

Filing a Fair Housing Complaint

Remedies under the law:

When an individual believes that he or she has been harmed by an unlawful discriminatory housing practice, the three alternative legal options are available:

1. **Private Suit:** The individual may institute a private lawsuit in federal, state, or local court. The statute of limitations is two (2) years from the alleged discriminatory practice. Unlimited damages may be sought.
2. **Federal/HUD:** The federal government provides that a complaint may be filed with the Office of Housing & Urban Development. HUD is authorized to investigate and conciliate complaints but can refer complaints to states or localities that have fair housing laws which provide substantially equivalent rights and remedies. HUD may order a respondent to pay damages, civil penalties, and attorney's fees if discrimination can be found.
3. **PA State/PHRC:** A complaint may be filed with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) within 180 days of the alleged discriminatory action. Currently, the PHRC is the substantially equivalent agency to HUD which means that individual cases may be referred to the Commission by HUD. If discrimination is found the Commission may order an award for actual damages, damages for humiliation and embarrassment, and assess a civil penalty.

Agencies to contact:

Please reach out to any of the following agencies to file a complaint and general inquiries:

- Shenango Valley Urban League (SVUL) – 724-981-5310
 - SVUL provides information to individuals looking to learn more about how to file complaints and the overall complaint process. Complaints that are not resolved by the SVUL are referred by the complainant to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission or HUD.
- Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) – 412-565-5395 (Pittsburgh Regional Office) or 717-787-4410 (Harrisburg, PA general inquiries)
 - PHRC is tasked to enforce state laws that prohibit discrimination. PHRC investigates housing complaints on behalf of HUD.
- Fair Housing & Equal Opportunity (HUD-FHEO) – 215-861-7646 (Region III Philadelphia Office) or 1-800-669-9777 (general inquiries)
 - HUD-FHEO receives complaints regarding alleged violations of the Fair Housing Act.
- Fair Housing Partnership of Greater Pittsburgh (FHP) – 412-391-2535
 - The FHP is a non-profit organization dedicated to creating equal housing choice.