

Fair Housing Guidance for Medical Professionals/Care Providers

Definition of disability under the Fair Housing Act

- physical and/or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities,
- record of such an impairment, or
- regarded as having such an impairment.

Reasonable Accommodation: a change, exception, or adjustment to a rule, policy, practice, or service that may be necessary for a person with a disability to have equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling, including public and common use spaces.

Reasonable Modification: a physical change to the interior of a tenant's own unit or to the common use areas that allows the person full use and enjoyment of their housing.

Verification Letter

Housing Providers may need to rely on the advice and recommendations of Medical Professionals or Care Providers (including mental or behavioral health professionals, social workers, case managers) when evaluating requests for accommodations or modifications. Such a letter may be necessary to verify that the tenant has a disability and that an accommodation or modification is necessary because of that disability.

The Verification Letter confirms that:

1. They are a person with a disability as defined within Fair Housing law, and
2. The requested accommodation/modification is necessary because of their disability to fully use and enjoy their housing.

It is important to include or address each of these two points in the Verification Letter.

Tenants do not have to disclose any information about the nature or extent of their disability. The Verification Letter does not need to include any specific information about the individual's diagnosis.

If a tenant's disability and the disability-related need for the accommodation or modification is obvious, a Verification Letter is not needed.

Examples of Accommodations

- Assigning an accessible parking space for a person with a mobility impairment
- Permitting a tenant to transfer to a ground-floor unit
- Adjusting a rent payment schedule to accommodate when an individual receives income assistance
- Permitting an assistance animal in a "no pets" building for a person with a disability
- Approving an additional bedroom beyond what you qualify for because you need a live-in aide or an aide who stays overnight to assist you because of your disability
- Providing an assigned parking space closest to your unit even though there are otherwise no assigned parking spaces
- Assigning a mailbox that is located in a position that you can reach or to have your mail delivered and stored in another secure location

Any cost associated with accommodations are generally covered by the property owner.

Examples of Modifications

- Removal of carpet due to an allergy or mobility impairment
- Installation of grab bars in your bathroom to transfer to and from a wheelchair or to mitigate disability-related limitations that impact your balance or stability
- Installation of visual alerts for doorbell, fire alarm, or other sound alerts in your home because of your inability to hear audible alerts
- Installation of a ramp or transfer to a different unit without steps
- Widening doorways to accommodate a wheelchair or other mobility device
- Lowering cabinets and countertops
- Switching knobs and faucets to lever handles
- Installation of additional or different locks or an alarm for when the door opens in order to keep your child with a disability safe from wandering away from the home

Costs associated with modifications are generally the responsibility of the tenant. However, if the tenant lives in public housing, the cost is generally covered by the public housing authority.