
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
REAL ESTATE BOARD



FAIR HOUSING REGULATIONS

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STATUTES
Title 36, Chapter 5.1



Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation

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PART I

General Provisions

18 VAC 135-50-10. Definitions.

The definitions provided in the Virginia Fair Housing Law, as they may be supplemented in this section, shall apply throughout this chapter.

The following words and terms used in this chapter have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

"Authorized representative" means (i) an attorney licensed to practice law in the Commonwealth, or (ii) a law student appearing in accordance with the third-year student practice rule, or (iii) a non-lawyer under the supervision of an attorney and acting pursuant to Part 6, § 1, Rule 1 (UPR 1-101(A)(1)) of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, or (iv) a person who, without compensation, advises a complainant, respondent, or aggrieved person in connection with a complaint, a conciliation conference, or a proceeding before the board. When a complainant, respondent, or aggrieved person authorizes a person to represent him under subdivision (iv) of this definition, such authority shall be made to the board, either in writing or orally in an appearance before the board, and shall be accepted by the representative by sending a written acknowledgement to the board or by the representative's appearance before the board.

"Board" means the Real Estate Board or the Fair Housing Board, or both.

"Broker" or "agent" means any person authorized to perform an action on behalf of another person regarding any matter related to the sale or rental of dwellings, including offers, solicitations, or contracts and the administration of matters regarding such offers, solicitations, or contracts or any residential real estate-related transactions.

"Department" means the Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation.

"Fair housing administrator" means the individual employed and designated as such by the Director of the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation.

"Fair housing law" means the Virginia Fair Housing Law, Chapter 5.1 (§ 36-96.1 et seq.) of Title 36 of the Code of Virginia, effective July 1, 1991.

"Gender identity" means the gender-related identity, appearance, or other gender-related characteristics of an individual, with or without regard to the individual's designated sex at birth.

"Person in the business of selling or renting dwellings" means any person who (i) within the preceding 12 months, has participated as principal in three or more transactions involving the sale or rental of any dwelling or any interest therein; (ii) within the preceding 12 months, has participated as agent, other than in the sale of his own personal residence, in providing sales or

rental facilities or sales or rental services in two or more transactions involving the sale or rental of any dwelling or any interest therein; or (iii) is the owner of any dwelling designed or intended for occupancy by or occupied by, five or more families.

"Receipt of notice" means the day that personal service is completed by handing or delivering a copy of the document to an appropriate person or the date that a document is delivered by certified mail, or three days after the date of the proof of mailing of first class mail.

"Sexual orientation" means a person's actual or perceived heterosexuality, bisexuality, or homosexuality.

"Status as a veteran" means a person who is a member of, applies to be a member of, performs, has performed, applies to perform, or has an obligation to perform service in the Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, or Coast Guard; the Reserve components thereof, including the Army and Air National Guard and the Virginia Defense Force; the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service; and any other category of persons designated as members of the armed forces by the President in time of war or national emergency.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 1.1, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003; Volume 23, Issue 22, eff. September 22, 2007; Volume 30, Issue 11, eff. March 1, 2014; Volume 37, Issue 03, eff. November 1, 2020.

18 VAC 135-50-20. Purpose.

This chapter governs the exercise of the administrative and enforcement powers granted to and the performance of duties imposed upon the Real Estate Board and the Fair Housing Board by the Virginia Fair Housing Law. In accordance with § [54.1-2344](#) of the Code of Virginia, the Real Estate Board is responsible for the administration and enforcement of the Fair Housing Law with respect to real estate licensees or their agents or employees who have allegedly violated or violated the Fair Housing Law. The Fair Housing Board is responsible for the administration and enforcement of the Fair Housing Law with respect to all others who have allegedly violated or violated the Fair Housing Law.

This chapter provides the board's interpretation of the coverage of the fair housing law regarding discrimination related to the sale or rental of dwellings, the provision of services in connection therewith, the availability of residential real estate-related transactions, or any other discriminatory conduct prohibited by the Virginia Fair Housing Law.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 1.2, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Virginia Register Volume 23, Issue 22, eff. September 22, 2007; Volume 30, Issue 11, eff. March 1, 2014.

18 VAC 135-50-30. General construction.

This chapter shall be construed to further the policies and purposes of the Virginia Fair Housing Law. The board does not intend that a failure by the board to comply with this chapter should

constitute a jurisdictional or other bar to administrative or legal action unless otherwise required under this chapter or the law. The board further intends that this chapter shall impose obligations, rights and remedies which are substantially equivalent to those provided by the federal fair housing law and regulations.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §1.3, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003.

18 VAC 135-50-40. [Repealed]

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §1.4, eff. December 1, 1991; repealed, Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003.

18 VAC 135-50-50. Scope.

It is the policy of Virginia to provide, within constitutional limitations, for fair housing throughout the Commonwealth and to impose obligations, rights, and remedies substantially equivalent to those granted under federal law. No person shall be subject to discriminatory housing practices in the sale, rental, advertising of dwellings, inspection of dwellings, or entry into a neighborhood, in the provision of brokerage services, financing, the availability of residential real estate-related transactions, or any other discriminatory conduct prohibited by the Virginia Fair Housing Law because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, elderliness, familial status, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 1.5, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003; Volume 30, Issue 11, eff. March 1, 2014; Volume 37, Issue 03, eff. November 1, 2020.

18 VAC 135-50-60. Notice.

Whenever any person is required by these regulations to give notice to any other person of any fact, matter, or event, then such notice shall be written, and delivery of such notice shall be sufficient if the person giving notice demonstrates that he has used any of the following methods: (i) certified mail, (ii) personal service which means handing a copy of the document to the person to be served or leaving a copy of the document with a person of suitable age and discretion at the place of business, residence or usual place of abode of the person to be served; and (iii) first class mailing with proof of mailing.

This section shall in no way be construed to invalidate delivery of notice in any case in which it can be shown that the person intended to receive the notice actually received it.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §1.6, eff. December 1, 1991.

PART II.

Regulated Conduct

Article 1

Prohibited Practices

18 VAC 135-50-70. Real estate practices prohibited.

This chapter provides the board's interpretation of conduct that is unlawful housing discrimination under §36-96.3 of the Code of Virginia. The list of unlawful discriminatory housing practices contained in §36-96.3 of the Virginia Fair Housing Law is to be construed as broadly as possible. In general, the prohibited actions are set forth under sections of these regulations which are most applicable to the discriminatory conduct described. However, an action illustrated in one section can constitute a violation under other sections in these regulations.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §2.1, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003.

18 VAC 135-50-80. Unlawful refusal to sell or rent or to negotiate for the sale or rental.

Prohibited actions under this section include:

1. Failing to accept or consider a bona fide offer because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.
2. Refusing to sell or rent a dwelling to, or to negotiate for the sale or rental of a dwelling with any person because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.
3. Imposing different sales prices or rental charges for the sale or rental of a dwelling upon any person because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.
4. Using different qualification criteria or applications or sale or rental standards or procedures, such as income standards, application requirements, application fees, credit analysis, or sale or rental approval procedures or other requirements, because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.

5. Evicting tenants because of their race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran or because of the race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran of a tenant's guest.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 2.2, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003; Volume 37, Issue 03, eff. November 1, 2020.

18 VAC 135-50-90. Discrimination in terms, conditions and privileges and in services and facilities.

Examples of prohibited actions under this section include:

1. Using different provisions in leases or contracts of sale, such as those relating to rental charges, security deposits, and the terms of a lease and those relating to down payment and closing requirements, because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.
2. Failing or delaying maintenance or repairs of sale or rental dwellings because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.
3. Failing to process an offer for the sale or rental of a dwelling or to communicate an offer accurately because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.
4. Limiting the use of privileges, services, or facilities associated with a dwelling because of the race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran of an owner, tenant, or a person associated with him.
5. Denying or limiting services or facilities in connection with the sale or rental of a dwelling because a person failed or refused to provide sexual favors.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 2.3, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003; Volume 37, Issue 03, eff. November 1, 2020.

18 VAC 135-50-100. Other prohibited sale and rental conduct.

A. It shall be unlawful, because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran to restrict or attempt to restrict the choices of a person by word or conduct in connection with seeking, negotiating for, buying, or renting a dwelling so as to perpetuate or tend to perpetuate segregated housing patterns or to discourage or obstruct choices in a community, neighborhood, or development.

Prohibited actions under this subsection, which are generally referred to as unlawful steering practices, include:

1. Discouraging any person from inspecting, purchasing, or renting a dwelling because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran or because of the race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran of persons in a community, neighborhood, or development.
2. Discouraging the purchase or rental of a dwelling because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran by exaggerating drawbacks or failing to inform any person of desirable features of a dwelling or of a community, neighborhood, or development.
3. Communicating to any prospective purchaser that the purchaser would not be comfortable or compatible with existing residents of a community, neighborhood, or development because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.
4. Assigning any person to a particular section of a community, neighborhood, or development or to a particular floor or section of a building because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.

B. It shall be unlawful because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran to engage in any conduct relating to the provision of housing or of services and facilities in connection therewith that otherwise makes unavailable or denies dwellings to persons.

Prohibited activities relating to dwellings sales and rental practices under this subsection include:

1. Discharging or taking other adverse action against an employee, broker, or agent because he refused to participate in a discriminatory housing practice.

2. Employing codes or other devices to segregate or reject applicants, purchasers, or renters, refusing to take or to show listings of dwellings in certain areas because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran or refusing to deal with certain brokers or agents because they or one or more of their clients are of a particular race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.

3. Denying or delaying the processing of an application made by a purchaser or renter or refusing to approve such a person for occupancy in a cooperative or condominium dwelling because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.

4. Refusing to provide municipal services or property or hazard insurance for a dwelling or providing such services or insurance differently because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 2.4, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003; Volume 37, Issue 03, eff. November 1, 2020.

18 VAC 135-50-110. Discriminatory advertisements, statements and notices.

A. It shall be unlawful to make, print, or publish, or cause to be made, printed, or published any notice, statement, or advertisement with respect to the sale or rental of a dwelling that indicates any preference, limitation, or discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran or an intention to make any such preference, limitation, or discrimination.

B. The prohibitions in this section shall apply to all written or oral notices or statements by a person engaged in the sale or rental of a dwelling. Written notices and statements include any applications, flyers, brochures, deeds, signs, banners, posters, billboards, or any documents used with respect to the sale or rental of a dwelling.

C. Discriminatory notices, statements, and advertisements include:

1. Using words, phrases, photographs, illustrations, symbols, or forms that convey that dwellings are available or not available to a particular group of persons because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.

2. Expressing to agents, brokers, employees, prospective sellers, renters, or any other persons a preference for or limitation on any purchaser or renter because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran of such person.

3. Selecting media or locations for advertising the sale or rental of a dwelling that deny particular segments of the housing market information about housing opportunities because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.

4. Refusing to publish advertising for the sale or rental of dwellings or requiring different charges or terms for such advertising because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.

D. Publishers' notice. All publishers shall publish at the beginning of the real estate advertising section a notice such as that appearing in this subsection. The notice shall include a statement regarding the coverage of any Virginia and federal fair housing laws prohibiting discrimination in the sale, rental, or financing of dwellings:

All real estate advertised herein is subject to the Virginia and federal fair housing laws, which make it illegal to advertise "any preference, limitation, or discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, national origin, elderliness, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran or intention to make any such preference, limitation, or discrimination."

We will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate which is in violation of the law. All persons are hereby informed that all dwellings advertised are available on an equal opportunity basis. (Table III, Appendix I to 24 CFR Part 109, Ch. 1 (4/1/2000 edition)).

E. Fair housing poster requirements.

1. Persons subject to § 36-96.3 of the Virginia Fair Housing Law shall post and maintain a HUD approved fair housing poster as follows:

a. With respect to a single-family dwelling (not being offered for sale or rental in conjunction with the sale or rental of other dwellings) offered for sale or rental through a real estate broker, agent, salesman, or person in the business of selling or renting dwellings, such person shall post and maintain a fair housing poster at any place of business where the dwelling is offered for sale or rental.

b. With respect to all other dwellings covered by the Virginia Fair Housing Law: (i) a fair housing poster shall be posted and maintained at any place of business where the dwelling is offered for sale or rental, and (ii) a fair housing poster shall be posted and maintained at the dwelling, except that with respect to a single-family dwelling being offered for sale or rental in conjunction with the sale or rental of other dwellings, the fair housing poster may be posted and maintained at the model dwellings or at a conspicuous location instead of at each of the individual dwellings.

c. With respect to those dwellings to which subdivision 1 b of this subsection applies, the fair housing poster must be posted at the beginning of construction and maintained throughout the period of construction and sale or rental.

2. The poster requirement does not apply to vacant land, or any single-family dwelling, unless such dwelling (i) is being offered for sale or rental in conjunction with the sale or rental of other dwellings in which circumstances a fair housing poster shall be posted and maintained as specified in subdivision 1 b (ii) of this subsection, or (ii) is being offered for sale or rental through a real estate broker, agent, salesman, or person in the business of selling or renting dwellings in which circumstances a fair housing poster shall be posted and maintained as specified in subdivision 1 a of this subsection.

3. All persons subject to § 36-96.4 of the Virginia Fair Housing Law, Discrimination in Residential Real Estate-Related Transactions, shall post and maintain a fair housing poster at all their places of business which participate in the covered activities.

4. All persons subject to 18VAC135-50-140, Discrimination in the Provision of Brokerage Services, shall post and maintain a fair housing poster at all their places of business.

5. Location of posters. All fair housing posters shall be prominently displayed so as to be readily apparent to all persons seeking housing accommodations or seeking to engage in residential real estate-related transactions or brokerage services.

6. Availability of posters. All persons subject to this part may obtain fair housing posters from the Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation. A facsimile may be used if the poster and the lettering are equivalent in size and legibility to the poster available from the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation. Any person who claims to have been injured by a discriminatory housing practice may file a complaint with the administrator pursuant to Part III (18VAC135-50-300 et seq.) of this chapter.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 2.5, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003; Volume 30, Issue 11, eff. March 1, 2014; Volume 37, Issue 03, eff. November 1, 2020.

18 VAC 135-50-120. Discriminatory representations on the availability of dwellings.

- A. It shall be unlawful, because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran, to provide inaccurate or untrue information about the availability of dwelling for sale or rental.
- B. Prohibited actions under this section include:

1. Indicating through words or conduct that a dwelling that is available for inspection, sale, or rental has been sold or rented because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.
2. Representing that covenants or other deed, trust, or lease provisions that purport to restrict the sale or rental of dwellings because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran preclude the sale or rental of a dwelling to a person.
3. Enforcing covenants or other deed, trust, or lease provisions that preclude the sale or rental of a dwelling to any person because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.
4. Limiting information by word or conduct regarding suitably priced dwellings available for inspection, sale, or rental because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.
5. Providing false or inaccurate information regarding the availability of a dwelling for sale or rental to any person, including testers, regardless of whether such person is actually seeking housing because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 2.6, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Volume 37, Issue 03, eff. November 1, 2020.

18 VAC 135-50-130. Blockbusting.

- A. It shall be unlawful to induce or attempt to induce a person to sell or rent a dwelling by representations regarding the entry or prospective entry into the neighborhood of a person of a particular race, color, religion, sex, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran or with a disability.
- B. Prohibited actions under this section include:
 1. Engaging in conduct (including uninvited solicitations for listing) that conveys to a person that a neighborhood is undergoing or is about to undergo a change in the race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran of persons residing in it in order to encourage the person to offer a dwelling for sale or rental.

2. Encouraging any person to sell or rent a dwelling through assertions that the entry or prospective entry of persons of a particular race, color, religion, sex, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran or with disabilities can or will result in undesirable consequences for the project, neighborhood, or community, such as a lowering of property values, an increase in criminal or antisocial behavior, or a decline in the quality of schools or other services or facilities.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 2.7, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Volume 37, Issue 03, eff. November 1, 2020.

18 VAC 135-50-140. Discrimination in the provision of brokerage services.

Prohibited actions under this section include:

1. Setting different fees for access to or membership in a multiple listing service based on race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.
2. Denying or limiting benefits accruing to members in a real estate brokers' organization because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.
3. Imposing different standards or criteria for membership in a real estate sales, rental, or exchange organization because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.
4. Establishing geographic boundaries or office location or residence requirements for access to or membership or participation in any multiple listing service, real estate brokers' organization, or other service, organization, or facility relating to the business of selling or renting dwellings because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 2.8, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003; Volume 37, Issue 03, eff. November 1, 2020.

18 VAC 135-50-150. [Repealed]

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §2.9, eff. December 1, 1991; repealed, Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003.

18 VAC 135-50-160. Discrimination in the making of loans and in the provision of other financial assistance.

- A. It shall be unlawful for any person or entity whose business includes engaging in residential real estate-related transactions to discriminate against any person in making available loans or other financial assistance for a dwelling or that is or is to be secured by a dwelling because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, sexual identity, gender identity, or status as a veteran.
- B. Prohibited practices under this section include failing or refusing to provide to any person, in connection with a residential real estate-related transaction, information regarding the availability of loans or other financial assistance, application requirements, or procedures or standards for the review and approval of loans or financial assistance or providing information that is inaccurate or different from that provided others because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 2.10, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Volume 37, Issue 03, eff. November 1, 2020.

18 VAC 135-50-170. Discrimination in the purchasing of loans.

- A. It shall be unlawful for any person or entity engaged in the purchasing of loans or other debts or securities that support the purchase, construction, improvement, repair, or maintenance of a dwelling or that are secured by residential real estate to refuse to purchase such loans, debts, or securities, or to impose different terms or conditions for such purchases, because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.
- B. Unlawful conduct under this section includes:
 - 1. Purchasing loans or other debts or securities that relate to or are secured by dwellings in certain communities or neighborhoods but not in others because of the race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran of persons in such neighborhoods or communities.
 - 2. Pooling or packaging loans or other debts or securities that relate to or are secured by dwellings differently because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.

3. Imposing or using different terms or conditions on the marketing or sale of securities issued on the basis of loans or other debts or securities that relate to or are secured by dwellings because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.
- C. This section does not prevent consideration, in the purchasing of loans, of factors justified by business necessity, including requirements of federal law, relating to a transaction's financial security or to protection against default or reduction of the value of the security. Thus, this provision would not preclude considerations employed in normal and prudent transactions, provided that no such factor may in any way relate to race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 2.11, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Volume 37, Issue 03, eff. November 1, 2020.

18 VAC 135-50-180. Discrimination in the terms and conditions for making available loans or other financial assistance.

- A. It shall be unlawful for any person or entity engaged in the making of loans or in the provision of other financial assistance relating to the purchase, construction, improvement, repair or maintenance of dwellings or which are secured by residential real estate to impose different terms or conditions for the availability of such loans or other financial assistance because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.
- B. Unlawful conduct under this section includes:
1. Using different policies, practices, or procedures in evaluating or in determining credit worthiness of any person in connection with the provision of any loan or other financial assistance for a dwelling or for any loan or other financial assistance that is secured by residential real estate because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.
 2. Determining the type of loan or other financial assistance to be provided with respect to a dwelling or fixing the amount, interest rate, duration, or other terms for a loan or other financial assistance for a dwelling that is secured by residential real estate because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 2.12, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Volume 37, Issue 03, eff. November 1, 2020.

18 VAC 135-50-190. Unlawful practices in the selling, brokering, or appraising of residential real property.

- A. It shall be unlawful for any person or other entity whose business includes engaging in the selling, brokering or appraising of residential real property to discriminate against any person in making available such services, or in the performance of such services, because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.
- B. For the purposes of this section the term "appraisal" means an estimate or opinion of the value of a specified residential real property made in a business context in connection with the sale, rental, financing, or refinancing of a dwelling or in connection with any activity that otherwise affects the availability of a residential real estate-related transaction, whether the appraisal is oral or written, or transmitted formally or informally. The appraisal includes all written comments and other documents submitted as support for the estimate or opinion of value.
- C. Practices that are unlawful under this section include using an appraisal of residential real property in connection with the sale, rental, or financing of any dwelling where the person knows or reasonably should know that the appraisal improperly takes into consideration race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 2.13, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003; Volume 37, Issue 03, eff. November 1, 2020.

18 VAC 135-50-200. General prohibitions against discrimination because of handicap.

A. Definitions. As used in this section unless a different meaning is plainly required by the context:

"Accessible," when used with respect to the public and common use areas of a building containing covered multi-family dwellings, means that the public or common use areas of the building can be approached, entered, and used by individuals with physical disabilities. The phrase "readily accessible to and usable by" is synonymous with "accessible." A public or common use area that complies with the appropriate requirements of ANSI A117.1-1986 or with any other standards adopted as part of regulations promulgated by HUD at 24 CFR Part 100 providing accessibility and usability for physically disabled people is accessible within the meaning of this section.

"Accessible route" means a continuous unobstructed path connecting accessible elements and spaces in a building or within a site that can be negotiated by a person with a severe disability using a wheelchair and that is also safe for and usable by people with other disabilities. Interior accessible routes may include corridors, floors, ramps, elevators, and lifts. Exterior accessible routes may include parking access aisles, curb ramps, walks, ramps, and lifts. A route that complies with the appropriate requirements of ANSI A117.1-1986, or with any other standards adopted as part of regulations promulgated by HUD at 24 CFR Part 100, is an "accessible route."

"ANSI A117.1" means ANSI A117.1-1986, the American National Standard for buildings and facilities providing accessibility and usability for physically disabled people, or an equivalent or stricter standard. This incorporation by reference was approved by the Director of the Federal Register in accordance with 5 USC § 552(a) and 1 CFR Part 51. Copies may be obtained from Global Engineering Documents, 15 Inverness Way East, Englewood, Colorado 90112.

"Building" means a structure, facility, or portion thereof that contains or serves one or more dwelling units.

"Building entrance on an accessible route" means an accessible entrance to a building that is connected by an accessible route to public transportation stops, to accessible parking and passenger loading zones, or to public streets or sidewalks, if available. A building entrance that complies with ANSI A117.1 or a comparable standard complies with the requirements of this paragraph.

"Common use areas" shall include rooms, spaces, or elements inside or outside of a building that are not part of the dwelling unit and that are made available for the use of residents of a building or the guests thereof. These areas include hallways, lounges, lobbies, laundry rooms, refuse rooms, mailrooms, recreational areas, and passageways among and between buildings.

"Controlled substance" means any drug or other substance as defined in Virginia or federal law.

The following terms, as used in the definition of "disability" contained in § 36-96.1:1 of the Code of Virginia, shall mean:

1. "Has a record of such an impairment" means has a history of, or has been misclassified as having, a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
2. "Is regarded as having an impairment" means:
 - a. Has a physical or mental impairment that does not substantially limit one or more major life activities but that is treated by another person as constituting such a limitation;

- b. Has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities only as a result of the attitudes of other toward such impairment; or
 - c. Has none of the impairments defined in "physical or mental impairment" but is treated by another person as having such an impairment.
- 3. "Major life activities" means functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.
- 4. "Physical or mental impairment" includes:
 - a. Any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological; musculoskeletal; special sense organs; respiratory, including speech organs; cardiovascular; reproductive; digestive; genito-urinary; hemic and lymphatic; skin; and endocrine; or
 - b. Any mental or psychological disorder, such as intellectual disability, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities. The term "physical or mental impairment" includes such diseases and conditions as orthopedic, visual, speech and hearing impairments, cerebral palsy, autism, epilepsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, cancer, heart disease, diabetes, Human Immunodeficiency Virus infection, intellectual disability, emotional illness, drug addiction (other than addiction caused by current, illegal use of a controlled substance), and alcoholism.

"Dwelling unit" means a single unit of residence for a family or one or more persons. Examples of dwelling units include: a single family home; an apartment unit within an apartment building; and in other types of dwellings in which sleeping accommodations are provided but toileting or cooking facilities are shared by occupants of more than one room or portion of the dwelling, rooms in which people sleep. Examples of the latter include dormitory rooms and sleeping accommodations in shelters intended for occupancy as a residence for homeless persons.

"Entrance" means any access point to a building or portion of a building used by residents for the purpose of entering.

"Exterior" means all areas of the premises outside of an individual dwelling unit.

"First occupancy" means a building that has never before been used for any purpose.

"Ground floor" means a floor of a building with a building entrance on an accessible route. A building may have more than one ground floor.

"Interior" means the spaces, parts, components, or elements of an individual dwelling unit.

"Modification" means any change to the public or common use areas of a building or any change to a dwelling unit.

"Premises" means the interior or exterior spaces, parts, components, or elements of a building, including individual dwelling units and the public and common use areas of a building.

"Public use areas" means interior or exterior rooms or spaces of a building that are made available to the general public. Public use may be provided at a building that is privately or publicly owned.

"Site" means a parcel of land bounded by a property line or a designated portion of a public right of way.

B. General prohibitions against discrimination because of disability. It shall be unlawful to make an inquiry to determine whether an applicant for a dwelling; a person intending to reside in that dwelling after it is so sold, rented, or made available; or any person associated with that person has a disability or to make inquiry as to the nature or severity of a disability of such a person. However, this subsection does not prohibit the following inquiries, provided these inquiries are made of all applicants, whether or not they have disabilities:

1. Inquiry into an applicant's ability to meet the requirements of ownership or tenancy;
2. Inquiry to determine whether an applicant is qualified for a dwelling available only to persons with disabilities or to persons with a particular type of disability;
3. Inquiry to determine whether an applicant for a dwelling is qualified for a priority available to persons with disabilities or to persons with a particular type of disability;
4. Inquiring whether an applicant for a dwelling is a current illegal abuser or addict of a controlled substance;
5. Inquiring whether an applicant has been convicted of the illegal manufacture or distribution of a controlled substance.

C. Reasonable modifications of existing premises.

1. It shall be unlawful for any person to refuse to permit, at the expense of a disabled person, reasonable modifications of existing premises, occupied or to be occupied by a disabled person, if the proposed modifications may be necessary to afford the

disabled person full enjoyment of the premises of a dwelling. In the case of a rental, the landlord may, where it is reasonable to do so, condition permission for a modification on the renter agreeing to restore the interior of the premises to the condition that existed before the modification, reasonable wear and tear excepted. The landlord may not increase for disabled persons any customarily required security deposit. However, where it is necessary in order to ensure with reasonable certainty that funds will be available to pay for the restorations at the end of the tenancy, the landlord may negotiate as part of such a restoration agreement a provision requiring that the tenant pay into an interest bearing escrow account, over a reasonable period, a reasonable amount of money not to exceed the cost of the restorations. The interest in any such account shall accrue to the benefit of the tenant.

2. A landlord may condition permission for a modification on the renter providing a reasonable description of the proposed modifications as well as reasonable assurances that the work will be done in a workmanlike manner and that any required building permits will be obtained.
3. Except as otherwise provided, the Joint Statement of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Justice "Reasonable Modifications under the Fair Housing Act" dated March 5, 2008, is hereby incorporated by reference to provide guidance regarding the rights and obligations of persons with disabilities and housing providers relating to reasonable modifications. A copy of the joint statement may be obtained from the Virginia Fair Housing Office.

D. Reasonable accommodations.

1. It shall be unlawful for any person to refuse to make reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices, or services, when such accommodations may be necessary to afford a disabled person equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling unit, including public and common use areas.
2. Except as otherwise provided, the Joint Statement of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Justice "Reasonable Accommodations under the Fair Housing Act" dated May 17, 2004, is hereby incorporated by reference to provide guidance regarding the rights and obligations of persons with disabilities and housing providers relating to reasonable accommodations. A copy of this joint statement may also be obtained from the Virginia Fair Housing Office.

E. Design and construction requirements. Covered multi-family dwellings for first occupancy after March 13, 1991, shall be designed and constructed to have at least one building entrance on an accessible route unless it is impractical to do so because of the terrain or unusual characteristics of the site. The burden of establishing impracticality because of terrain or unusual site characteristics is on the person who designed or constructed the housing facility.

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 2.14, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003; Volume 30, Issue 11, eff. March 1, 2014; Volume 37, Issue 03, eff. November 1, 2020.

18 VAC 135-50-210. Housing for older persons.

Nothing in the Virginia Fair Housing Law regarding unlawful discrimination because of familial status shall apply to housing for older persons. As used in this section, "housing for older persons" includes:

1. Housing provided under any state or federal program determined by the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to be specifically designed and operated to assist elderly persons;
2. 62 or over housing. The provisions regarding familial status in these regulations shall not apply to housing intended for, and solely occupied by persons 62 years of age or older. Housing satisfies the requirements of this exemption even though:
 - a. There are persons residing in such housing on September 13, 1988, who are under 62 years of age, provided that all new occupants are persons 62 years of age or older;
 - b. There are unoccupied units, provided that such units are reserved for occupancy by persons 62 years of age or older;
 - c. There are units occupied by employees of the housing (and family members residing in the same unit) who are under 62 years of age provided they perform substantial duties directly related to the management or maintenance of the housing.
3. 55-or-over housing. The provisions regarding familial status shall not apply to housing intended and operated for occupancy by at least one person 55 years of age or older per unit, provided that the housing satisfies the following requirements:
 - a. At least 80% of the occupied units in the housing facility are occupied by at least one person 55 years of age or older per unit except that a newly constructed housing facility for first occupancy after March 12, 1989, need not comply with this section until 25% of the units in the facility are occupied.
 - (1) For purposes of this section, "occupied unit" means:
 - (a) A dwelling unit that is actually occupied by one or more persons on the date that the exemption for 55-or-older housing is claimed; or
 - (b) A temporarily vacant unit, if the primary occupant has resided in the unit during the past year and intends to return on a periodic basis.

- (2) For purposes of this section, occupied by at least one person 55 years of age or older means that on the date the exemption for 55-or-older housing is claimed:
 - (a) At least one occupant of the dwelling is 55 years of age or older; or
 - (b) If the dwelling unit is temporarily vacant, at least one of the occupants immediately prior to the date of which the unit was vacated was 55 years of age or older.
 - (3) Newly constructed housing for first occupancy after March 12, 1989, need not comply with the requirements of this section until at least 25% of the units are occupied. For purposes of this section, newly constructed housing includes facilities or communities that have been wholly unoccupied for at least 90 days prior to reoccupancy due to renovation or rehabilitation.
- b. Housing satisfies the requirements of the 55 or older exemption even though:
 - (1) There are units occupied by employees of the housing facility or community (and family members residing in the same unit) who are under 55 years of age provided the employees perform substantial duties directly related to the management or maintenance of the housing facility or community.
 - (2) There are units occupied by persons who are necessary to provide a reasonable accommodation to disabled residents and who are under the age of 55.
 - (3) Reserves all unoccupied units for occupancy by at least one person 55 years of age or older until at least 80% of the units are occupied by at least one person who is 55 years of age or older.
 - c. Where application of the 80% rule results in a fraction of a unit, that unit shall be considered to be included in the units that must be occupied by at least one person 55 years of age or older.
 - d. Each housing facility or community may determine the age restriction for units that are not occupied by at least one person 55 years of age or older so long as the housing facility or community complies with the provisions of 18VAC135-50-220.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §2.15, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003.

18 VAC 135-50-212. Intent to operate as 55 or over housing.

- A. In order for a housing facility or community to qualify as 55-or-older housing, it must publish and adhere to policies and procedures that demonstrate its intent to operate as

housing for persons 55 years of age or older. The following factors are considered relevant in determining whether the housing facility or community has complied with this requirement:

1. The manner in which the housing facility or community is described to prospective residents;
 2. Any advertising designed to attract prospective residents;
 3. Lease provisions;
 4. Written rules, regulations, covenants, deeds or other restrictions;
 5. The maintenance and consistent application of relevant procedures;
 6. Actual practices of the housing facility or community; and
 7. Public posting in common areas of statements describing the facility or community as housing for persons 55 years of age or older.
- B. Phrases such as "adult living," "adult community," "40-and-over community," or similar statements in any written advertisement or prospectus are not consistent with the intent that the housing facility or community intends to operate as housing for persons 55 years of age or older.
- C. If there is language in deeds or other community or facility documents that is inconsistent with the intent to provide housing for persons who are 55 years of age or older, the board shall consider documented evidence of a good faith attempt to remove such language in determining whether the housing facility or community complies with the requirements of this section.
- D. A housing facility or community may allow occupancy by families with children as long as it meets the requirements of 18VAC135-50-210 3 a and subsection A of this section.

Historical Notes

Derived from Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003.

18 VAC 135-50-215. Verification of occupancy.

- A. In order for a housing facility or community to qualify as 55-or-older housing, it must be able to produce, in response to a housing complaint filed under the Virginia Fair Housing Law, verification of compliance with these regulations through reliable surveys and affidavits.
- B. A facility or community shall, within 180 days of the effective date of this rule, develop procedures for routinely determining the occupancy of each unit, including the identification of whether at least one occupant of each unit is 55 years of age or older. Such procedures may be part of a normal leasing or purchasing arrangement.

- C. The procedures described in subsection B of this section must provide for regular updates through surveys or other means, of the initial information supplied by the occupants of the housing facility or community. Such updates must take place at least once every two years.
- D. The following documents are considered reliable documentation of the age of the occupants of the housing facility or community.
 - 1. Driver's license;
 - 2. Birth certificate;
 - 3. Passports;
 - 4. Immigration cards;
 - 5. Military identification;
 - 6. Any other state, local, national or international official documents containing a birth date of comparable reliability; or
 - 7. A certification in a lease, application, affidavit, or other document signed by an adult member of the household asserting that at least one person in the unit is 55 years of age or older.
- E. If the occupants of a unit refuse to comply with the age verification procedures, the housing facility or community may, if it has sufficient evidence, consider the unit occupied by at least one person 55 years of age or older. Such evidence may include:
 - 1. Government records or documents, such as a census; or
 - 2. Prior forms or applications; or
 - 3. A statement from an individual who has personal knowledge of the age of the occupants. The individual's statement must set forth the basis for such knowledge and be signed under penalty of perjury.
- F. Surveys and verification procedures that comply with the requirements of this section shall be admissible in administrative and judicial proceedings for the purpose of verifying occupancy.
- G. Occupancy surveys shall be available for inspection upon reasonable notice and request by any person.

Historical Notes

Derived from Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003.

18 VAC 135-50-217. Good faith defense against civil money damages.

- A. A person shall not be held personally liable for monetary damages for discriminating on the basis of familial status, if the person acted with the good faith belief that the housing facility or community qualified as 55-or-older housing.
- B. A person claiming the good faith belief defense must have actual knowledge that the housing facility or community has, through an authorized representative, asserted in writing that it qualifies as 55-or-older housing.
- C. For purposes of this section, an authorized representative, of a housing facility or community means the individual, committee, management company, owner, or other entity having responsibility for adherence to the requirements established by these regulations.
- D. A person shall not be entitled to the good faith belief defense if the person has actual knowledge that the housing facility or community does not, or will not qualify as 55-or-older housing. Such a person will be ineligible for the good faith belief defense regardless of whether the person received or viewed the written assurance described in subsection B of this section.

Historical Notes

Derived from Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003.

18 VAC 135-50-220. Interference, coercion or intimidation.

- A. This section provides the board's interpretation of the conduct that is unlawful under § 36-96.5 of the Virginia Fair Housing Law.
- B. It shall be unlawful to coerce, intimidate, threaten, or interfere with any person in the exercise or enjoyment of, or on account of that person having exercised or enjoyed, or on account of that person having aided or encouraged any other person in the exercise or enjoyment of, any right granted or protected by the Virginia Fair Housing Law and these regulations.
- C. Conduct made unlawful under this section includes the following:
 - 1. Coercing a person, either orally, in writing, or by other means, to deny or limit the benefits provided that person in connection with the sale or rental of a dwelling or in connection with a residential real estate-related transaction because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.
 - 2. Threatening, intimidating, or interfering with persons in their enjoyment of a dwelling because of the race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran, of such persons or of visitors or associates of such persons.

3. Threatening an employee or agent with dismissal or an adverse employment action, or taking such adverse employment action, for any effort to assist a person seeking access to the sale or rental of a dwelling or seeking access to any residential real estate-related transaction because of the race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran of that person or of any person associated with that person.
4. Intimidating or threatening any person because that person is engaging in activities designed to make other persons aware of, or encouraging such other persons to exercise, rights granted or protected by this part.
5. Retaliating against any person because that person has made a complaint, testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in a proceeding under the fair housing law.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 2.16, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003; Volume 23, Issue 22, eff. September 22, 2007; Volume 37, Issue 3, eff. November 1, 2020.

Article 2

Advertising

18 VAC 135-50-230 to 18VAC135-50-250. [Repealed]

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §§2.17 to 2.19, eff. December 1, 1991; repealed, Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003.

18 VAC 135-50-260. Affirmative advertising efforts.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to restrict advertising efforts designed to attract persons to dwellings who would not ordinarily be expected to apply, when such efforts are pursuant to an affirmative marketing program or undertaken to remedy the effects of prior discrimination in connection with the advertising or marketing of dwellings.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §2.20, eff. December 1, 1991.

18 VAC 135-50-270. Use of words, phrases, symbols and visual aids.

The following words, phrases, symbols, and forms typify those most often used in residential real estate advertising to convey either overt or tacit discriminatory preferences or limitations. In considering a complaint under the fair housing law, the board will consider the use of these and comparable words, phrases, symbols, and forms to determine a possible violation of the law and to establish a need for further proceedings on the complaint, if it is apparent from the context of the usage that discrimination within the meaning of the law is likely to result.

1. Words descriptive of dwelling, landlord and tenants. White private home, Colored home, Jewish home, Hispanic residence, adult building.
2. Words indicative of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran, including:
 - a. Race: African-American, Negro, Black, White, Caucasian, Oriental, Asian, American Indian, Native American, Arab.
 - b. Color: White, Black, Colored.
 - c. Religion: Protestant, Christian, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Islamic.
 - d. National origin: Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Philippine, Polish, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Chicano, African, Hispanic, Chinese, Indian, Latino.

e. Sex: The exclusive use of words in advertisements, including those involving the rental of separate units in a single or multi-family dwelling, stating or intending to imply that the housing being advertised is available to persons of only one sex and not the other, except where the sharing of living areas is involved. Nothing in this section restricts advertisements of dwellings used exclusively for dormitory facilities by educational institutions.

f. Disability: crippled, blind, deaf, mentally ill, retarded, impaired, handicapped, physically fit. Nothing in this section restricts the inclusion of information about the availability of accessible housing in advertising of dwellings.

g. Familial status: adults, children, singles, mature persons. Nothing in this section restricts advertisements of dwellings that are intended and operated for occupancy by older persons and that constitute "housing for older persons" as defined in 18VAC135-50-210.

h. Elderliness: elderly, senior citizens, young, old, active, available to those between 25 and 55.

i. Sexual orientation: lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, same-sex couples.

j. Gender identity: transgender, trans.

k. Source of funds: voucher, section 8, social security, disability income, government benefits.

3. Catch words. Words and phrases used in a discriminatory context should be avoided, e.g., "restricted," "exclusive," "private," "integrated," "traditional," "board approval," "membership approval."

4. Symbols or logotypes. Symbols or logotypes that imply or suggest race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.

5. Colloquialisms. Words or phrases used regionally or locally that imply or suggest race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran.

6. Directions to real estate for sale or rent (use of maps or written instructions). Directions can imply a discriminatory preference, limitation, or exclusion. For example, references to real estate location made in terms of racial or national origin significant landmarks, such as an existing black development (signal to blacks) or an existing development known for its exclusion of minorities (signal to whites). Specific directions which make reference to a racial or national origin significant area may indicate a preference.

7. Area (location) description. Names of facilities which cater to a particular racial, national origin, or religious group, such as country club or private school designations, or names of facilities which are used exclusively by one sex may indicate a preference.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 2.21, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003; Volume 30, Issue 11, eff. March 1, 2014; Volume 37, Issue 03, eff. November 1, 2020.

18 VAC 135-50-280. Selective use of advertising media or content.

The selective use of advertising media or content when particular combinations thereof are used exclusively with respect to various housing developments or sites can lead to discriminatory results and may indicate a violation of the fair housing law. For example, the use of English language media alone or the exclusive use of media catering to the majority population in an area, when, in such area, there are also available non-English language or other minority media, may have discriminatory impact. Similarly, the selective use of human models in advertisements may have discriminatory impact. The following are examples of the selective use of advertisements which may be discriminatory:

1. Selective geographic advertisements. Such selective use may involve the strategic placement of billboards; brochure advertisements distributed within a limited geographic area by hand or in the mail; advertising in particular geographic coverage editions of major metropolitan newspapers or in newspapers of limited circulation which are mainly advertising vehicles for reaching a particular segment of the community; or displays or announcements available only in selected sales offices.
2. Selective use of equal opportunity slogan or logo. When placing advertisements, such selective use may involve placing the equal housing opportunity slogan or logo in advertising reaching some geographic areas, but not others, or with respect to some properties but not others.
3. Selective use of human models when conducting an advertising campaign. Selective advertising may involve an advertising campaign using human models primarily in media that cater to one racial or national origin segment of the population without a complementary advertising campaign that is directed at other groups. Another example may involve use of racially mixed models by a developer to advertise one development and not others. Similar care must be exercised in advertising in publications or other media directed at one particular sex, or at persons without children. Such selective advertising may involve the use of human models of members of only one sex, or of adults only, in displays, photographs, or drawings to indicate preferences for one sex or the other, or for adults to the exclusion of children.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §2.22, eff. December 1, 1991.

18 VAC 135-50-290. Fair housing policy and practices.

In the investigation of complaints, the board will consider the implementation of fair housing policies and practices provided in this section as evidence of compliance with the prohibitions against discrimination in advertising under the fair housing law.

1. Use of equal housing opportunity logotype, statement, or slogan. All advertising of residential real estate for sale, rent, or financing should contain an equal housing opportunity logotype, statement, or slogan as a means of educating the homeseeking public that the property is available to all persons regardless of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran. The choice of logotype, statement, or slogan will depend on the type of media used (visual or auditory) and, in space advertising, on the size of the advertisement. See Appendix I to 24 CFR Part 109, Ch. 1 (4/1/2000 edition) for suggested use of the logotype, statement, or slogan and size of logotype and copies of the suggested equal housing opportunity logotype, statement and slogan. A copy of Appendix I to 24 CFR Part 109, Ch. 1 (4/1/2000 edition) is posted on the Fair Housing Office's website or may be obtained by contacting the Fair Housing Office.

2. Use of human models. Human models in photographs, drawings, or other graphic techniques may not be used to indicate exclusiveness because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran. If models are used in display advertising campaigns, the models should be clearly definable as reasonably representing majority and minority groups in the metropolitan area, both sexes and, when appropriate, families with children. Models, if used, should portray persons in an equal social setting and indicate to the general public that the housing is open to all without regard to race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, elderliness, national origin, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran, and is not for the exclusive use of one such group. Human models include any depiction of a human being, paid or unpaid, resident or nonresident.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 2.23, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003; Volume 30, Issue 11, eff. March 1, 2014; Volume 37, Issue 03, eff. November 1, 2020.

PART III

Investigation and Conciliation of Complaints

Article 1

Complaints

18 VAC 135-50-300. Submission of information to file a complaint.

- A. The administrator or his designee will receive complaint information concerning alleged discriminatory housing practices from any person. Where the information constitutes a complaint within the meaning of the fair housing law and these regulations and is furnished by an aggrieved person, a complaint will be considered filed in accordance with 18VAC135-50-350. Where additional information is required for the purpose of perfecting a complaint under the law, the administrator or his designee will advise what additional information is needed and will provide appropriate assistance in the filing of the complaint.
- B. Complaint information may also be made available to any appropriate federal, state or local agency having an interest in the matter. In making available such information, steps will be taken to protect the confidentiality of any informant or complainant where desired by the informant or complainant.
- C. The administrator or his designee may counsel with an aggrieved party about the facts and circumstances which constitute the alleged discriminatory housing practices. If the facts and circumstances do not constitute discriminatory housing practices, the administrator or his designee shall so advise the aggrieved party. If the facts and circumstances constitute alleged discriminatory housing practices, the administrator or his designee shall assist the aggrieved party in perfecting a complaint.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.1, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003.

18 VAC 135-50-310. Who may file a complaint.

Any aggrieved person or the administrator on behalf of the board may file a complaint no later than one year after an alleged discriminatory housing practice has occurred or terminated. The complaint may be filed with the assistance of an authorized representative of an aggrieved person, including any organization acting on behalf of an aggrieved person.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.2, eff. December 1, 1991.

18 VAC 135-50-320. Persons against whom complaints may be filed.

- A. A complaint may be filed against any person alleged to be engaged, to have engaged, or to be about to engage, in a discriminatory housing practice.
- B. A complaint may also be filed against any person who directs or controls, or has the right to direct or control, the conduct of another person with respect to any aspect of the sale, rental, advertising, or financing of dwellings, or the provision of brokerage services relating to the sale or rental of dwellings if that other person, acting within the scope of his authority as employee or agent of the directing or controlling person, is engaged, has engaged, or is about to engage, in a discriminatory housing practice.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.3, eff. December 1, 1991.

18 VAC 135-50-330. Filing a complaint.

Aggrieved persons may provide information to be contained in a complaint by telephone to fair housing office staff. Staff in the fair housing office will reduce information provided by telephone to writing on the prescribed complaint form and send the form to the aggrieved person to be signed and affirmed in accordance with 18VAC135-50-340 A.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.4, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003.

18 VAC 135-50-340. Form and content of a complaint.

- A. Each complaint must be in writing and must be signed and affirmed by the aggrieved person filing the complaint or if the complaint is filed by the administrator on behalf of the board, it must be signed and affirmed by the administrator. The signature and affirmation may be made at any time during the investigation. The affirmation shall state "I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct."
- B. The administrator may require complaints to be made on prescribed forms. The complaint forms will be available through the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation. Notwithstanding any requirement for use of a prescribed form, the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation will accept any written statement which substantially sets forth the allegations of a discriminatory housing practice under the fair housing law (including any such statement filed with a substantially equivalent local agency) as a fair housing law complaint. Personnel in the fair housing office will provide appropriate assistance in filling out forms and filing a complaint.
- C. Each complaint must contain substantially the following information:

1. The name and address of the aggrieved person.
2. The name and address of the respondent.
3. A description and address of the dwelling which is involved, if appropriate.
4. A concise statement of the facts, including pertinent dates, constituting the alleged discriminatory housing practice.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.5, eff. December 1, 1991.

18 VAC 135-50-350. Date of filing of a complaint.

- A. Except as provided in subsection B of this section, a complaint is filed when it is received by the board or dual filed with the federal government in a form that reasonably meets the standards of [18VAC135-50-340](#).
- B. The administrator may determine that a complaint is filed for the purposes of the one-year period for filing of complaints upon submission of written information identifying the parties and describing generally the alleged discriminatory housing practice. Written information includes information provided by telephone and reduced to writing by Fair Housing Office staff. A filed complaint can be signed at any time during the investigation.
- C. Where a complaint alleges a discriminatory housing practice that is continuing, as manifested in a number of incidents of such conduct, the complaint will be timely if filed within one year of the last alleged occurrence of that practice.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 3.6, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003; Volume 30, Issue 11, eff. March 1, 2014.

18 VAC 135-50-360. Amendment of complaint.

Complaints may be reasonably and fairly amended at any time. Such amendments may include, but are not limited to: (i) amendments to cure technical defects or omissions, including failure to sign or affirm a complaint, (ii) to clarify or amplify the allegations in a complaint, or (iii) to join additional or substitute respondents. Except for the purposes of notifying respondents, under 18VAC135-50-380, amended complaints will be considered as having been made as of the original filing date.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.7, eff. December 1, 1991.

18 VAC 135-50-370. Service of notice on aggrieved person.

Upon the filing of a complaint, the administrator or his designee will notify, by certified mail or personal service, each aggrieved person on whose behalf the complaint was filed. The notice will:

1. Acknowledge the filing of the complaint and state the date that the complaint was accepted for filing.
2. Include a copy of the complaint.
3. Advise the aggrieved person of the time limits applicable to complaint processing and of the procedural rights and obligations of the aggrieved person under the Virginia Fair Housing Law and these regulations.
4. Advise the aggrieved person of his right to commence a civil action under the fair housing law, in state circuit court, not later than two years after the occurrence or termination of the alleged discriminatory housing practice. The notice will state that the computation of this two-year period excludes any time during which an action arising from a breach of a conciliation agreement under the law is pending.
5. Advise the aggrieved person that retaliation against any person because he made a complaint or testified, assisted, or participated in an investigation or conciliation under these regulations is a discriminatory housing practice that is prohibited under the law and these regulations.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.8, eff. December 1, 1991.

18 VAC 135-50-380. Respondent to be notified of complaint.

- A. Within 10 days of the filing of a complaint under 18VAC135-50-350 or the filing of an amended complaint under 18VAC135-50-360, the administrator or his designee will serve a notice on each respondent by certified mail or by personal service. A person who is not named as a respondent in a complaint, but who is identified in the course of the investigation under Part V of these regulations as a person who is alleged to be engaged, to have engaged, or to be about to engage in the discriminatory housing practice upon which the complaint is based may be joined as an additional or substitute respondent by service of a notice on the person under this section within 10 days of the identification.
- B. 1. The notice will identify the alleged discriminatory housing practice upon which the complaint is based, and include a copy of the complaint and copies of any supporting documentation referenced in the complaint which are received with the complaint.

2. The notice will state the date that the complaint was accepted for filing.
3. The notice will advise the respondent of the time limits applicable to complaint processing under these regulations and of the procedural rights and obligations of the respondent under the law and these regulations, including the opportunity to submit an answer to the complaint within 10 days of the receipt of the notice. The administrator, upon request, has the discretion to extend this time period for a reasonable time.
4. The notice will advise the respondent of the aggrieved person's right to commence a civil action under the law, in a state circuit court, no later than 180 days after the conclusion of the administrative process with respect to a complaint or charge, or, not later than two years after the occurrence or termination of the alleged discriminatory housing practice, whichever is longer.
5. If the person is not named in the complaint, but is being joined as an additional or substitute respondent, the notice will explain the basis for the administrator's belief that the joined person is properly joined as a respondent.
6. The notice will advise the respondent that retaliation against any person because he made a complaint or testified, assisted, or participated in an investigation or conciliation under this part is a discriminatory housing practice that is prohibited under the law and these regulations.
7. The notice may invite the respondent to enter into a conciliation agreement for the purpose of resolving the complaint.
8. The notice may include an initial request for information and documentation concerning the facts and circumstances surrounding the alleged discriminatory housing practice set forth in the complaint.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.9, eff. December 1, 1991.

Article 2

Responses

18 VAC 135-50-390. Respondent may file response.

The respondent may file an answer after receipt of the notice described in 18VAC135-50-380. The respondent may assert any defense that might be available to a defendant in a court of law. The answer must be in writing under oath or affirmation by the respondent. The affirmation must state: "I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct."

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.10, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003.

Article 3

Investigations

18 VAC 135-50-400. Investigations.

- A. Upon the filing of a complaint, the administrator shall investigate the allegations. The purposes of an investigation are:
1. To obtain information concerning the events or transactions that relate to the alleged discriminatory housing practice identified in the complaint.
 2. To document policies or practices of the respondent involved in the alleged discriminatory housing practice raised in the complaint.
 3. To develop factual data necessary for the administrator on behalf of the board to make a recommendation whether reasonable cause exists to believe that a discriminatory housing practice has occurred or is about to occur, and to take other actions provided under this part.
- B. Based on the authority delegated to the fair housing administrator by the board, the administrator may investigate housing practices to determine whether a complaint should be filed. Such an initiation may include using testers and other established practices or procedures.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 3.11, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003; Volume 23, Issue 22, eff. September 22, 2007; Volume 30, Issue 11, eff. March 1, 2014.

18 VAC 135-50-410. Systemic processing.

Where the administrator determines that the alleged discriminatory practices contained in a complaint are pervasive or institutional in nature, or that the processing of the complaint will involve complex issues, novel questions of fact or law, or will affect a large number of persons, the administrator may identify the complaint for systemic processing. This determination can be based on the face of the complaint or on information gathered in connection with an investigation. Systemic investigations may focus not only on documenting facts involved in the alleged discriminatory housing practice that is the subject of the complaint but also on review of other policies and procedures related to matters under investigation, to make sure that they also comply with the nondiscrimination requirements of the law.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.12, eff. December 1, 1991.

18 VAC 135-50-420. Conduct of investigation.

- A. In conducting investigations under these regulations, the voluntary cooperation of all persons will be sought to obtain access to premises, records, documents, individuals, and other possible sources of information; to examine, record, and copy necessary materials; and to take and record testimony or statements of persons reasonably necessary for the furtherance of the investigation.
- B. The administrator and the respondent may conduct discovery in aid of the investigation by the same methods and to the same extent that parties may conduct discovery in a court of law. The administrator or his designee, on behalf of the board, shall also have the power to issue subpoenas described under the law, in support of the investigation.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.13, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003.

18 VAC 135-50-430. Cooperation with federal agencies.

The administrator, in processing complaints under the Virginia Fair Housing Law, may seek the cooperation and utilize the services of federal, state and local agencies, including any agency having regulatory or supervisory authority over financial institutions.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.14, eff. December 1, 1991.

18 VAC 135-50-440. Completion of investigation.

The investigation will remain open until a determination regarding reasonable cause is made, the board determines that the matter involves the legality of local zoning or land use laws or ordinances, or a conciliation agreement is executed and approved.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 § 3.15, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003; Volume 30, Issue 11, eff. March 1, 2014.

18 VAC 135-50-450. Final investigative report.

At the end of each investigation under this article, the administrator or his designee will prepare a final investigative report. The investigative report will contain the names and dates of contacts with witnesses, except that the report will not disclose the names of witnesses who request anonymity. The board, however, may be required to disclose the names of such witnesses in the course of a civil action under the fair housing law.

Notwithstanding the prohibitions and requirements with respect to disclosure of information contained in 18VAC135-50-510, the administrator will make information derived from an investigation, including the final investigative report, available to the aggrieved person and the respondent. Following the completion of an investigation, the administrator shall notify the aggrieved person and the respondent that the final investigative report is complete and will be provided upon request.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.16, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003.

Article 4

Conciliation

18 VAC 135-50-460. Conciliation process.

In conciliating a complaint, the administrator will attempt to achieve a just resolution of the complaint and to obtain assurances that the respondent will satisfactorily remedy any violations of the rights of the aggrieved person, and take such action as will assure the elimination of discriminatory housing practices, or the prevention of their occurrence, in the future.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.17, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003.

18 VAC 135-50-470. Conciliation agreement.

- A. The terms of a settlement of a complaint will be reduced to a written conciliation agreement. The conciliation agreement shall seek to protect the interests of the aggrieved person, other persons similarly situated, and the public interest. The types of relief that may be sought for the aggrieved person are described in 18VAC135-50-480 and the Virginia Fair Housing Law. The provisions that may be sought for the vindication of the public interest are described in 18VAC135-50-490.
- B. The agreement must be executed by the respondent and the complainant. The agreement is subject to the approval of the board.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.18, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003.

18 VAC 135-50-480. Relief sought for aggrieved persons during conciliation.

- A. The following types of relief may be sought for aggrieved persons in conciliation:
 - 1. Monetary relief in the form of compensatory and punitive damages and attorney fees;
 - 2. Other equitable relief including, but not limited to, access to the dwelling at issue, or to a comparable dwelling, the provision of services or facilities in connection with a dwelling, or other specific relief; or
 - 3. Injunctive relief appropriate to the elimination of discriminatory housing practices affecting the aggrieved person or other persons.
- B. The conciliation agreement may provide for binding arbitration or other methods of resolving a dispute arising from the complaint. Arbitration may award appropriate relief as described in subsection A of this section. The aggrieved person and the respondent may, in the conciliation agreement, limit the types of relief that may be awarded under binding arbitration or other methods of dispute resolution.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.19, eff. December 1, 1991.

18 VAC 135-50-490. Conciliation provisions relating to public interest.

The following are types of provisions that may be sought for the vindication of the public interest:

- 1. Elimination of discriminatory housing practices.

2. Prevention of future discriminatory housing practices.
3. Remedial affirmative activities to overcome discriminatory housing practices.
4. Reporting requirements.
5. Monitoring and enforcement activities.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.20, eff. December 1, 1991.

18 VAC 135-50-500. Termination of conciliation process.

- A. The administrator may terminate his efforts to conciliate the complaint if the respondent fails or refuses to confer with the administrator or his designee; the aggrieved person or the respondent fails to make a good faith effort to resolve any dispute; or the administrator finds, for any reason, that voluntary agreement is not likely to result.
- B. Where the aggrieved person has commenced a civil action under federal law or a state law seeking relief with respect to the alleged discriminatory housing practice, and the trial in the action has commenced, the administrator will terminate conciliation unless the court specifically requests assistance from the board.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.21, eff. December 1, 1991.

18 VAC 135-50-510. Disclosure of information obtained during conciliation.

- A. Except as provided in subsection B of this section and 18VAC135-50-450 C, nothing that is said or done in the course of conciliation under this article may be made public or used as evidence in subsequent civil actions under the Virginia Fair Housing Law or this chapter without the written consent of the persons concerned.
- B. Conciliation agreements shall be made public, unless the aggrieved person and respondent request nondisclosure and the board determines that disclosure is not required to further the purposes of the fair housing law. Notwithstanding a determination that disclosure of a conciliation agreement is not required, the board may publish tabulated descriptions of the results of all conciliation efforts.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.22, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003.

18 VAC 135-50-520. Review of compliance with conciliation agreement.

The administrator may, from time to time, review compliance with the terms of any conciliation agreement. Whenever there is reasonable cause to believe that a respondent has breached a conciliation agreement, the board shall refer the matter to the Attorney General with a recommendation for the filing of a civil action under the Virginia Fair Housing Law for the enforcement of the terms of the conciliation agreement.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.23, eff. December 1, 1991.

Article 5

Issuance of a Charge

18 VAC 135-50-530. Reasonable cause determination.

- A. The reasonable cause determination will be based solely on the facts concerning the alleged discriminatory housing practice, provided by complainant and respondent and otherwise disclosed during the investigation. In making the reasonable cause determination, the board shall consider whether the facts concerning the alleged discriminatory housing practice are sufficient to warrant the initiation of a civil action in the appropriate state court.
- B. In all cases not involving the legality of local zoning or land use laws or ordinances:
 - 1. If the board determines that reasonable cause exists, the board will issue a charge under §36-96.14 of the fair housing law and these regulations on behalf of the aggrieved person, and shall notify the aggrieved person and the respondent of this determination by certified mail or personal service.
 - 2. If a no reasonable cause determination is made, the board shall: Issue a short and plain written statement of the facts upon which the no reasonable cause determination was based; dismiss the complaint; notify the aggrieved person and the respondent of the dismissal (including the written statement of facts) in writing within 30 days of such determination by certified mail or personal service; and make public disclosure of the dismissal.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.24, eff. December 1, 1991; amended, Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003.

18 VAC 135-50-540. Local zoning and land use.

If the board determines that the matter involves the legality of local zoning or land use laws or ordinances, in lieu of making a determination regarding reasonable cause, the investigative

materials shall be referred to the Attorney General for appropriate action under the fair housing law, and shall notify the aggrieved person and the respondent of this action by certified mail or personal service.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.25, eff. December 1, 1991.

18 VAC 135-50-550. Pending private civil action.

The board may not issue a charge regarding an alleged discriminatory housing practice if an aggrieved person has commenced a civil action under federal law or a state law seeking relief with respect to the alleged discriminatory housing practice, and the trial in the action has commenced. If a charge may not be issued because of the commencement of such a trial, the board will so notify the aggrieved person and the respondent by certified mail or personal service.

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.26, eff. December 1, 1991.

18 VAC 135-50-560 to 18 VAC 135-50-590. [Repealed]

Historical Notes

Derived from VR585-01-05 §3.27 to 3.30, eff. December 1, 1991; repealed, Virginia Register Volume 19, Issue 24, eff. September 10, 2003.

NOTICE

Included in this booklet are relevant excerpts from the *Code of Virginia*. Please note that the Virginia General Assembly is responsible for creating and amending the *Code*, not the Real Estate and Fair Housing Boards. The version contained herein contains all changes, if any, that have been made by the General Assembly through the 2020 session. Any changes made during the 2020 session became effective July 1, 2020, unless otherwise noted. It is your responsibility to stay informed of revisions to the regulation and statutes. Please consult the General Assembly or your local library for annual changes.

§ 36-96.1. Declaration of policy.

- A. This chapter shall be known and referred to as the Virginia Fair Housing Law.
- B. It is the policy of the Commonwealth of Virginia to provide for fair housing throughout the Commonwealth, to all its citizens, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, status as a veteran, or disability, and to that end to prohibit discriminatory practices with respect to residential housing by any person or group of persons, in order that the peace, health, safety, prosperity, and general welfare of all the inhabitants of the Commonwealth may be protected and ensured. This law shall be deemed an exercise of the police power of the Commonwealth of Virginia for the protection of the people of the Commonwealth.

(1972, c. 591, §§ 36-86, 36-87; 1973, c. 358; 1978, c. 138; 1989, c. 88; 1991, c. 557; 2020, cc. 477, 1137, 1140.)

§ 36-96.1:1. Definitions.

For the purposes of this chapter, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

"Aggrieved person" means any person who (i) claims to have been injured by a discriminatory housing practice or (ii) believes that such person will be injured by a discriminatory housing practice that is about to occur.

"Assistance animal" means an animal that works, provides assistance, or performs tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability, or provides emotional support that alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability. Assistance animals perform many disability-related functions, including guiding individuals who are blind or have low vision, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to sounds, providing protection or rescue assistance, pulling a wheelchair, fetching items, alerting persons to impending seizures, or providing emotional support to persons with disabilities who have a disability-related need for such support. An assistance animal is not required to be individually trained or certified. While dogs are the most common type of assistance animal, other animals can also be assistance animals. An assistance animal is not a pet.

"Complainant" means a person, including the Fair Housing Board, who files a complaint under § 36-96.9.

"Conciliation" means the attempted resolution of issues raised by a complainant, or by the investigation of such complaint, through informal negotiations involving the aggrieved person, the respondent, their respective authorized representatives and the Fair Housing Board.

"Conciliation agreement" means a written agreement setting forth the resolution of the issues in conciliation.

"Disability" means, with respect to a person, (i) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities; (ii) a record of having such an impairment; or (iii) being regarded as having such an impairment. The term does not include current, illegal use of or addiction to a controlled substance as defined in Virginia or federal law. For the purposes of this chapter, the terms "disability" and "handicap" shall be interchangeable.

"Discriminatory housing practices" means an act that is unlawful under § 36-96.3, 36-96.4, 36-96.5, or 36-96.6.

"Dwelling" means any building, structure, or portion thereof, that is occupied as, or designated or intended for occupancy as, a residence by one or more families, and any vacant land that is offered for sale or lease for the construction or location thereon of any such building, structure, or portion thereof.

"Elderliness" means an individual who has attained his fifty-fifth birthday.

"Familial status" means one or more individuals who have not attained the age of 18 years being domiciled with (i) a parent or other person having legal custody of such individual or individuals or (ii) the designee of such parent or other person having custody with the written permission of such parent or other person. The term "familial status" also includes any person who is pregnant or is in the process of securing legal custody of any individual who has not attained the age of 18 years. For purposes of this section, "in the process of securing legal custody" means having filed an appropriate petition to obtain legal custody of such minor in a court of competent jurisdiction.

"Family" includes a single individual, whether male or female.

"Lending institution" includes any bank, savings institution, credit union, insurance company or mortgage lender.

"Major life activities" includes any the following functions: caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.

"Person" means one or more individuals, whether male or female, corporations, partnerships, associations, labor organizations, fair housing organizations, civil rights organizations, organizations, governmental entities, legal representatives, mutual companies, joint stock companies, trusts, unincorporated organizations, trustees, trustees in bankruptcy, receivers and fiduciaries.

"Physical or mental impairment" includes any of the following: (i) any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological; musculoskeletal; special sense organs; respiratory, including speech organs; cardiovascular; reproductive; digestive; genito-urinary; hemic and lymphatic; skin; or endocrine or (ii) any mental or psychological disorder, such as an intellectual or developmental disability, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, or specific learning disability. "Physical or mental impairment" includes such diseases and conditions as orthopedic, visual, speech, and hearing impairments; cerebral palsy; autism; epilepsy; muscular dystrophy; multiple sclerosis; cancer; heart disease; diabetes; human immunodeficiency virus infection; intellectual and developmental disabilities; emotional illness; drug addiction other than addiction caused by current, illegal use of a controlled substance; and alcoholism.

"Respondent" means any person or other entity alleged to have violated the provisions of this chapter, as stated in a complaint filed under the provisions of this chapter and any other person joined pursuant to the provisions of § 36-96.9.

"Restrictive covenant" means any specification in any instrument affecting title to real property that purports to limit the use, occupancy, transfer, rental, or lease of any dwelling because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, status as a veteran, or disability.

"Source of funds" means any source that lawfully provides funds to or on behalf of a renter or buyer of housing, including any assistance, benefit, or subsidy program, whether such program is administered by a governmental or nongovernmental entity.

"To rent" means to lease, to sublease, to let, or otherwise to grant for consideration the right to occupy premises not owned by the occupant.

(1972, c. 591, § 36-87; 1973, c. 358; 1978, c. 138; 1989, c. 88; 1991, c. 557; 1992, c. 322; 1996, c. 77; 2003, c. 575; 2017, cc. 575, 729; 2020, cc. 477, 1137, 1140.)

§ 36-96.2. Exemptions.

- A. Except as provided in subdivision A 3 of § 36-96.3 and subsections A, B, and C of § 36-96.6, this chapter shall not apply to any single-family house sold or rented by an owner, provided that such private individual does not own more than three single-family houses at any one time. In the case of the sale of any single-family house by a private individual-owner not residing in the house at the time of the sale or who was not the most recent resident of the house prior to sale, the exemption granted shall apply only with respect to one such sale within any 24-month period, provided that such bona fide private individual owner does not own any interest in, nor is there owned or reserved on his behalf, under any express or voluntary agreement, title to or any right to all or a portion of the proceeds from the sale or rental of, more than three such single-family houses at any one time. The sale or rental of any such single-family house shall be exempt from the application of this chapter only if the house is sold or rented (i) without the use in any manner of the sales or rental facilities or the sales or rental services of any real estate broker, agent, salesperson, or of the facilities or the services of any person in the business of selling or renting

dwellings, or of any employee, independent contractor, or agent of any broker, agent, salesperson, or person and (ii) without the publication, posting, or mailing, after notice, of any advertisement or written notice in violation of this chapter. However, nothing herein shall prohibit the use of attorneys, escrow agents, abstractors, title companies, and other professional assistance as necessary to perfect or transfer the title. This exemption shall not apply to or inure to the benefit of any licensee of the Real Estate Board or regulant of the Fair Housing Board, regardless of whether the licensee is acting in his personal or professional capacity.

- B. Except for subdivision A 3 of § 36-96.3, this chapter shall not apply to rooms or units in dwellings containing living quarters occupied or intended to be occupied by no more than four families living independently of each other, if the owner actually maintains and occupies one of such living quarters as his residence.
- C. Nothing in this chapter shall prohibit a religious organization, association or society, or any nonprofit institution or organization operated, supervised, or controlled by or in conjunction with a religious organization, association or society, from limiting the sale, rental, or occupancy of dwellings that it owns or operates for other than a commercial purpose to persons of the same religion, or from giving preferences to such persons, unless membership in such religion is restricted on account of race, color, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, status as a veteran, or disability. Nor shall anything in this chapter apply to a private membership club not in fact open to the public, which as an incident to its primary purpose or purposes provides lodging that it owns or operates for other than a commercial purpose, from limiting the rental or occupancy of such lodgings to its members or from giving preference to its members. Nor, where matters of personal privacy are involved, shall anything in this chapter be construed to prohibit any private, state-owned, or state-supported educational institution, hospital, nursing home, or religious or correctional institution from requiring that persons of both sexes not occupy any single-family residence or room or unit of dwellings or other buildings, or restrooms in such room or unit in dwellings or other buildings, which it owns or operates.
- D. Nothing in this chapter prohibits conduct against a person because such person has been convicted by any court of competent jurisdiction of the illegal manufacture or distribution of a controlled substance as defined in federal law.
- E. It shall not be unlawful under this chapter for any owner to deny or limit the rental of housing to persons who pose a clear and present threat of substantial harm to others or to the dwelling itself.
- F. A rental application may require disclosure by the applicant of any criminal convictions and the owner or managing agent may require as a condition of acceptance of the rental application that applicant consent in writing to a criminal record check to verify the disclosures made by applicant in the rental application. The owner or managing agent may collect from the applicant moneys to reimburse the owner or managing agent for the exact amount of the out-of-pocket costs for such criminal record checks. Nothing in this

chapter shall require an owner or managing agent to rent a dwelling to an individual who, based on a prior record of criminal convictions involving harm to persons or property, would constitute a clear and present threat to the health or safety of other individuals.

- G. Nothing in this chapter limits the applicability of any reasonable local, state or federal restriction regarding the maximum number of occupants permitted to occupy a dwelling. Owners or managing agents of dwellings may develop and implement reasonable occupancy and safety standards based on factors such as the number and size of sleeping areas or bedrooms and overall size of a dwelling unit so long as the standards do not violate local, state or federal restrictions. Nothing in this chapter prohibits the rental application or similar document from requiring information concerning the number, ages, sex and familial relationship of the applicants and the dwelling's intended occupants.
- H. Nothing in this chapter shall prohibit a landlord from considering evidence of an applicant's status as a victim of family abuse, as defined in § 16.1-228, to mitigate any adverse effect of an otherwise qualified applicant's application pursuant to subsection D of § 55.1-1203.
- I. Nothing in this chapter shall prohibit an owner or an owner's managing agent from denying or limiting the rental or occupancy of a rental dwelling unit to a person because of such person's source of funds, provided that such owner does not own more than four rental dwelling units in the Commonwealth at the time of the alleged discriminatory housing practice. However, if an owner, whether individually or through a business entity, owns more than a 10 percent interest in more than four rental dwelling units in the Commonwealth at the time of the alleged discriminatory housing practice, the exemption provided in this subsection shall not apply.
- J. It shall not be unlawful under this chapter for an owner or an owner's managing agent to deny or limit a person's rental or occupancy of a rental dwelling unit based on the person's source of funds for that unit if such source is not approved within 15 days of the person's submission of the request for tenancy approval.

(1972, c. 591, §§ 36-87, 36-92; 1973, c. 358; 1978, c. 138; 1989, c. 88; 1991, c. 557; 1992, c. 322; 2003, c. 575; 2006, c. 693; 2020, cc. 388, 477, 1137, 1140.)

§ 36-96.3. Unlawful discriminatory housing practices.

- A. It shall be an unlawful discriminatory housing practice for any person to:
 - 1. Refuse to sell or rent after the making of a bona fide offer or refuse to negotiate for the sale or rental of, or otherwise make unavailable or deny, a dwelling to any person because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, source of funds, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran;
 - 2. Discriminate against any person in the terms, conditions, or privileges of sale or rental of a dwelling, or in the provision of services or facilities in the connection therewith to any person because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex,

elderliness, source of funds, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or status as a veteran;

3. Make, print, or publish, or cause to be made, printed, or published any notice, statement, or advertisement, with respect to the sale or rental of a dwelling that indicates any preference, limitation, or discrimination or an intention to make any such preference, limitation, or discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, status as a veteran, or disability. The use of words or symbols associated with a particular religion, national origin, sex, or race shall be prima facie evidence of an illegal preference under this chapter that shall not be overcome by a general disclaimer. However, reference alone to places of worship, including churches, synagogues, temples, or mosques, in any such notice, statement, or advertisement shall not be prima facie evidence of an illegal preference;
4. Represent to any person because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, status as a veteran, or disability that any dwelling is not available for inspection, sale, or rental when such dwelling is in fact so available;
5. Deny any person access to membership in or participation in any multiple listing service, real estate brokers' organization, or other service, organization or facility relating to the business of selling or renting dwellings or discriminate against such person in the terms or conditions of such access, membership, or participation because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, status as a veteran, or disability;
6. Include in any transfer, sale, rental, or lease of housing any restrictive covenant that discriminates because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, status as a veteran, or disability or for any person to honor or exercise, or attempt to honor or exercise, any such discriminatory covenant pertaining to housing;
7. Induce or attempt to induce to sell or rent any dwelling by representations regarding the entry or prospective entry into the neighborhood of a person or persons of a particular race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, source of funds, sexual orientation, gender identity, status as a veteran, or disability;
8. Refuse to sell or rent, or refuse to negotiate for the sale or rental of, or otherwise discriminate or make unavailable or deny a dwelling because of a disability of (i) the buyer or renter; (ii) a person residing in or intending to reside in that dwelling after it is so sold, rented, or made available; or (iii) any person associated with the buyer or renter; or

9. Discriminate against any person in the terms, conditions, or privileges of sale or rental of a dwelling, or in the provision of services or facilities in connection therewith because of a disability of (i) that person; (ii) a person residing in or intending to reside in that dwelling after it was so sold, rented, or made available; or (iii) any person associated with that buyer or renter.
- B. For the purposes of this section, discrimination includes (i) a refusal to permit, at the expense of the disabled person, reasonable modifications of existing premises occupied or to be occupied by any person if such modifications may be necessary to afford such person full enjoyment of the premises; except that, in the case of a rental, the landlord may, where it is reasonable to do so, condition permission for a modification on the renter's agreeing to restore the interior of the premises to the condition that existed before the modification, reasonable wear and tear excepted; (ii) a refusal to make reasonable accommodations in rules, practices, policies, or services when such accommodations may be necessary to afford such person equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling; or (iii) in connection with the design and construction of covered multi-family dwellings for first occupancy after March 13, 1991, a failure to design and construct dwellings in such a manner that:
1. The public use and common use areas of the dwellings are readily accessible to and usable by disabled persons;
 2. All the doors designed to allow passage into and within all premises are sufficiently wide to allow passage by disabled persons in wheelchairs; and
 3. All premises within covered multi-family dwelling units contain an accessible route into and through the dwelling; light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats, and other environmental controls are in accessible locations; there are reinforcements in the bathroom walls to allow later installation of grab bars; and there are usable kitchens and bathrooms such that an individual in a wheelchair can maneuver about the space. As used in this subdivision, the term "covered multi-family dwellings" means buildings consisting of four or more units if such buildings have one or more elevators and ground floor units in other buildings consisting of four or more units.
- C. Compliance with the appropriate requirements of the American National Standards for Building and Facilities (commonly cited as "ANSI A117.1") or with any other standards adopted as part of regulations promulgated by HUD providing accessibility and usability for physically disabled people shall be deemed to satisfy the requirements of subdivision B 3.

- D. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to invalidate or limit any Virginia law or regulation that requires dwellings to be designed and constructed in a manner that affords disabled persons greater access than is required by this chapter.

(1972, c. 591, § 36-88; 1973, c. 358; 1978, c. 138; 1984, c. 685; 1985, c. 344; 1989, c. 88; 1991, c. 557; 1992, c. 322; 1996, c. 327; 2020, cc. 477, 1137, 1140.)

§ 36-96.3:1. Rights and responsibilities with respect to the use of an assistance animal in a dwelling.

- A. A person with a disability, or a person associated with such person, who maintains an assistance animal in a dwelling shall comply with the rental agreement or any rules and regulations of the property owner applicable to all residents that do not interfere with an equal opportunity to use and enjoy the dwelling and any common areas of the premises. Such person shall not be required to pay a pet fee or deposit or any additional rent to maintain an assistance animal in a dwelling, but shall be responsible for any physical damages to the dwelling if residents who maintain pets are responsible for such damages in accordance with such documents or state law. Nothing herein shall be construed to affect any cause of action against any resident for other damages under the laws of the Commonwealth.
- B. If a person's disability is obvious or otherwise known to the person receiving a request, or if the need for a requested accommodation is readily apparent or known to the person receiving a request, the person receiving a request for reasonable accommodation may not request any additional verification about the requester's disability. If a person's disability is readily apparent or known to the person receiving the request but the disability-related need is not readily apparent or known, the person receiving the request may ask for additional verification to evaluate the requester's disability-related need.
- C. A person with a disability, or a person associated with such person, may submit a request for a reasonable accommodation to maintain an assistance animal in a dwelling. Subject to subsection B, the person receiving the request may ask the requester to provide reliable documentation of the disability and the disability-related need for an assistance animal, including documentation from any person with whom the person with a disability has or has had a therapeutic relationship.
- D. Subject to subsection B, a person receiving a request for a reasonable accommodation to maintain an assistance animal in a dwelling shall evaluate the request and any reliable supporting documentation to verify the disability and the disability-related need for the reasonable accommodation regarding an assistance animal.
- E. For purposes of this section, "therapeutic relationship" means the provision of medical care, program care, or personal care services, in good faith, to the person with a disability by (i) a mental health service provider as defined in § 54.1-2400.1; (ii) an individual or entity with a valid, unrestricted state license, certification, or registration to serve persons with disabilities; (iii) a person from a peer support or similar group that does not charge service recipients a fee or impose any actual or implied financial requirement and who

has actual knowledge about the requester's disability; or (iv) a caregiver, reliable third party, or government entity with actual knowledge of the requester's disability.

(2017, cc. 575, 729.)

§ 36-96.3:2. Reasonable accommodations; interactive process.

- A. When a request for a reasonable accommodation establishes that such accommodation is necessary to afford a person with a disability, and who has a disability-related need, an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling and does not impose either (i) an undue financial and administrative burden or (ii) a fundamental alteration to the nature of the operations of the person receiving the request, the request for the accommodation is reasonable and shall be granted.

- B. When a request for a reasonable accommodation may impose either (i) an undue financial and administrative burden or (ii) a fundamental alteration to the nature of the operations of the person receiving the request, the person receiving the request shall offer to engage in a good-faith interactive process to determine if there is an alternative accommodation that would effectively address the disability-related needs of the requester. An interactive process is not required when the requester does not have a disability and a disability-related need for the requested accommodation. As part of the interactive process, unless the reasonableness and necessity for the accommodation has been established by the requester, a request may be made for additional supporting documentation to evaluate the reasonableness of either the requested accommodation or any identified alternative accommodations. If an alternative accommodation is identified that effectively meets the requester's disability-related needs and is reasonable, the person receiving the reasonable accommodation request shall make the effective alternative accommodation. However, the requester shall not be required to accept an alternative accommodation if the requested accommodation is also reasonable. The various factors to be considered for determining whether an accommodation imposes an undue financial and administrative burden include (a) the cost of the requested accommodation, including any substantial increase in the cost of the owner's insurance policy; (b) the financial resources of the person receiving the request; (c) the benefits that the accommodation would provide to the person with a disability; and (d) the availability of alternative accommodations that would effectively meet the requester's disability-related needs.

- C. A request for a reasonable accommodation shall be determined on a case-by-case basis and may be denied if (i) the person on whose behalf the request for an accommodation was submitted is not disabled; (ii) there is no disability-related need for the accommodation; (iii) the accommodation imposes an undue financial and administrative burden on the person receiving the request; or (iv) the accommodation would fundamentally alter the nature of the operations of the person receiving the request. With respect to a request for reasonable accommodation to maintain an assistance animal in a dwelling, the requested assistance animal shall (a) work, provide assistance, or perform tasks or services for the benefit of the requester or (b) provide emotional support that alleviates one or more of the identified symptoms or effects of such requester's existing disability. In addition, as determined by the person receiving the request, the requested

assistance animal shall not pose a clear and present threat of substantial harm to others or to the dwelling itself that is not solely based on breed, size, or type or cannot be reduced or eliminated by another reasonable accommodation.

(2017, cc. 575, 729.)

§ 36-96.4. Discrimination in residential real estate-related transactions; unlawful practices by lenders, insurers, appraisers, etc.; deposit of state funds in such institutions.

- A. It is unlawful for any person or other entity, including any lending institution, whose business includes engaging in residential real estate-related transactions to discriminate against any person in making available such a transaction, or in the terms or conditions of such a transaction, or in the manner of providing such a transaction, because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, status as a veteran, or disability. It is not unlawful, however, for any person or other entity whose business includes engaging in residential real estate transactions to require any applicant to qualify financially for the loan or loans for which such person is making application.
- B. As used in this section, the term "residential real estate-related transaction" means any of the following:
1. The making or purchasing of loans or providing other financial assistance (i) for purchasing, constructing, improving, repairing, or maintaining a dwelling or (ii) secured by residential real estate; or
 2. The selling, brokering, insuring or appraising of residential real property. However, nothing in this chapter shall prohibit a person engaged in the business of furnishing appraisals of real property to take into consideration factors other than race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, status as a veteran, or disability.
- C. It shall be unlawful for any state, county, city, or municipal treasurer or governmental official whose responsibility it is to account for, to invest, or manage public funds to deposit or cause to be deposited any public funds in any lending institution provided for herein which is found to be committing discriminatory practices, where such findings were upheld by any court of competent jurisdiction. Upon such a court's judicial enforcement of any order to restrain a practice of such lending institution or for said institution to cease or desist in a discriminatory practice, the appropriate fiscal officer or treasurer of the Commonwealth or any political subdivision thereof which has funds deposited in any lending institution which is practicing discrimination, as set forth herein, shall take immediate steps to have the said funds withdrawn and redeposited in another lending institution. If for reasons of sound economic management, this action will result in a financial loss to the Commonwealth or any of its political subdivisions, the action may be deferred for a period not longer than one year. If the lending institution in question has corrected its discriminatory practices, any prohibition set forth in this section shall not apply.

(1972, c. 591, § 36-90; 1973, c. 358; 1989, c. 88; 1991, c. 557; 2020, cc. 1137, 1140.)

§ 36-96.5. Interference with enjoyment of rights of others under this chapter.

It shall be an unlawful discriminatory housing practice for any person to coerce, intimidate, threaten, or interfere with any person in the exercise or enjoyment of, or on account of his having exercised or enjoyed, or on the account of his having aided or encouraged any other person in the exercise or enjoyment of, any right granted or protected by this chapter.

(1972, c. 591, § 36-93; 1973, c. 358; 1991, c. 557.)

§ 36-96.6. Certain restrictive covenants void; instruments containing such covenants.

- A. Any restrictive covenant and any related reversionary interest, purporting to restrict occupancy or ownership of property on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, status as a veteran, or disability, whether heretofore or hereafter included in an instrument affecting the title to real or leasehold property, are declared to be void and contrary to the public policy of the Commonwealth.
- B. Any person who is asked to accept a document affecting title to real or leasehold property may decline to accept the same if it includes such a covenant or reversionary interest until the covenant or reversionary interest has been removed from the document. Refusal to accept delivery of an instrument for this reason shall not be deemed a breach of a contract to purchase, lease, mortgage, or otherwise deal with such property.
- C. No person shall solicit or accept compensation of any kind for the release or removal of any covenant or reversionary interest described in subsection A. Any person violating this subsection shall be liable to any person injured thereby in an amount equal to the greater of three times the compensation solicited or received, or \$500, plus reasonable attorney fees and costs incurred.
- D. A family care home, foster home, or group home in which individuals with physical disabilities, mental illness, intellectual disability, or developmental disability reside, with one or more resident counselors or other staff persons, shall be considered for all purposes residential occupancy by a single family when construing any restrictive covenant which purports to restrict occupancy or ownership of real or leasehold property to members of a single family or to residential use or structure.

(1972, c. 591, § 36-91; 1973, c. 358; 1986, c. 574; 1989, c. 88; 1991, c. 557; 1998, c. 873; 2012, cc. 476, 507; 2020, cc. 1137, 1140.)

§ 36-96.7. Familial status protection not applicable to housing for older persons.

- A. Nothing in this chapter regarding unlawful discrimination because of familial status shall apply to housing for older persons. As used in this section, "housing for older persons" means housing: (i) provided under any state or federal program that is specifically designed

and operated to assist elderly persons, as defined in the state or federal program; or (ii) intended for, and solely occupied by, persons sixty-two years of age or older; or (iii) intended for, and solely occupied by, at least one person fifty-five years of age or older per unit. The following criteria shall be met in determining whether housing qualifies as housing for older persons under clause (iii) of this subsection:

1. At least eighty percent of the occupied units are occupied by at least one person fifty-five years of age or older per unit; and
2. The publication of, and adherence to, policies and procedures which demonstrate an intent by the owner or manager to provide housing for persons fifty-five years of age or older.

B. Housing shall not fail to meet the requirements for housing for older persons by reason of:

1. Persons residing in such housing as of September 13, 1988, who do not meet the age requirements of clauses (ii) and (iii) of subsection A, provided that new occupants of such housing meet the age requirements of those clauses; or
2. Unoccupied units, provided that such units are reserved for occupancy by persons who meet the provisions of clauses (ii) and (iii) of subsection A.

(1991, c. 557; 1992, c. 322; 2000, c. 30.)

§ 36-96.8. Powers of Real Estate Board and Fair Housing Board.

- A. The Real Estate Board and the Fair Housing Board, as provided in this chapter, have the power for the purposes of this chapter to initiate and receive complaints, conduct investigations of any violation of this chapter, attempt resolution of complaints by conference and conciliation, and, upon failure of such efforts, issue a charge and refer it to the Attorney General for action.
- B. The Real Estate Board and the Fair Housing Board shall perform all acts necessary and proper to carry out the provisions of this chapter and may promulgate and amend necessary regulations.

(1972, c. 591, § 36-94; 1973, c. 372; 1975, c. 566; 1984, c. 271; 1987, c. 167; 1991, c. 557; 2003, c. 575.)

§ 36-96.9. Procedures for receipt or initiation of complaint; notice to parties; filing of answer.

- A. A complaint under § 36-96.8 shall be filed with the Board in writing within one year after the alleged discriminatory housing practice occurred or terminated.
- B. Any person not named in the complaint and who is identified as a respondent in the course of the investigation may be joined as an additional or substitute respondent upon written notice

to such person by the Board explaining the basis for the Board's belief that such person is properly joined as a respondent.

- C. Any respondent may file an answer to a complaint. Complaints and answers must be made in writing, under oath or affirmation, and in such form as the Board requires. Complaints and answers may be reasonably and fairly amended at any time.
- D. Upon the filing of a complaint or initiation of a complaint by the Board or its designee, the Board shall provide written notice to the parties as follows:
 - 1. To the aggrieved person acknowledging the filing and advising such person of the time limits and choice of forums under this chapter; and
 - 2. To the respondent, not later than ten days after such filing or the identification of an additional respondent under subsection B, identifying the alleged discriminatory housing practice and advising such respondent of the procedural rights and obligations of respondents under this chapter with a copy of the original complaint and copies of any supporting documentation referenced in the complaint.

(1991, c. 557.)

§ 36-96.10. Procedures for investigation.

- A. The Board shall commence proceedings with respect to a complaint within thirty days after receipt of the complaint, and shall complete the investigation within 100 days thereof unless it is impracticable to do so. If the Board is unable to complete the investigation within 100 days after the receipt of the complaint, the aggrieved person and the respondent shall be notified in writing of the reasons for not doing so.
- B. When conducting an investigation of a complaint filed under this chapter, the Board shall have the right to interview any person who may have any information which may further its investigation and to request production of any records or documents for inspection and copying in the possession of any person which may further the investigation. Such persons shall be interviewed under oath. The Board or its designated subordinates shall have the power to issue and serve a subpoena to any such person to appear and testify and to produce any such records or documents for inspection and copying. Said subpoenas and discovery may be ordered to the same extent and subject to the same limitations as would apply if the subpoenas or discovery were ordered or served as part of a civil action in the Commonwealth of Virginia. In case of refusal or neglect to obey a subpoena, the Board may petition for its enforcement in the Circuit Court for the City of Richmond. The hearing on such petition shall be given priority on the court docket over all cases which are not otherwise given priority on the court docket by law.
- C. At the end of each investigation under this section, the Board shall prepare a final investigative report containing:

1. The names and dates of contacts with witnesses;
2. A summary and the dates of correspondence and other contacts with the aggrieved person and the respondent;
3. A summary description of other pertinent records;
4. A summary of witness statements; and
5. Answers to interrogatories.

A final report under this subsection may be amended if additional evidence is later discovered.

- D. The Board shall make available to the aggrieved person and the respondent, at any time, upon request following completion of the Board's investigation, information derived from an investigation and any final investigative report relating to that investigation.

(1975, c. 566, § 36-94.1; 1991, c. 557; 1998, c. 634.)

§ 36-96.11. Reasonable cause determination and effect.

The Board shall, within 100 days after the filing of a complaint, determine, based on the facts and after consultation with the Office of the Attorney General, whether reasonable cause exists to believe that a discriminatory housing practice has occurred or is about to occur, unless it is impracticable to do so or unless the Board has approved a conciliation agreement with respect to the complaint. If the Board is unable to determine whether reasonable cause exists to believe that a discriminatory housing practice has occurred or is about to occur within 100 days after receipt of the complaint, the aggrieved person and the respondent shall be notified in writing of the reasons therefor.

(1991, c. 557; 1998, c. 634.)

§ 36-96.12. No reasonable cause determination and effect.

If the Board determines that no reasonable cause exists to believe that a discriminatory housing practice has occurred or is about to occur, the Board shall promptly dismiss the complaint notifying the parties within thirty days of such determination. The Board shall make public disclosure of each dismissal.

(1991, c. 557.)

§ 36-96.13. Conciliation.

During the period beginning with the filing of such complaint and ending with the filing of a charge or a dismissal by the Board, the Board shall, to the extent feasible, engage in conciliation with respect to such complaint.

- A. A conciliation agreement arising out of such conciliation shall be an agreement between the respondent and the complainant, and shall be subject to approval by the Board.
- B. A conciliation agreement may provide for binding arbitration of the dispute arising from the complaint. Any such arbitration that results from a conciliation agreement may award appropriate relief, including monetary relief.
- C. Each conciliation agreement shall be made public unless the complainant and respondent otherwise agree and the Board determines that disclosure is not required to further the purposes of this chapter.
- D. Whenever the Board has reasonable cause to believe that a respondent has breached a conciliation agreement, the Board may refer the matter to the Attorney General with a recommendation that a civil action be filed under § 36-96.17 for the enforcement of such agreement.

(1991, c. 557; 1992, c. 322.)

§ 36-96.14. Issuance of a charge.

Upon failure to resolve a complaint by conciliation and after consultation with the Office of the Attorney General, the Board shall issue a charge on behalf of the aggrieved person or persons and shall immediately refer the charge to the Attorney General, who shall proceed with the charge as directed by § 36-96.16. The Board may not issue a charge under this section regarding an alleged discriminatory housing practice after the beginning of a trial of a civil action commenced by the aggrieved party under an Act of Congress or a state law seeking relief with respect to that discriminatory housing practice.

- 1. Such charge:
 - a. Shall consist of a short and plain statement of the facts upon which the Board has found reasonable cause to believe that a discriminatory housing practice has occurred or is about to occur;
 - b. Shall be based on the final investigative report; and
 - c. Need not be limited to the acts or grounds alleged in the complaint filed under § 36-96.9.
- 2. After the Board issues a charge under this section, the Board shall cause a copy thereof to be served on each respondent named in such charge and on each aggrieved person on whose behalf the complaint was filed.

(1991, c. 557.)

§ 36-96.15. Prompt judicial action.

If the Board concludes at any time following the filing of a complaint and after consultation with the Office of the Attorney General, that prompt judicial action is necessary to carry out the purposes of this chapter, the Board may authorize a civil action by the Attorney General for appropriate temporary or preliminary relief. Upon receipt of such authorization, the Attorney General shall promptly commence and maintain such action. Any temporary restraining order or other order granting preliminary or temporary relief shall be issued in accordance with the Virginia Rules of Civil Procedure. The commencement of a civil action under this section shall not affect the initiation or continuation of administrative proceedings by the Board under § 36-96.8.

(1991, c. 557.)

§ 36-96.16. Civil action by Attorney General upon referral of charge by the Real Estate Board.

- A. Not later than thirty days after a charge is referred by the Board to the Attorney General under § 36-96.14, the Attorney General shall commence and maintain a civil action seeking relief on behalf of the complainant in the circuit court for the city, county, or town in which the unlawful discriminatory housing practice has occurred or is about to occur.
- B. Any aggrieved person with respect to the issues to be determined in a civil action pursuant to subsection A may intervene as of right.
- C. In a civil action under this section, if the court or jury finds that a discriminatory housing practice has occurred or is about to occur, the court or jury may grant, as relief, any relief which a court could grant with respect to such discriminatory housing practice in a civil action under § 36-96.18. Any relief so granted that would accrue to an aggrieved person under § 36-96.18 shall also accrue to the aggrieved person in a civil action under this section. If monetary relief is sought for the benefit of an aggrieved person who does not intervene in the civil action, the court shall not award such relief if that aggrieved person has not complied with discovery orders entered by the court in the course of the action brought under this section.
- D. In any court proceeding arising under this section, the court, in its discretion, may allow the prevailing party reasonable attorney's fees and costs.

(1991, c. 557; 1994, c. 814.)

§ 36-96.17. Civil action by Attorney General; matters involving the legality of any local zoning or other land use ordinance; pattern or practice cases; or referral of conciliation agreement for enforcement.

- A. If the Board determines, after consultation with the Office of the Attorney General, that an alleged discriminatory housing practice involves the legality of any local zoning or land use ordinance, instead of issuing a charge, the Board shall immediately refer the matter to the Attorney General for civil action in the appropriate circuit court for appropriate relief. A civil action under this subsection shall be commenced no later than the expiration of eighteen

months after the date of the occurrence or the termination of the alleged discriminatory housing practice.

- B. Whenever the Attorney General has reasonable cause to believe that any person or group of persons is engaged in a pattern or practice of resistance to the full enjoyment of any of the rights granted by this chapter, or that any group of persons has been denied any of the rights granted by this chapter and such denial raises an issue of general public importance, the Attorney General may commence a civil action in the appropriate circuit court for appropriate relief.
- C. In the event of a breach of a conciliation agreement by a respondent, the Board may authorize a civil action by the Attorney General. The Attorney General may commence a civil action in any appropriate circuit court for appropriate relief. A civil action under this subsection shall be commenced no later than the expiration of ninety days after the referral of such alleged breach.
- D. The Attorney General, on behalf of the Board, or other party at whose request a subpoena is issued, under this chapter, may enforce such subpoena in appropriate proceedings in the appropriate circuit court.
- E. In a civil action under subsections A, B, and C, the court may:
 - 1. Award such preventive relief, including a permanent or temporary injunction, restraining order, or other order against the person responsible for a violation of this chapter as is necessary to assure the full enjoyment of the rights granted by this chapter.
 - 2. Assess a civil penalty against the respondent (i) in an amount not exceeding \$50,000 for a first violation; and (ii) in an amount not exceeding \$100,000 for any subsequent violation.
 - 3. Award the prevailing party reasonable attorney's fees and costs. The Commonwealth shall be liable for such fees and costs to the extent provided by the Code of Virginia.

The court or jury may award such other relief to the aggrieved person, as the court deems appropriate, including compensatory damages, and punitive damages without limitation otherwise imposed by state law.

- F. Upon timely application, any person may intervene in a civil action commenced by the Attorney General under subsection A, B or C which involves an alleged discriminatory housing practice with respect to which such person is an aggrieved person or a party to a conciliation agreement. The court may grant such appropriate relief to any such intervening party as is authorized to be granted to a plaintiff in a civil action under § 36-96.18.

(1991, c. 557; 1994, c. 814.)

§ 36-96.18. Civil action; enforcement by private parties.

- A. An aggrieved person may commence a civil action in an appropriate United States district court or state court not later than two years after the occurrence or the termination of an alleged discriminatory housing practice, or the breach of a conciliation agreement entered into under this chapter, whichever occurs last, to obtain appropriate relief with respect to such discriminatory housing practice or breach.
- B. An aggrieved person may commence a civil action under § 36-96.18 A no later than 180 days after the conclusion of the administrative process with respect to a complaint or charge, or not later than two years after the occurrence or the termination of an alleged discriminatory housing practice, whichever is later. This subsection shall not apply to actions arising from a breach of a conciliation agreement. An aggrieved person may commence a civil action under this section whether or not a complaint has been filed under § 36-96.9 and without regard to the status of any such complaint. If the Board or a federal agency has obtained a conciliation agreement with the consent of an aggrieved person, no action may be filed under this section by such aggrieved person with respect to the alleged discriminatory housing practice which forms the basis for such complaint except for the purpose of enforcing the terms of such an agreement.
- C. In a civil action under subsection A, if the court or jury finds that a discriminatory housing practice has occurred or is about to occur, the court or jury may award to the plaintiff, as the prevailing party, compensatory and punitive damages, without limitation otherwise imposed by state law, and the court may award reasonable attorney's fees and costs, and subject to subsection D, may grant as relief, any permanent or temporary injunction, temporary restraining order, or other order, including an order enjoining the defendant from engaging in such practice or order such affirmative action as may be appropriate.
- D. Relief granted under subsection C shall not affect any contract, sale, encumbrance, or lease consummated before the granting of such relief and involving bona fide purchasers, encumbrancer or tenant, without actual notice of the filing of a complaint with the Board or civil action under this chapter.
- E. Upon timely application, the Attorney General may intervene in such civil action, if the Attorney General certifies that the case is of general public importance. Upon intervention, the Attorney General may obtain such relief as would be available to the private party under subsection C.

(1972, c. 591, § 36-94; 1973, c. 372; 1975, c. 566; 1984, c. 271; 1987, c. 167; 1991, c. 557; 1994, c. 814.)

§ 36-96.19. Witness fees.

Witnesses summoned by a subpoena under this chapter shall be entitled to the same witness and mileage fees as witnesses in proceedings in the courts of the Commonwealth. Fees payable to a witness summoned by a subpoena issued at the request of a party shall be paid by that party or, where a party is unable to pay the fees, by the Board.

(1991, c. 557.)

§ 36-96.20. Additional powers of the Real Estate Board; action on real estate licenses.

- A. In any case in which the Board has received or initiated a complaint and conducted an investigation of any violation of this chapter and determined that there exists reasonable cause to believe that a real estate broker, real estate salesperson, real estate brokerage firm licensed in accordance with Chapter 21 (§ 54.1-2100 et seq.), or their agents or employees have engaged in discriminatory housing practices prohibited by the Virginia Fair Housing Law (§ 36-96.1 et seq.) or Chapter 5 (§ 6.2-500 et seq.) of Title 6.2, the Board shall immediately attempt to resolve the matter by conference and conciliation, and upon failure to resolve the matter in such manner, may initiate an administrative hearing to determine whether to revoke, suspend or fail to renew the license or licenses in question. Not less than 10 days prior to the initial conference hereunder, the Board shall prepare and deliver to the respondent or respondents a written report setting forth the scope, findings and conclusions of the investigation conducted under this section.
- B. If any person operating under a real estate license issued by the Board, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21 (§ 54.1-2100 et seq.) of Title 54.1, is found by a court to have violated any provision of this chapter and this fact is so certified to the Board, the Board, after notification to the licensee, shall take appropriate action to consider suspension or revocation of the license of the licensee.

(1972, c. 591, §§ 36-94, 36-95.2; 1973, c. 372; 1975, c. 566; 1984, c. 271; 1987, c. 167; 1991, c. 557; 1992, c. 84; 2003, c. 575; 2010, c. 794.)

§ 36-96.21. Powers of counties, cities and towns.

- A. Any county, city or town which has any ordinance in effect on January 1, 1991, enacted under the Virginia Fair Housing Law (§ 36-86 et seq.), the Virginia Human Rights Act (§ 2.2-3900 et seq.), or any other applicable state law may continue to enforce such ordinance and may amend the ordinance, provided the amendment is not inconsistent with this chapter. Nothing herein shall be construed to prohibit any county, city or town under this subsection from submitting amended ordinances to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for substantial equivalency pursuant to Title VIII, Civil Rights Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. §§ 3604-3606), as amended.
- B. The governing body of any county, city or town may enact ordinances in accordance with the provisions of this chapter provided that (i) such ordinances conform to this chapter and are enacted prior to September 30, 1992, and (ii) such amended ordinances are submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for a determination of substantial equivalency pursuant to Title VIII, Civil Rights Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. §§ 3604-3606), as amended.

(1972, c. 591, § 36-96; 1975, c. 345; 1982, c. 113; 1991, c. 557; 1996, cc. 173, 369.)

§ 36-96.22. Application of chapter.

If any provision of this chapter or the application thereof to any person or circumstances is held invalid, the invalidity shall not affect the other provisions or applications of this chapter which can be given effect without the invalid provisions or application, and to this end the provisions of this chapter are severable.

(1991, c. 557.)

§ 36-96.23. Construction of law.

Nothing in this chapter shall abridge the federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. § 3601 et seq.) as amended.

(1991, c. 557.)