



THE MAYOR'S OFFICE OF FAIR HOUSING AND EQUITY



CITY OF BOSTON

OPENING DOORS TO EQUITY AND OPPORTUNITY

a message

from our



MAYOR

The Office of Fair Housing and Equity is responsible for ensuring fair and equitable access to housing and other opportunities. We strive to increase equity and reduce barriers to opportunity for persons living and working in the City of Boston through education, collaboration, policy, and enforcement. Boston is the place we've elected to call home and we want it to continue to be a wonderful place to live, work, and raise families. In Boston, diversity is one of our greatest strengths and we will continue to work toward equity and opportunity in housing for all Bostonians.

—*Martin J. Walsh*

OUR COMMISSIONS

BOSTON FAIR HOUSING COMMISSION

The Boston Fair Housing Commission (BFHC) was established in 1982, and strengthened by the 1991 consent decree between the city of Boston, the Boston Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The BFHC's powers to investigate housing discrimination were increased through a 1994 home rule petition; and in 1999 HUD accepted the office into the Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP), allowing the BFHC to conduct investigations on its behalf. The BFHC endeavors to eliminate discrimination and increase access to housing in Boston through its Investigation and Enforcement program, Affirmative Marketing program, and housing listing service (Metrolist). The BFHC periodically conducts an Analysis of Impediments to housing/

Assessment of Fair Housing, and then develops Fair Housing Action plans. The commission also provides fair housing trainings throughout the City of Boston. We strive to ensure that all City of Boston residents can exercise their Fair Housing Choice. Fair Housing Choice means that individuals and families have the information, options, and protection to live where they choose without illegal discrimination and other barriers related to their protected categories.

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Human Rights Commission provides policy guidance that advances social justice and equity. The Commission Investigates and monitors city vendor compliance with the City of Boston CORI Ordinance. The Commission also provides technical assistance to vendors in adopting CORI hiring practices and procedures that are consistent with those of the City of Boston.

METROLIST

WHAT IS METROLIST?

Metrolist is a program created to expand choice in housing. Acting as a clearinghouse, Metrolist shares the information and resources it receives and gathers from a number of housing agencies, landlords, and developers.

METROLIST EXPANDS HOUSING CHOICE BY PROVIDING:

- Access to a regional housing opportunity database, matching housing needs with available housing.
- Lists of income restricted and affordable apartments.
- Announcements of developments with open waiting lists.
- Rental listings from Boston Housing Authority (BHA), Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership (MBHP), and from owners and managers of private housing.
- Information about upcoming housing lotteries.
- News of affordable homeownership opportunities.
- Notices of homebuyer educational offerings and assistance.
- Basic housing eligibility information and other resources.
- Lists of shelters and lodging houses.
- Referrals to housing and human service agencies.

WHAT STEPS ARE NEEDED TO ACCESS METROLIST?

- At least one household member must be Boston resident¹.
- Complete an intake form.
- Indicate unit size desired, and any features needed.
- Provide income information and number of household members.
- Provide basic demographic information.

In-take forms are available online, by phone, or in person at the Metrolist office Monday through Friday from 9am to 4pm.

Metrolist requests information about household demographics and needs. This information includes the following: yearly household income; possession or need of subsidy; and the number of bedrooms needed. Typically the form takes under five minutes to complete. Metrolist does not share this information with others without consent.

METROLIST

WHO PROVIDES METROLIST WITH NOTICES OF HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES?

- Owners and managers of federally assisted and/or state-assisted housing in the Boston metropolitan statistical area.
- Owners and managers of housing with financial or other assistance from the City of Boston.
- Owners and managers of affordable units restricted by the Boston Redevelopment Authority.
- Owners and managers of private housing, on a voluntary basis.

HOW CAN I ACCESS METROLIST?

In person: Monday–Friday, 9am–4pm

By phone: Monday–Friday, 9am–4pm

Or complete and submit in-take forms online through our website:

<http://www.boston.gov/fairhousing/fairhousing/metrolist.asp>

Metrolist is intended for City of Boston residents and people who may be homeless, in shelters, or in transitional housing. Boston residency is defined as a household that, at the time of application for an affordable housing unit, is a documented full-time resident of the City of Boston. Former Boston residents who can show that they were a documented full-time resident of the city on or after January 1, 1999 are also recognized as Boston residents. Former residents who can document that they were displaced from an apartment in the city as a result of the end of rent control in 1995-6 are also considered Boston residents; and individuals who are employed within the City of Boston are considered as Boston residents.

**OFFICE OF
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Boston City Hall
One City Hall Square
Room 966
Boston, MA 02201

617-635-2500
TTY: 617-635-2541
www.boston.gov/fairhousing

CITY OF BOSTON CORI ORDINANCE

WHAT IS A CORI?

CORI stands for Criminal Offender Record Information. CORI reports can come in many different forms and variations. However, when an employer requests a CORI about a potential or current employee, it will contain only conviction history and current, open cases where there was an arrest and a finding is pending.

WHAT IS THE CITY OF BOSTON CORI ORDINANCE (CBC 4-7)?

The City of Boston CORI Ordinance (CBC 4-7) was passed in 2005 to provide people who have criminal records fair opportunities for employment with City of Boston Vendors. The ordinance states that vendors who contract with the City of Boston must have CORI hiring practices that are consistent with the City of Boston's hiring practices. For example, the City of Boston only requires a CORI for positions it deems to be "sensitive," which includes but is not limited to positions working with children, elderly, and/or disabled populations.

WHAT IS THE POLICY UNDER THE CITY OF BOSTON CORI ORDINANCE?

- CORI checks should only be conducted for sensitive positions. CORI checks should only be conducted after a person has been deemed qualified through an interview or other means.
- If the results of the CORI raise concerns, a copy should be shared and discussed with the applicant. The applicant must be given an opportunity to present information regarding the accuracy and relevance of the report prior to a final employment decision.
- The Office of Fair Housing and Equity is responsible for investigating complaints of vendor non-compliance, and for providing recommendations to the appropriate city agency on how to resolve issues that are found.

WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF NON-COMPLIANCE UNDER THE CITY OF BOSTON CORI ORDINANCE?

- Vendor job application included, "Have you ever been convicted of a crime?"
- Vendor asked you to complete a CORI background check before an interview, if an interview is part of the hiring process.
- Vendor asked you about your criminal background during your interview.
- Vendor asked you to complete a CORI background check for a non-sensitive position.
- Vendor refused you a job opportunity because of your CORI and did not supply you with an opportunity to explain your CORI.

WHERE CAN I ACCESS THE CITY OF BOSTON VENDORS LIST?

Visit www.boston.gov/fairhousing/cori.asp to access the list of City of Boston CORI-friendly employers as well as resources for CORI-related concerns. Job seekers must contact the individual vendor to find out about any existing employment opportunities. The City of Boston does not guarantee employment opportunities are currently available.

CITY OF BOSTON CORI ORDINANCE

WHAT CAN I DO IF A VENDOR VIOLATES THE CORI ORDINANCE?

If you feel that a vendor has violated the CORI Ordinance, please contact the Office of Fair Housing and Equity at the website listed below, or 617-635-2500, or fairhousing@boston.gov.

WHERE CAN I FIND HELP WITH CORI CONCERNS FOR NON-CITY OF BOSTON VENDORS?

Boston Workers Alliance

Boston Workers Alliance is community organization that has worked, since 2005, to end the employment barriers faced by members with a past court record.
www.bostonworkersalliance.org | 617-606-3580

Fair Employment Project

Fair Employment Project provides assistance for those facing legal issues in the workplace.
www.fairemploymentproject.org | 617-390-2593

Greater Boston Legal Services

Through on-site legal clinics at Roxbury District Court and Dorchester District Court, Greater Boston Legal Services provides advice, assistance and representation so that individuals can successfully petition to seal CORI records.
www.gbls.org | 617-371-1234

SPAN, INC

SPAN, INC provides assistance and resources to persons with convictions.
www.spaninc.org | 617-482-2717

STRIVE Boston

STRIVE provides jobs support services to persons with convictions.
www.bostonstrive.org | 617-825-1800

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AFFIRMATIVE FAIR MARKETING PROGRAM

The City of Boston's Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Program originated in 1986 to establish standards for public outreach, advertising, applicant screening, and tenant/buyer selection. The Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Program was broadened in 1991 to go beyond standard marketing procedures and to implement a proactive effort to expand housing access to all Boston residents.

WHAT IS THE AFFIRMATIVE MARKETING PROGRAM?

The Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Program is designed to promote fair housing choice, overcome historic patterns of segregation, and foster inclusive communities for all. The intention of the program is to encourage households least likely to apply for housing because of location, to increase their awareness of available housing, and to facilitate access to housing opportunities.

Through the review and monitoring of Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plans, and by providing technical assistance, the Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Program supports housing developers in meeting their obligation to affirmatively further fair housing—together, promoting fair housing choice for all persons.

WHO COMPLIES WITH THE AFFIRMATIVE MARKETING PROGRAM?

Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing is required of all developers of five or more units with government assistance including land acquisition or financial assistance from the Department of Neighborhood Development (DND), the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (including DHCD), or the federal government (HUD).

All affordable units restricted under the city of Boston's Inclusionary Development Program (IDP) are subject to Affirmative Marketing requirements.

AFFIRMATIVE FAIR MARKETING PROGRAM

WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS TO AN AFFIRMATIVE FAIR HOUSING MARKETING PLAN?

The two key components of an Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plan (AFHM Plan) are the marketing and outreach process and the tenant /buyer selection process.

The marketing, advertising, and community outreach activities must include efforts to inform the general public as well as those least likely to apply. The AFHM Plan must include advertising in a diverse selection of community newspapers and outreach to housing and service agencies throughout Boston; providing information about income and other eligibility requirements and preferences; and stating clearly dates, times, and deadlines for potential applicants to learn about and apply for the housing offered.

For tenant/buyer selection, the AFHM Plan must list the steps of the application process, eligibility screening and selection procedures relating to occupancy—including rejections and appeals, and waiting list management. The AFHM Plan may include policies and practices, such as providing reasonable accommodations and language access.

The Affirmative Marketing Program monitors each step of the marketing efforts and selection process to ensure compliance with the program.

To receive Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plan forms, and/or to request the Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Program Manual, please contact:

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INVESTIGATIONS & ENFORCEMENT

In the City of Boston, it's against the law to discriminate in the sale, rental, financing, or other services related to housing on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, familial status, disability, marital status, military status, age, sexual orientation, source of income, gender identity and expression, and ancestry.

In Boston, the only exemptions from some federal, state and local Fair Housing laws are:

- Owner-occupied two to four family homes.
- Properties with three apartments or less, one of which is occupied by an elderly or infirmed person for whom the presence of children would be a hardship.

All housing providers are prohibited from making discriminatory statements and engaging in intimidation.

WHAT IS THE INVESTIGATIVE PROCESS?

The Investigations and Enforcement division of the Boston Fair Housing Commission investigates and enforces fair housing law in the City of Boston.

Investigators analyze information gathered from interviews and records to determine whether there is enough evidence to believe housing discrimination has occurred. Throughout the investigation, the Boston Fair Housing Commission offers all parties ample opportunity to settle the matter.

When a discrimination complaint results in a Probable Cause finding that cannot be resolved through conciliation or mediation, the Commission may hold a public hearing before a Fair Housing Commissioner. If the Hearing Commissioner finds that the housing provider has violated the law, the Commissioner may award damages, assess fines, and order other actions to prevent further discrimination.

When there is a finding of no Probable Cause, complainants have the right to appeal the determination to the Fair Housing Commission Board.

The Fair Housing Commission Board is comprised of 5 members who are appointed by the Mayor, and have powers that are somewhat similar to those of a judge.

INVESTIGATIONS & ENFORCEMENT

WHAT IS ILLEGAL UNDER FAIR HOUSING LAW?

Some examples *may* include:

- You are told the landlord does not accept rental assistance such as Section 8 vouchers.
- You make an appointment to look at a home or unit for sale but when you get there you're told the property has been sold. You later see the property is still on the market.
- You are told that an apartment has been rented but you later see that it has been listed again.
- You are a person with a disability and you are denied a request for a reasonable accommodation.
- You are a person with a disability and you are denied an apartment because you require a service or emotional support animal.
- You are denied housing because you are pregnant, have a child or children.
- You are told a property cannot be rented to families with children because of the presence of lead paint.
- You are told a higher selling price or rent than what was advertised or what you heard others being told.
- You are directed to or away from neighborhoods based on race, national origin, religion, or disability.
- You are given terms of a rental or sale that are different from those given to other persons, such as being assessed different fees.

If you have questions regarding Investigations and Enforcement or feel as if you've experienced housing discrimination in Boston, please contact:

In person: Monday–Friday, 9am–5pm

By phone: Monday–Friday, 9am–5pm, (617) 635-2500 TTY: (617) 635-2541

Or complete and submit an in-take form online through our website:

<http://www.boston.gov/fairhousing>

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English

