

# Be an Informed Renter!

## Know your rights

### General information to know before renting an apartment

There are some basic questions that all renters should make sure they ask before deciding to enter into a lease agreement.

- What is the **rental rate** for the apartment that I am interested in and are **any utilities** (gas, electric, water, trash, cable, phone, lawn care, snow removal) **included**?
- Is a **security deposit** and/or **application fee** required? Are they **refundable** at the end of the lease or if my application is denied?
- What does the **application process** entail? Do you require a credit report, criminal background check, income verification, or previous landlord references? Do you have income requirements? If I am a first time renter, or don't meet your minimum income or credit requirements, will you accept a **co-signer**?
- What options are available for the **length of the lease**? Do you offer 6 or 9 month lease options in addition to 12 month leases?
- Are there **any extra fees**, above and beyond the rental rate and utility costs, such as fees for carports or association fees?
- Are you currently offering any rental **specials or incentives**?

### Knowing and ensuring your fair housing rights



#### What is fair housing?

Fair housing is the right of an individual to obtain the housing of their choice free from discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability, familial status (presence of children under the age of 18 in the home or pregnancy), age or marital status (whether or not a couple seeking to live together is married).

#### Possible signs of housing discrimination

- Offering different terms to different people
  - "For people under the age of 25, we require double the security deposit"
- A statement that a dwelling is "not right" for you or your family
  - "This neighborhood is mainly families and elderly people. Are you sure you would be comfortable here?"
- Terms or availability change between a phone contact and an in-person visit
  - "I'm sorry. I had someone come in after we spoke yesterday. The unit is no longer available."
- You are directed only to certain floors or buildings
  - "Families with children can only rent units on the first floor."
- You are harassed or intimidated
  - "People like you are not welcome here"



#### Where can I find more information?

If you have additional questions about your fair housing rights, please contact the **Fair Housing Center of West Michigan** at (616) 451-2980 or [contact-us@fhcwm.org](mailto:contact-us@fhcwm.org). Visit our website, [www.fhcwm.org](http://www.fhcwm.org).