



# CITY OF SOMERVILLE FAIR HOUSING FACT SHEET FOR TENANTS



**The Fair Housing Act of 1968 prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental, or finance of housing. This includes individuals seeking a mortgage, housing assistance & housing related activities.**

The Fair Housing Act and the City of Somerville protect members of the following protected classes: race, color, creed, religion, sex, handicap, children, family status, marital status, sexual preference, source of income (Section 8), military status, age, ancestry and/or national origin

It is illegal for owners, real estate brokers, lenders, or agents to treat persons differently based on either their perceived or actual membership of a protected class. Fair housing law applies to both home ownership and rentals.

**If you believe you have been discriminated against or would like more information on your housing rights:**

- Contact City of Somerville Program Specialist by email at [hsteinhart@Somervillema.gov](mailto:hsteinhart@Somervillema.gov), by phone at 617-625-6600 x2584, or in person at 50 Evergreen Ave Somerville MA
- File a complaint with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD): <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-commission-against-discrimination>
- File a complaint with the U.S. Dept. of housing & Urban Development (HUD): <https://www.hud.gov/fairhousing/fileacomplaint>

**See the next slide for frequently asked questions and more information...**



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## Common Questions:

**Q: How can I ask for a reasonable accommodation or modification for a disability?**

A: Ask in writing. A reasonable accommodation is a change to a policy, practice, or service to allow equal opportunity in housing for persons with disabilities. A reasonable modification is a physical alteration or waiver to a unit or common use area to allow a person with a disability greater accessibility and use of the premises.

Service dogs and emotional support animals cannot be refused except in cases of conflicting reasonable access needs.

**Q: I just told my landlord I will be having a child, and he told me he will not be renewing my lease. The building in which I am renting has not been de-leaded. Is this a violation of my rights?**

A: Yes, Massachusetts law requires landlords to remove lead paint from any unit where a child under 6 lives. The landlord also cannot refuse to rent to you because the apartment has lead paint.

**Q: Someone is threatening to report me to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) if I assert my housing rights. Do I need to disclose my immigration status when making a fair housing complaint?**

A: Fair Housing investigative agencies such as HUD and MCAD do not ask about immigration status.

**Q: What if a landlord or broker tells me that they do not accept rental assistance vouchers such as RAFT or Section 8?**

A: That is a fair housing violation, it is illegal under Massachusetts law to discriminate against persons receiving public assistance such as welfare, SNAP, or rental assistance

**Q: I believe I am experiencing predatory lending, is that allowed under Massachusetts law?**

A: No, predatory lending is not allowed. It is when borrowers are given loans or encouraged to get loans that come with unreasonable terms and conditions such as excessive fees and high interest rate.