

If You Advertise Housing Online, You Must Know Your Fair Housing Obligations

Do you advertise your property vacancies and sales online on websites like Craigslist, Facebook, Rent.com, Twitter, your company’s website, or even on phone apps? If so, you should...

1) Know what is prohibited from being posted in your online ads and social media accounts.

Although advertising properties is a common practice, the increasing ease and popularity of online advertising and social media, as well as its wide audience, means that you should be aware of your fair housing obligations. Making discriminatory advertisements or statements online may result in *legal liability* and *monetary damages*, even if you did not intend to discriminate.

▪ **DO:**

- State the price, location, features, and amenities of your properties
- List qualifications that all tenants must meet
- Let potential tenants know that you will accept assistance animals, even if you don’t allow pets

▪ **DO NOT:**

- **Discriminate against, prefer, or limit** prospective tenants or buyers based on characteristics like their:
 - Race, color, or national origin/ancestry – You cannot only accept US issued identification
 - Gender identity/expression
 - Sexual orientation
 - Disability
 - Religion
 - Sex
 - Familial status (families with children under 18)
 - Marital Status (single, married, divorced, widowed, etc.)
 - Source of income - You cannot require employment income over benefits or other types of income



For example, the following advertisements are illegal:

\$3300 / 3br - 1734ft² - 3B2.5B Furnished House 95122 Available in Dec. (san jose south)
 - Employment verification will be done prior to signing lease contract.

Discrimination based on source of income

- “Tech workers preferred.”
- “Independent living unit.”
- “Perfect for 2 adults.”
- “Couples preferred.”
- “Looking for female tenants.”
- “English speakers only, please.”
- “Christian atmosphere.”

More Examples of Dos and Don'ts:

Do	Don't
"Tenant must have a monthly income of three times the rent."	"Tenant must be employed."
"No pets. Exceptions will be made for disability assistance animals."	"No pets. No exceptions."
"Small 1 bedroom unit, only 450 square feet."	"Small unit, perfect for a single person."
"Come visit us and see all we have to offer!"	"No yard for children to play."
"Cosigners allowed."	"Cosigners for students only."

2) Train staff who manage your online presence.

- Make sure marketing and other staff who handle your online advertising, website, and social media know the law.

3) Oversee your online presence to ensure third parties comply with fair housing laws.

- If you exercise editorial control over content, you may be responsible for discriminatory or harassing comments made by third parties on your website or social media pages.

We can help you comply with fair housing laws in your online advertisements

Project Sentinel offers free fair housing consultations to housing providers who have questions about how to comply with the law, including questions about whether an advertisement is discriminatory. For those who want more comprehensive training, Project Sentinel is also available to conduct fair housing workshops for groups of property owners, managers and staff (fee may apply).

Contact Us

This joint initiative of Law Foundation of Silicon Valley and Project Sentinel is funded by HUD.



Project Sentinel: We provide housing discrimination counseling, education, investigation, and enforcement services in Sacramento, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Stanislaus and Monterey Counties, as well as in the cities of Fremont and Merced.
 (888) FAIR-HOUSING (324-7468)
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