

Texas Workforce Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Guidance Reinforces Housing Rights for the Disabled *TWC Civil Rights Division Enforces Fair Housing Act*

AUSTIN – The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) encourages residential occupants with disabilities to be aware of new guidance by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Justice, under the Federal Housing Act (FHA), that reinforces their rights to make reasonable structural modifications to dwellings which facilitate full enjoyment of the premises.

TWC's Civil Rights Division (CRD) enforces laws to ensure that all Texas residents are given equal access to housing as federally mandated by FHA, which prohibits discrimination in housing based on disability, race, color, religion, national origin, sex and familial status. In Fiscal Year 2007, TWC's Civil Rights Division resolved more than 300 cases involving allegations of housing discrimination.

The new guidance, which coincides with the 40th anniversary of the FHA and National Fair Housing Month in April, is designed to help housing providers and homeowners' associations better understand their obligations and inform disabled people about their rights regarding the FHA's reasonable modifications provision.

Housing providers or homeowners' associations are prohibited from refusing to allow occupants to modify residences that would enable full accessibility of the premises. Examples of reasonable modifications, for which occupants must pay, include widening doorways to make rooms more wheelchair accessible, and installing a ramp to provide access to common use areas such as clubhouses.

Complaints filed by prospective renters or home buyers also can range from being denied the chance to rent or purchase housing to being told housing is unavailable when it is on the market. Being shown apartments or homes only in certain neighborhoods or being refused information about mortgage loans are other types of housing discrimination.

To file a complaint with TWC's Civil Rights Division alleging housing discrimination, you may:

- File a complaint in person at the CRD office, 1117 Trinity St., Room 144-T in Austin, Texas;
- Call the CRD office toll free at 1-888-452-4778 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., CDT, weekdays; or
- Write to Texas Workforce Commission, Civil Rights Division, 1117 Trinity St., Room 144-T, Austin, Texas 78701

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The Texas Workforce Commission is a state agency dedicated to helping Texas employers, workers and communities prosper economically. For details on TWC and the programs it offers in unison with its network of local workforce development boards, call (512) 463-8556 or visit www.texasworkforce.org.