



**CITY OF IOWA CITY  
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**  
410 E. Washington St.  
Iowa City, IA 52240  
[www.icgov.org/humanrights](http://www.icgov.org/humanrights)  
356-5022 or 356-5015  
[humanrights@iowa-city.org](mailto:humanrights@iowa-city.org)

**KNOW YOUR  
HOUSING  
RIGHTS**

**And**

**Rental Subsidies**

**In Iowa City**

November 2019



(Housing Choice Voucher/Section 8)

## **I PARTICIPATE IN THE HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER (HCV) PROGRAM. (COMMONLY KNOWN AS ‘SECTION 8’) WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS?**

Fair Housing laws in Iowa City protect you from discrimination by landlords, property managers, and others involved in rentals. You are protected if you participate in the HCV program.

The fair housing laws also make it illegal to discriminate in housing based on age, color, creed, disability, gender identity, marital status, familial status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, presence or absence of dependents or public assistance source of income.

## **IS THE HCV PROTECTION AVAILABLE AT ALL RENTAL PROPERTIES IN JOHNSON COUNTY?**

No. Only housing properties located inside the city limits of Iowa City are covered. Other housing in Johnson County does not include HCV protection. Landlords and managers in other parts of Johnson County can refuse to accept vouchers.

## **HOW DO I KNOW IF SOMEONE IS DISCRIMINATING AGAINST ME?**

- Advertising that indicates in any way that Section 8 will not be accepted.
- Rejecting an applicant solely because the applicant uses Section 8 or another subsidy.
- Reserving certain units or buildings for Section 8 or subsidy tenants and denying them rental opportunities in other portions of the complex or development.
- Saying they only take a certain number of Section 8 tenants or that all of their Section 8 units are full.
- Denying amenities or treating section 8 renters differently. (“Only market rate tenants have access to the party room and rooftop garden.” “Oh, that’s the market rate lobby. The affordable unit door is over here.”)
- You may not know, but if something seems off or odd to you, you might be right. For example, the landlord is friendly and seems happy to show you the apartment until you mention you have a voucher. Then their attitude suddenly changes and they rush through the rest of the showing while acting cold to you.

## **DOES A LANDLORD HAVE TO RENT TO ME BECAUSE I HAVE A VOUCHER?**

No. You must still apply and show you can pay your share of the rent. The landlord may apply *the same* application and background check rules they use with everyone to a person with a voucher. But a landlord cannot impose extra requirements just to keep out HCV applicants, *and cannot use different application and background check rules for them than people without vouchers.*

## **A LANDLORD OR MANAGER MAY LEGALLY TURN YOU DOWN BECAUSE OF:**

- Bad credit history.
- Eviction history.
- Negative rental references.

As a tenant, you are expected to follow the lease and program requirements, to pay rent on time, and to maintain the rental in good condition.

The landlord or manager is expected to provide services according to the lease and to maintain the rental in a decent, safe, and sanitary manner.

However, if you suspect that the landlord is using your background as a pretext, or excuse, not to rent to you when you believe (or even wonder if) the real reason is that you have a voucher, please contact the Iowa City Human Rights Office as described below. We can discuss your concerns with you and you can decide whether you would like to file a complaint.

## **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF HOUSING DISCRIMINATION HAPPENS TO ME?**

Contact the Iowa City Human Rights Office right away. If you want to file a complaint, you must do it within 300 days of the discriminatory event. However, we encourage you to file as soon as possible. Document what happened, when it happened, who was involved, where it happened, who witnessed it, and any other information you remember. Save any paperwork related to the situation. For more information about your housing rights, contact Iowa City Human Rights at [humanrights@iowa-city.org](mailto:humanrights@iowa-city.org), 319-356-5022 or 319-356-5015. Find more information at [www.icgov.org/humanrights](http://www.icgov.org/humanrights).