

FACT SHEET: FAIR HOUSING FOR REFUGEES

When people are denied housing, mortgages, or insurance because of their national origin, it's not just a personal insult. It also makes our neighborhoods less diverse and welcoming, and it can force people into housing that may not meet their needs.

Fair housing means everyone should have an equal opportunity to choose housing that meets their needs. Discrimination is illegal in housing transactions including rental, sales, lending and insurance. The Fair Housing Act and state and local laws protect people from discrimination in housing based on the following protected classes: race, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status, disability, marital status and age.

While refugees are not a specific protected class, the protections against housing discrimination on the basis of **national origin** often may extend to refugees. On October 2, 2012, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) affirmed their commitment to protect fair housing choice for refugees when they announced the resolution of a housing discrimination complaint against a housing provider who allegedly failed to renew the leases of three Burmese families because of their national origin, and instituted an alleged policy to no longer accept rental referrals for refugees. "America's protection of refugees fleeing from persecution from abroad includes ensuring protection against housing discrimination here," said John Trasviña, HUD's Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity.

Further, because refugees are not a specific protected class, the law does not specifically prohibit housing providers from making exceptions to their policies or practices to work with refugee resettlement programs to ensure equal housing opportunity for persons seeking to resettle in the United States. Such exceptions might include a consistent policy of waiving credit requirements to allow a lease for refugees working with a resettlement program, or to allow for shorter lease terms due to resettlement program requirements or restrictions.

The Fair Housing Center acknowledges that this may be a new or complex area for housing providers; therefore, please feel free to contact us with any questions.



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SIGNS OF POSSIBLE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST REFUGEES

- Refusing to rent or sell because of a refugee's national origin
- Restricting refugees to a certain floor or area of a complex
- Charging extra fees or higher rent to refugees
- Imposing or enforcing rules more strictly against refugees
- Telling a refugee that they won't be safe or that the neighborhood is not "right" for them
- Evicting a refugee family, or not renewing a lease, for reasons that non-refugee families are allowed to stay