

COMMUNITY PULSE

JULY 2026

FAIR HOUSING RESOURCE CENTER



Fair Housing Resource Center

The Fair Housing Resource Center is a non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization offering several housing programs to benefit residents of Lake, Geauga and Ashtabula County, Ohio. The mission of the Fair Housing Resource Center is to promote equal housing opportunities for all persons and to advocate for fair housing and diversity in Lake and surrounding counties through the education and involvement of the public, governments, and the business community.

FHRC operates a Landlord/Tenant hot-line service for county residents to assist them in protecting their housing rights. FHRC also operates a fair housing intake complaint service for victims of housing discrimination. FHRC is a Housing Counseling agency certified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and provides homeowner counseling such as foreclosure prevention, predatory lending, home financing and repairs.



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Housing Assistance Programs Could Change: What Community Partners Need to Know

By: Patricia Kidd, Esq., Executive Director

Recent discussions at the federal level regarding Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8), public housing, and other HUD-assisted housing programs have raised questions among residents, housing providers, and service organizations.

Several proposals under consideration would provide local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) with greater flexibility in administering housing assistance programs. Among the ideas being discussed are work-related requirements, time limits for certain forms of assistance, and other policy changes intended to promote self-sufficiency among assisted households.

It is important to emphasize that these are proposals, not current program requirements. No changes have been implemented, and existing program rules remain in effect.

For local governments, nonprofit organizations, case managers, housing providers, and community advocates, this distinction is critical. News reports and social media discussions can sometimes create confusion among residents who may mistakenly believe they are at immediate risk of losing housing assistance. Providing accurate information and directing clients to official sources can help reduce unnecessary anxiety and prevent the spread of misinformation.

What We Know

While several policy concepts have been proposed, many details remain unclear, including how any future changes would be implemented, which households might be affected, and whether exemptions would apply to seniors, persons with disabilities, caregivers, or other vulnerable populations.

As with many federal policy proposals, significant revisions may occur before any changes are adopted.

Housing Assistance Programs Could Change: What Community Partners Need to Know

Continued

What Service Providers Can Do Now

Promote accurate information. Encourage clients to rely on official communications from their housing authority, HUD, and trusted community organizations. Encourage document readiness. Households should maintain current records related to income, employment, and household composition to ensure compliance with existing program requirements.

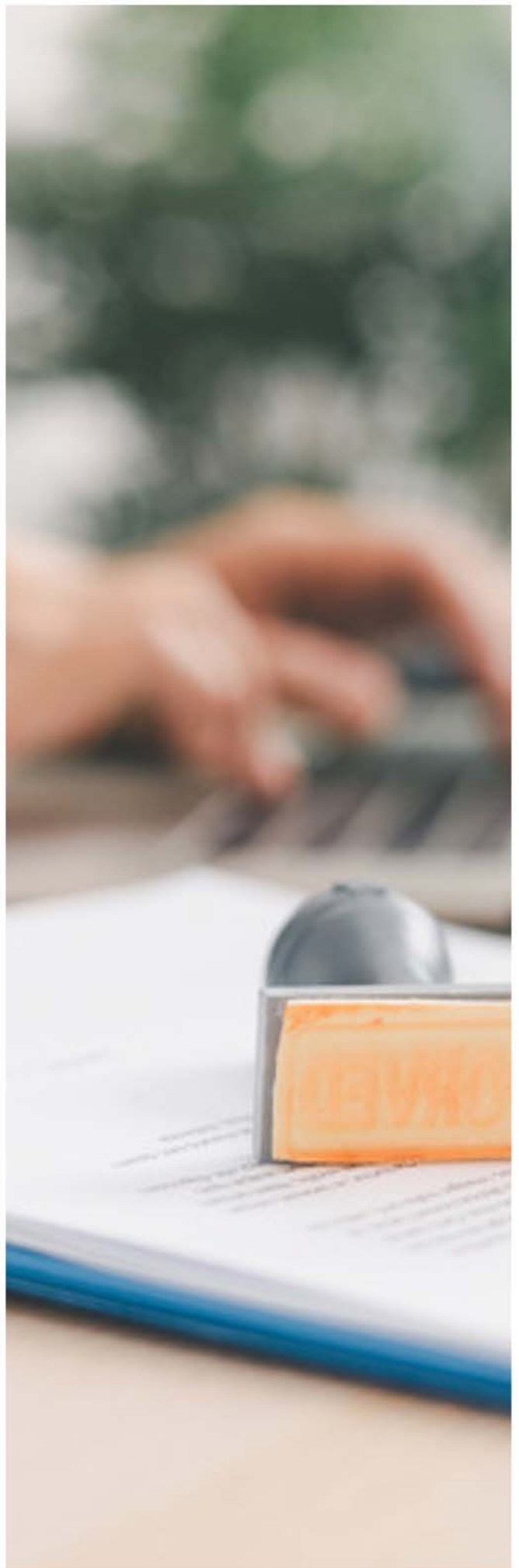
Strengthen financial capability. Budgeting assistance, financial literacy education, employment services, and benefits counseling can help households build stability regardless of future policy changes.

Identify vulnerable households early. Seniors, persons with disabilities, and households experiencing economic hardship may need additional support understanding and responding to policy developments.

Looking Ahead

Housing assistance programs play a critical role in helping families, seniors, and persons with disabilities maintain stable housing. While discussions about program changes are likely to continue, service providers should remember that no changes have been implemented at this time.

The most effective response is not speculation, but preparation. By sharing accurate information, helping households maintain program compliance, and strengthening local support systems, communities can ensure residents are better positioned to respond to whatever policy decisions may emerge in the future.



The Summer Noise Index: Lawnmowers, Kids & Living Together

By: Dana Pritschau, Certified Housing Counselor

Summer has a soundtrack: lawnmowers at 8 a.m., kids playing outside, cookouts, music drifting across the neighborhood, and the occasional leaf blower that seems louder than necessary.

In housing communities, especially apartments, condominiums, and closely spaced neighborhoods, noise becomes a bigger topic this time of year. As the weather improves, people naturally spend more time outdoors enjoying patios, yards, parks, and community spaces. With that increased activity comes an increase in everyday sounds.

Most of these sounds aren't problems—they're simply signs of people living their lives. Children playing, neighbors gathering with friends, or someone tackling weekend yard work are all normal parts of summer. However, when people live close together, understanding what is reasonable versus what may be disruptive helps keep communities functioning smoothly.

Many housing agreements address quiet hours or nuisance standards, but the real key is balance. Being mindful of volume, time of day, and how our activities may affect those around us can go a long way toward preventing conflicts. At the same time, a little patience and understanding can help neighbors navigate the realities of shared living.

Good communities are built on mutual respect. Everyone contributes a little noise—and everyone benefits from a little grace when occasional disruptions occur.

Summer living works best when we remember that community life is rarely silent—it's simply shared.



Summer Fun Doesn't Have to Break the Bank

By: Dana Pritschau, Certified Housing Counselor

With the cost of groceries, gas, and everyday expenses continuing to rise, many families are looking for ways to enjoy summer without spending a fortune. The good news? Some of the best summer memories come from simple activities that cost little—or nothing at all.

Pack a picnic and visit a local park. Bring sandwiches, a deck of cards, or a frisbee and enjoy an afternoon outdoors. Many communities also offer free concerts, movies in the park, festivals, and farmers markets throughout the summer months.

Take advantage of your local library. Libraries often host free summer programs for children and adults, including crafts, book clubs, educational events, and even passes to local attractions.

Explore your own backyard. Start a small garden, have a family game night on the patio, or host a neighborhood potluck where everyone brings a favorite dish to share. A simple campfire with s'mores and storytelling can create lasting memories.

For those looking to stay active, walking trails, bike paths, and community playgrounds offer free opportunities to enjoy the outdoors and get some exercise. Consider becoming a tourist in your own town by visiting historical sites, scenic overlooks, or local landmarks you've never explored.

Most importantly, remember that summer isn't about how much money you spend—it's about spending time with the people who matter most. A little creativity can turn an ordinary day into a memorable adventure.

This summer, challenge yourself to find one new low-cost activity each week. You may be surprised to discover that some of the best experiences are the simplest ones.



NEIGHBOR DISPUTES AND OHIO LANDLORD-TENANT LAW: WHAT RESIDENTS SHOULD KNOW

By: Michelle Brunson, Test Coordinator/ Staff Attorney



Living close to others and being part of a community can be one of the benefits of apartment living; but it can also lead to disagreements. Noise complaints, parking issues, pet concerns, property damage, and conflicts over shared spaces are some of the most common neighbor disputes reported by tenants and housing providers.

When a disagreement arises, communication is the best first step. Many issues can be resolved by speaking respectfully with the neighbor involved. If direct communication feels uncomfortable or unsuccessful, residents should document the issue and notify property management or their landlord in writing.



Under Ohio law, landlords are generally responsible for maintaining safe and livable housing and enforcing lease terms fairly and consistently. However, landlords are not automatically responsible for every disagreement between neighbors. Residents should report repeated disturbances, threats, property damage, excessive noise, illegal activity, or safety concerns to the housing provider in writing. If they feel unsafe or believe a crime has occurred, they should contact law enforcement. Documentation is important, including dates, photos, videos, police reports, witness information, and copies of communications.

Tenants should review their lease carefully, as many leases contain rules regarding noise, guest behavior, pets, parking, and community conduct. Violations of these rules may result in warnings, lease enforcement actions, or, in serious cases, eviction proceedings. Without proof of the issue, many housing providers will take these negative actions against both parties involved. However, it is important to note that a housing provider cannot retaliate against a tenant for merely reporting an issue. Though these situations are often nuanced, and what is considered retaliation must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.



To help prevent disputes, residents can practice good neighbor habits such as keeping noise levels reasonable, respecting shared spaces, cleaning up after pets, following parking rules, and communicating concerns politely. A strong community depends on mutual respect. Understanding both tenant responsibilities and landlord obligations can help everyone enjoy a safer, more peaceful living environment.



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- Subsidy
- Moving Assistance

STAR PROGRAM

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Must reside in Lake County

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- Assistance is subject to available funding

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if you qualify today!**

FOR MORE
INFORMATION

📞 440-392-0147

✉️ www.fhrc.org

📍 1100 Mentor Avenue, Painesville



Avoiding Rental Scams During Peak Moving Season

By: Michelle Brunson, Staff Attorney/ Test Coordinator

Summer is one of the busiest times of year for moving, which also makes it a prime season for rental scams. One of the most common warning signs is a listing that seems too good to be true. Extremely low rent prices, luxury amenities at bargain rates, or a property that appears significantly cheaper than similar units in the area should raise concerns. Scammers often steal photos and descriptions from legitimate listings and repost them with altered contact information.

Another common scam involves someone posing as a landlord or property owner who claims they are out of town, overseas, or otherwise unable to meet in person. They may request a security deposit, application fee, or first month's rent before allowing a viewing. In some cases, scammers even provide fake leases and fabricated identification documents to appear legitimate.

Renters should also be cautious of listings that create a sense of urgency. Statements such as "many people are interested," "send payment today to hold the unit," or "act immediately before it's gone" are often used to pressure applicants into making quick decisions without verifying details.

Before sending money or signing any documents, verify that the property exists and that the person advertising it has the authority to rent it. Never wire money, send gift cards, use cryptocurrency, or pay deposits through untraceable payment methods. Legitimate landlords typically provide secure payment options, written leases, and time to review documents carefully.

Be cautious about sharing Social Security numbers, bank account information, or copies of identification before confirming the listing is legitimate. If an application requests unusually sensitive information early in the process, ask questions before proceeding.

During the busy summer rental season, taking a few extra minutes to verify information can prevent financial loss and unnecessary stress. If something feels suspicious, trust your instincts.

The Best Time to Ask for Help Is Before an Eviction Is Filed

By: Patricia Kidd, Executive Director

Housing affordability continues to be a challenge for many households. Rising rents, higher utility costs, unexpected medical expenses, and changes in employment can quickly place families at risk of housing instability.

Across the country, housing organizations and community agencies are reporting ongoing concerns about eviction filings and the growing number of households struggling to remain stably housed.

The good news is that eviction is often preventable especially when warning signs are identified early and assistance is sought before a court case is filed.

Recognizing the Warning Signs

Eviction rarely happens overnight. In many cases, households experience challenges for weeks or months before an eviction action is filed.

Common warning signs include:

- Falling behind on rent payments
- Difficulty paying utility bills
- Reduced work hours or loss of employment
- Unexpected medical or family expenses
- Increased reliance on credit cards or loans
- Notices from landlords regarding late payments
- Requests to borrow money from friends or family



For service providers and case managers, these warning signs often present opportunities for early intervention.

Why Early Action Matters

Many tenants wait until they receive an eviction notice or court summons before asking for help. Unfortunately, by that stage, available options may be more limited and timelines much shorter.

Early intervention can help households:

- Develop a plan to address rent arrears
- Access available financial assistance programs
- Connect with legal or housing resources
- Explore budgeting and financial counseling services
- Avoid the long-term consequences associated with an eviction record



The Importance of Communication

Clear communication is one of the most effective ways to prevent eviction. When tenants face financial challenges, reaching out to their landlord early can help keep the situation from worsening. In some cases, landlords may be open to payment plans or extra time when they understand what the tenant is experiencing.

For housing professionals, case managers, and community leaders, the message is simple: the best time to help a household at risk of eviction is before a case is filed. By recognizing warning signs, connecting people to resources, and encouraging early action, communities can keep short-term difficulties from turning into long-term housing instability.



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE FRONT PORCH?

By: Dana Pritschau, Certified Housing Counselor

There was a time when the front porch was more than just part of a house—it was the heart of the neighborhood. On warm summer evenings neighbors gathered to chat, children played until the streetlights came on, and a simple wave could turn into a lifelong friendship.

Today, our lives move much faster. We communicate through texts and social media, work long hours, and often enter our homes through garages without ever seeing our neighbors. While technology has made it easier to stay connected with people across the world, it has sometimes made it harder to connect with the people right next door.

Strong communities don't happen by accident. They are built through small acts of kindness and connection. A friendly greeting, helping a neighbor carry groceries, checking in on an older resident, or attending a local community event can help create a sense of belonging for everyone.

The good news is that the spirit of the front porch isn't gone—it has simply changed. Whether it's chatting with a neighbor while walking the dog, gathering at a community event, or sharing a conversation over a backyard fence, opportunities to connect are all around us.

This month, consider taking a moment to reach out to someone in your neighborhood. You may discover that what we miss most about the old front porch days isn't the porch itself—it's the sense of community that came with it.



Ohio Tenants Still Have Rights: What HUD's New ESA Policy Does & Doesn't Change

By: Patricia Kidd, Esq. Executive Director



A recent memorandum from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has created questions for tenants, housing providers, and fair housing advocates regarding emotional support animals (ESAs). The memorandum signals a significant shift in how HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity may handle certain fair housing complaints involving assistance animals moving forward.

What the memorandum does not do is change Ohio law or eliminate the rights of Ohio tenants with disabilities. Ohio fair housing protections remain in place, and housing providers must continue to consider requests for reasonable accommodations on an individualized basis. The Ohio Civil Rights Commission continues to enforce Ohio's anti-discrimination laws, and individuals who believe they have experienced housing discrimination may still have remedies available through state agencies and the courts.

Under previous HUD guidance, emotional support animals and trained service animals were generally recognized as assistance animals that could qualify as reasonable accommodations under the Fair Housing Act. The new memorandum narrows HUD's enforcement approach and suggests that HUD may be less likely to pursue certain Fair Housing Act complaints involving untrained emotional support animals.

However, one important fact has not changed: the Fair Housing Act itself remains in effect. The law still requires housing providers to make reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities in many circumstances. While HUD appears to have changed its enforcement priorities regarding certain assistance animal complaints, Congress has not amended the Fair Housing Act, and disability-related housing protections continue to exist.

Ohio Tenants Still Have Rights: What HUD's New ESA Policy Does & Doesn't Change

Continued

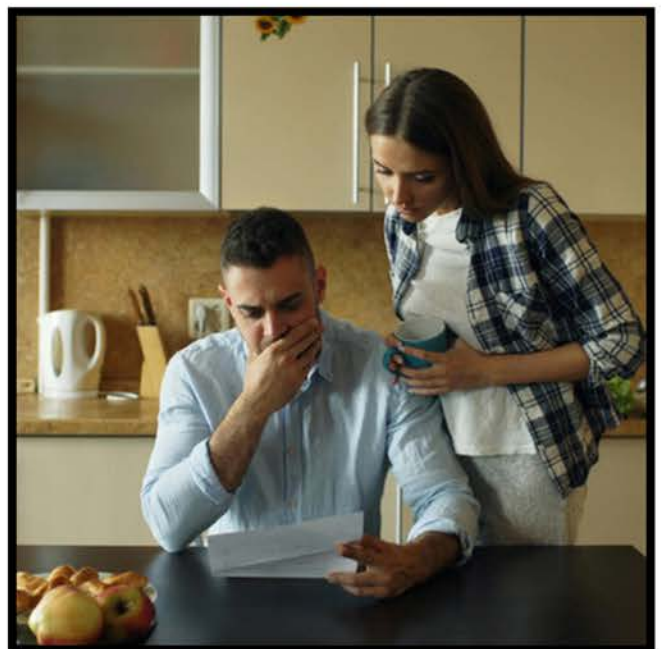
Because housing providers often look to HUD guidance when evaluating accommodation requests, changes in federal enforcement priorities can influence how disability-related requests are handled in practice, even when the underlying law remains unchanged. As a result, both tenants and housing professionals should pay close attention to future developments.

The memorandum also does not eliminate other legal protections. Complaints under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act in applicable situations, and state and local fair housing laws may still be available. Individuals may also pursue claims through the courts when they believe their rights have been violated.

For individuals who rely on an emotional support animal, now is an especially important time to maintain documentation from medical or mental health professionals, keep records of accommodation requests, and seek legal or fair housing assistance if a request is denied. Reliable documentation supporting the disability-related need for the animal remains important when requesting a reasonable accommodation.

While this policy shift may create uncertainty regarding federal enforcement, it does not eliminate disability-related housing protections. Housing providers should continue to evaluate accommodation requests on an individualized basis, and service providers should remain prepared to assist tenants in understanding and exercising their rights under federal, state, and local law.

Fair housing rights continue to exist, and Ohio's anti-discrimination protections remain in effect.



SUMMER HOUSING CHALLENGES: WHAT RENTERS AND HOMEOWNERS NEED TO KNOW RIGHT NOW

By: Michelle Brunson, Staff Attorney/ Test Coordinator



As summer begins, many families look forward to warmer weather, outdoor gatherings, vacations, and longer days. However, for many residents, summer can also bring a variety of housing-related challenges that impact comfort, finances, and overall quality of life. From rising costs and maintenance concerns to severe weather and housing instability, the summer months often highlight issues that can quickly become stressful if left unaddressed.

One of the biggest concerns for renters is the increased demand for housing during the summer moving season. Many leases end between May and August, college students relocate, and families often prefer to move while children are out of school. This surge in demand can make it more difficult to find affordable housing and may contribute to rising rental rates in some communities. Starting the housing search several months before a lease expires can provide more choices and reduce last-minute stress.

Summer weather can also create maintenance concerns for both renters and homeowners. Increased use of air conditioning can lead to significantly higher utility bills, while seasonal maintenance projects can create unexpected expenses. Air conditioning units may struggle during extreme heat, especially if filters have not been changed regularly or the system has not been serviced recently. To help control cooling costs, residents can close blinds during the hottest parts of the day, use ceiling fans to improve air circulation, and replace HVAC filters according to manufacturer recommendations. Even small adjustments to thermostat settings can lead to noticeable savings over the course of the summer.



Additionally, heavy rainstorms may reveal roof leaks, clogged gutters, poor drainage, or foundation issues. High humidity levels can contribute to mold and mildew growth, particularly in basements, bathrooms, and poorly ventilated areas. Residents should inspect their homes regularly for signs of water intrusion, musty odors, or visible mold growth. Pest activity often increases during warmer months as well. Ants, mosquitoes, flies, and other insects become more active and may find their way indoors through small openings around doors, windows, and utility lines.

Summer Housing Challenges

Continued

Keeping food sealed, promptly cleaning spills, and reporting maintenance issues such as damaged screens or gaps around entry points can help reduce pest problems.

With all of these problems, it is important to also consider the safety aspect of summer activity. Severe thunderstorms, power outages, and high temperatures can create emergency situations. Every household should have a basic emergency plan, including flashlights, batteries, bottled water, and a way to receive weather alerts. Knowing where important documents are stored and keeping emergency contact information accessible can also be valuable during unexpected events.

However, the weather and temperatures are not the only concerns for the summer. For many families, financial strain can become more noticeable during this time. Families may face higher electric bills, childcare expenses while school is out, vacation costs, or unexpected repair bills. Creating a seasonal budget and setting aside even a small emergency fund can help prepare for these additional expenses. Residents experiencing financial difficulties should communicate with landlords, mortgage lenders, or utility providers as early as possible, as assistance programs or payment arrangements may be available. If you are unsure of services or organizations near you, Google and 211 are great tools to point you in the right direction.

While summer brings many opportunities to enjoy the season, it also presents unique housing challenges. By planning ahead, addressing maintenance concerns early, budgeting for seasonal expenses, and staying prepared for weather-related emergencies, renters and homeowners can reduce stress and help ensure a safer, more comfortable summer. A little preparation today can prevent costly problems and provide greater peace of mind throughout the season.





Why Local Farmers Markets Matter

By: Hollie Rondini, Assistant Director

Summer is the perfect time to visit a local farmers market. From freshly picked tomatoes and sweet corn to homemade jams and baked goods, farmers markets offer much more than a place to shop. They provide an opportunity to support local farmers, strengthen communities, and enjoy some of the freshest foods available.

When you shop at a farmers market, you are often buying directly from the people who grew or produced the items. This direct connection allows consumers to learn more about where their food comes from, how it was grown, and the effort that goes into producing it. Many shoppers enjoy talking with farmers and gaining a greater appreciation for the agricultural community that helps feed our region.

Farmers markets also help keep money within the local economy. Small farms and local businesses rely on community support to thrive. Every purchase helps sustain local jobs, family-owned farms, and entrepreneurs who contribute to the economic health of the area.

Freshness is another major benefit. Many fruits and vegetables sold at farmers markets are harvested within a day or two of being offered for sale. Because the produce travels a shorter distance from farm to market, it often reaches consumers at peak flavor and nutritional value. Seasonal produce can also encourage families to try new foods and recipes throughout the year.

Beyond shopping, farmers markets often serve as gathering places. Neighbors meet, families spend time together, and community organizations share information about local resources and events. The atmosphere is welcoming and provides a chance to slow down, connect with others, and enjoy a sense of community.

For those looking to eat healthier, support local businesses, and spend more time outdoors, a visit to a farmers market is a simple way to accomplish all three. Whether you're searching for fresh produce, handmade goods, or just a pleasant Saturday morning activity, local farmers markets offer something for everyone.

This summer, consider stopping by a farmers market near you. You may leave with more than groceries—you may leave with a stronger connection to your community.

DRAGON EMPOWERMENT CENTER ASHTABULA

The Dragon Empowerment Center (DEC) provides food, clothing, hygiene items, school supplies, tutoring, and connections to community resources for students and families in need.

Call 440-855-0081 for current location and hours.

FREE SUMMER MEALS SUN MEALS PROGRAM

Children ages 1–18 (and qualifying young adults with disabilities) can receive free meals all summer long through SUN Meals, sponsored by the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce.

Call 1-866-348-6479 to find a site near you.

OHIO SENIOR FARMERS MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM (SFMNP)

Eligible Ohio seniors may receive benefits to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables, herbs, and honey from participating farmers markets. For information about eligibility, future enrollment periods, or other senior nutrition resources, contact the Ohio Aging and Disability Resource Network at 1-866-243-5678.



DID YOU KNOW.....?

By: Dana Pristchau, Housing Counselor



FOOD ASSISTANCE & COMMUNITY SUPPORT ASHTABULA DREAM CENTER

Ashtabula Dream Center provides food assistance, clothing, household essentials, and community support services to individuals and families in need throughout Ashtabula County. The organization works to help residents facing financial hardship access basic necessities and connect with additional community resources.

5028 Benefit Ave, Ashtabula, OH 44004 or call (440) 998-3732

GEAUGA COUNTY BOARD OF MENTAL HEALTH

Landlord Incentive Funding is designed to encourage landlords to provide permanent housing opportunities for individuals with a criminal record who have a mental illness, substance use disorder, or are being discharged from a psychiatric hospital. Eligible landlords may receive up to \$2,000 per qualifying tenant placement or lease renewal to help offset risks and costs associated with housing this population.

440-285-9617

G.O. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

G.O. Community Development Corporation provides free hot meals, a food pantry, clothing assistance, household items, and support programs for families and individuals in need. The organization continues to operate these services in 2026.

(440) 997-0040



A/C Wars: Who Controls the Thermostat?

By: Dana Pritschau, Certified Housing Counselor



Every summer, it happens somewhere: one person is freezing, another is sweating, and suddenly the thermostat becomes a peace negotiation tool.

In shared housing, temperature comfort can become a real issue—especially in apartments, multi-unit buildings, or homes with roommates or extended families. While it may sound lighthearted, it often raises real questions about habitability, communication, and reasonable expectations in shared living spaces. Some buildings have centralized heating and cooling systems, which means tenants may have limited or no direct control over temperature settings. In other situations, individual units allow more flexibility—but that doesn't always prevent disagreements when comfort levels clash.

The best solutions usually aren't technical—they're conversational. Setting shared expectations early, using fans or space heaters safely, and respecting different comfort levels can go a long way toward avoiding "summer thermostat drama."

However, it's also important to recognize that in larger apartment complexes or managed housing, residents may not always have full control over temperature settings or system performance. When heat or cooling issues become persistent—or when a medical condition makes temperature control especially important—there may be additional steps or requests that can be made through the housing provider.

Residents are encouraged to reach out to the Fair Housing Resource Center (FHRC) for guidance and support when housing-related concerns involve health needs or accessibility considerations.

Housing works best when small issues don't turn into big conflicts—and sometimes that starts with simply agreeing on a temperature that everyone can survive.

Dear Housing Hollie,

I recently applied for an apartment and was told that families with young children are only allowed to rent first-floor units because the landlord doesn't want children living on the second floor. I was surprised because there were second-floor apartments available, but I was told those units were reserved for households without children. Is it legal for a landlord to decide where families with children can live within a property?

Warm Regards,
Wondering About Fairness

Housing



Dear Wondering About Fairness,

Families with children are protected under the federal Fair Housing Act under familial status. This means that housing providers cannot treat applicants differently simply because they have children under 18 living in the household.

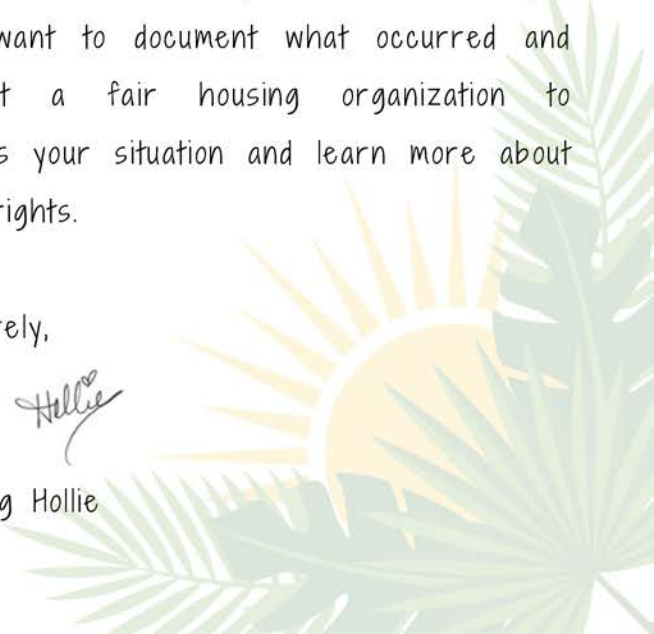
In most cases, a landlord cannot require families with children to live only on certain floors, in specific buildings, or in designated areas of a property. This practice, often referred to as "steering," may be considered housing discrimination because it limits housing choices based on a protected characteristic. Families with children should generally have the same opportunity to choose from available units as any other applicant who meets the property's rental criteria.

If you believe you have been denied housing opportunities because you have children, you may want to document what occurred and contact a fair housing organization to discuss your situation and learn more about your rights.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hollie" with a small heart above the letter 'i'.

Housing Hollie



Dear Housing Hollie,

I paid a security deposit when I moved into my apartment. I moved out over a month ago, left the unit clean, and provided my forwarding address, but I still haven't received my deposit back. My former landlord isn't returning my calls. How long do landlords have to return a security deposit in Ohio?

Sincerely,

Waiting and Wondering

Hollie



Dear Waiting and Wondering,

Under Ohio law, landlords generally have 30 days after a tenant moves out and provides a forwarding address to return the security deposit or provide an itemized list explaining any deductions that were made. The itemized statement should clearly identify the reasons for any deductions, such as unpaid rent or damages beyond normal wear and tear.

If more than 30 days have passed and you have not received either your deposit or an explanation of deductions, you may have legal remedies available. It is important to keep copies of your lease, photographs of the unit at move-out, your forwarding address notification, and any emails, letters, or text messages exchanged with your former landlord. These records can be helpful if a dispute arises.

Remember that landlords cannot withhold a security deposit simply because a tenant moved out or because routine cleaning and normal wear occurred during the tenancy. If your former landlord continues to ignore your attempts to communicate, you may wish to contact an attorney, your local legal aid organization, or our office to learn more about the options available to you.

Sincerely,

Housing Hollie



SO YOU WANT CHICKENS? WHAT BEGINNER FLOCK OWNERS NEED TO KNOW

By: Hollie Rondini, Assistant Director

Backyard chickens have become increasingly popular, and it's easy to see why. Fresh eggs, entertaining personalities, and the satisfaction of caring for your own flock make chickens appealing to many homeowners. But before bringing home those adorable fluffy chicks, there are a few things every beginner should know.

First, check your local zoning laws and homeowner association rules. While many communities allow backyard chickens, some have restrictions on the number of birds, coop placement, or whether roosters are permitted. It's always best to know the rules before you start building a coop. Speaking of coops, chickens need safe and secure housing. A well-built coop should protect birds from predators, provide adequate ventilation, and offer enough space for each chicken to move comfortably. Most experts recommend at least 3-4 square feet of coop space per bird and additional room in an outdoor run.

Food and water may seem simple, but chickens have specific nutritional needs. Quality layer feed, fresh water, and occasional treats will help keep your flock healthy and productive. Chickens also enjoy scratching for bugs and pecking at vegetation, which can help reduce pests in your yard.

New owners are often surprised to learn that chickens have distinct personalities. Some are friendly and curious, while others prefer to keep their distance. Spending time with your flock helps them become more comfortable around people and makes daily care easier.

It's also important to remember that chickens require year-round care. Eggs still need to be collected, water containers need to be cleaned, and coops need regular maintenance regardless of the weather. Chickens aren't difficult pets, but they do depend on consistent care and attention.

Finally, don't expect perfect eggs every day. Factors such as breed, age, weather, and daylight hours all influence egg production. Patience is part of the experience.

For many people, keeping chickens becomes more than a hobby—it's a rewarding lifestyle. With a little preparation and a commitment to proper care, beginner chicken owners can enjoy fresh eggs, fascinating pets, and a new appreciation for where their breakfast comes from.



Fair Housing and Short-Term Rentals: Does the Fair Housing Act Apply to Airbnb and VRBO?

By: Patricia Kidd, Esq.

With the continued popularity of Airbnb, VRBO, and other short-term rental platforms, a common question has emerged: Do fair housing laws apply to these properties? The answer isn't always straightforward.

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in the sale or rental of a dwelling based on race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, or national origin. Whether an Airbnb or VRBO is considered a "dwelling" depends largely on how the property is being used.

A vacation cabin rented for a weekend may be viewed more like a hotel stay and may not fall within the Fair Housing Act. However, a property rented for several weeks or months while someone relocates, undergoes home repairs, or seeks permanent housing is much more likely to be considered a dwelling and therefore subject to fair housing protections.

There is no bright-line rule based solely on the length of the stay. Instead, courts and enforcement agencies look at the overall circumstances, including whether the property is functioning as a residence rather than simply a place for transient lodging.

Even when the Fair Housing Act may not ultimately apply, Airbnb and VRBO each maintain their own nondiscrimination policies that prohibit hosts from discriminating against guests based on protected characteristics. Hosts who violate these policies may face removal from the platform or other penalties. In one well-publicized case, the Department of Justice alleged that a family with young children was denied an Airbnb rental because the listing stated it was "not suitable for children," raising concerns of unlawful familial status discrimination.

The Bottom Line

If you own or manage a short-term rental, it is wise to approach every rental decision as though fair housing laws apply. Avoid discriminatory advertisements, screening practices, or rental decisions based on a person's protected class. Treat every applicant fairly, consistently, and respectfully.

As short-term rentals continue to evolve, so too will the legal landscape. If you have questions about your rights or responsibilities under the Fair Housing Act, the Fair Housing Resource Center is here to help.



Contact us for More information

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