

Seattle's Source of Income Protection Ordinance



Seattle
Office for Civil Rights

Opening doors to opportunity.

For over 25 years it has been illegal to discriminate against a person who uses a Section 8 voucher to pay for rental housing. On **September 19th**, 2016, new legislation will go into effect that expands fair housing protections based on their source of income to all renters and creates new requirements for landlords.

THE SOURCE OF INCOME PROTECTION ORDINANCE:

- **Prohibits discrimination against renters who use subsidies or alternative sources of income**, such as Social Security or child support to pay for their housing costs. The following actions cannot be taken against a renter based on the renter's use of a subsidy or alternative source of income:
 - ✓ Denying an application for housing
 - ✓ Refusing to show a unit to a prospective tenant
 - ✓ Expelling or evicting a tenant
 - ✓ Applying different terms and conditions
 - ✓ Harassing or retaliating against a tenant
 - ✓ Using preferences or limitations in advertising
- **Sets new requirements when a tenant uses a subsidy to pay for housing costs.**

Requires landlords to:

- ✓ Cooperate with a potential or current occupant in completing and submitting required information and documentation for the renter to be eligible for or to receive rental assistance from Section 8 or another subsidy program.
- ✓ Accept a written pledge of payment within 5 days from a Section 8 or other subsidy program, when individuals and families are working to settle their bills and stay in their home. The pledge must be received by the owner prior to the issuance of a "pay or vacate" notice served under RCW 59.12.030(3) or (4) or 59.04.040 or prior to the end of the time period allowed for compliance in the notice served.

- **Sets new requirements when a landlord uses income to rent ratios.**

If a landlord is using an income screening requirement, such as an income to rent ratio:

- ✓ Any payment from a Section 8 or other subsidy program that reduces the amount of rent for which the tenant is responsible must be subtracted from the total monthly rent.
- ✓ All sources of income must be included as a part of the tenant's total income except when the unit is subject to income and/or rent restrictions as part of a housing regulatory or subsidy agreement.

- **Prohibits preferred employer programs** that give move-in discounts or other favorable terms or conditions to potential or current occupants who work for specific employers.

- **Sets a new "First-in-time" rule. (*"First-in-time" goes into effect January 1, 2017*)**

Requires landlords to:

- ✓ Provide notice in writing, or by posting in the leasing office or building, and if existing, on the website advertising rental of the unit, in addition to the information required by the Fair Tenant Screening Act (RCW 59.18.257(1)) of:
 - The criteria the landlord will use to screen prospective occupants and the minimum threshold the occupant must meet
 - All information and documentation the tenant must provide to be screened per the landlord's criteria
 - Information explaining how to request additional time to complete an application to either ensure meaningful access to the application or a reasonable accommodation and how fulfilling the request impacts the application receipt date

- ✓ Note the date and time of when the owner receives a completed rental application, whether submitted through the mail, electronically, or in person.

- ✓ Screen completed rental applications in chronological order to determine whether the applicant meets all the screening criteria necessary for approval.

- ✓ Offer tenancy to the first applicant who meets all the screening criteria necessary for approval.

- ✓ Those who require additional time to submit a complete rental application because of the need to ensure meaningful access to the application (for example, in situations where a person needs to get the application translated into another language) or for a reasonable accommodation (for example, requesting the application in a different format by a person with a disability), may make the request and the date of the request will serve as the date and time of receipt when the landlord is determining applications received in chronological order.

- ✓ Landlords will not need to offer tenancy to the first prospective occupant meeting all the screening criteria if the owner is obligated to set aside the available unit to serve specific vulnerable populations or voluntarily agrees to set aside the available unit to serve specific vulnerable populations.

OUR SERVICES

- Investigation of complaints.
- Outreach to the public.
- Technical assistance for landlords and property managers.
- Resources and referrals.

Accommodations for people with disabilities and language interpretation provided upon request.

To learn more contact the Seattle Office for Civil Rights

(206) 684-4500

seattle.gov/civilrights

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Hours: 8 am – 5 pm (Mon-Fri)