstatement of tenancy
- Payment for damages associated with the discrimination
- Reasonable attorney fees or costs
FAQ: Alternative Source of Income, Subsidies, and Preferred Employer Programs

For more information about Alternative Source of Income, Subsidies, and Preferred Employer Programs, go to:


Or the City of Seattle Office of Civil Rights/Fair Housing