



CT FAIR HOUSING CENTER

In the Spotlight

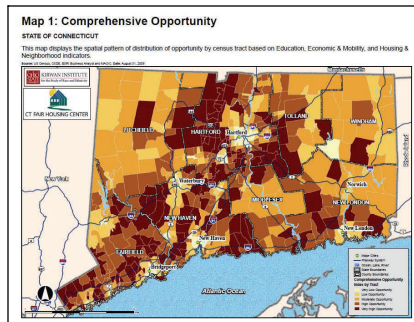
- **Find out why where you live matters.**
- **Did you know landlords cannot request medical records?**
- **Foreclosure Prevention Clinic Helps Save Homes**

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Opening Doors

Does where you live really matter? Absolutely!



Did you know that in Connecticut over 80% of African-Americans and 79% of Latinos live in low and very low opportunity areas? By contrast, only 25.84% of whites live in communities that are “opportunity isolated.”

This is just one of the findings in a report recently unveiled by the Connecticut Fair Housing Center. The report, “People, Place and Opportunity: Mapping Communities of Opportunity in

Connecticut,” commissioned by the Center from the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity draws on over 50 years of social science research concluding that where you live has an impact on the opportunities

you can access – opportunities like quality education, crime-free communities, and social and employment networks.

Using a series of indicators, the report assesses the opportunity available in each census tract in Connecticut. The result is a map of the state (above left) clearly illustrating that not all parts of Connecticut are on equal footing. The policy prescriptions

generated by this report are two-fold – we must create opportunity in neighborhoods that are opportunity isolated and we must also link people to existing opportunities.

Over the next several months the Center anticipates that this report will spark debate and discussion about concrete proposals to change the opportunity landscape of Connecticut, such as regional fair housing initiatives, policies to support inclusionary zoning, public transportation investments, and support of innovative public school strategies. We encourage your participation! To access the report, go to <http://www.ctfairhousing.org>.

Landlords cannot ask for medical records

A Federal Judge has ruled that a Connecticut landlord providing accessible housing to persons with physical disabilities cannot request copies of medical records, psychological and psychiatric reports, or other medical information from applicants for housing or deny applicants it felt could not “live independently.” (*Laflamme v. New Horizons, Inc.* 605 F.Supp.2d 378 (D.Conn.

2009). The ruling concluded that New Horizons’ use of medical records and diagnoses to reject applicants for housing based on stereotypes violated the Fair Housing Act. Following this ruling, New Horizons settled this case by paying \$600,000.

A landlord who provides housing for persons with disabilities may only ask an applicant to verify that he or

she has a disability. It cannot demand medical records or reject an applicant because it does not think he or she can live independently. If a landlord asks you to sign a medical release or asks for your medical records, call the Center. We will help you determine if this is legal. Contact the Center at (860)247-4400 or www.ctfairhousing.org.

Foreclosure Clinic Class Schedule

5:30—7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 15, 2009

Tuesday, January 19, 2010

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Tuesday, April 20, 2010

Where:

University of Hartford

Handel Performing Arts Center, Community Room

35 Westbourne Parkway, Hartford



1 in 14 mortgages in Connecticut in trouble. Get Help.

A recent article in the *Hartford Courant* reports that 1 in 14 mortgages in Connecticut is in foreclosure or more than 90 days past due. This is the highest number of Connecticut foreclosures or delinquencies in more than 30 years.

The Connecticut Fair Housing Center is collaborating with the University of Hartford Paralegal Program to expand its Foreclosure Prevention Clinics, offering guidance on how to navigate the judicial foreclosure process and provide one-on-

one counseling with volunteer attorneys as well as paralegal students from the University of Hartford Paralegal Program.

These free classes will be held on the **third Tuesday of every month** at the University of Hartford's Handel Performing Arts Center Community Room (directions can be found at <http://www.hartford.edu/about/info.asp?item=driving>), **from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.** and are open to anyone facing foreclosure. No pre-registration is required. For

a full list of classes, check the sidebar.

A new tool to help homeowners fight foreclosure! "Representing Yourself in Foreclosure" provides step by step instructions to help non-lawyers navigate the sometimes daunting foreclosure legal process, including the highly successful Foreclosure Mediation program. To get a copy of the guide, go to www.ctfairhousing.org or call Letty at (860)247-4400, ext. 0722 to have a hard copy mailed to you. **Available January 2010.**

You Can Help Distressed Homeowners

The Center is seeking volunteer attorneys to help homeowners in foreclosure. As reported above, the Center is offering foreclosure prevention clinics to homeowners.

The clinics provide homeowners with an understanding of the foreclosure mediation process followed by the opportunity to meet one-

on-one with volunteer attorneys for further information and counsel.

We are offering clinics in Hartford, New Britain, and New Haven once a month in the evening. For lawyers who want to help distressed homeowners but do not want to provide court representation, participation in these clinic counseling ses-

sions is a great pro bono option. For more information about how to volunteer or if you are interesting in taking a foreclosure case, contact Keith Fuller at 860-247-4400.

New Foreclosure Prevention Attorney at the Center

The Center is pleased to announce that Jeffrey Gentes will join the organization in January 2010 to work on foreclosure prevention issues. Mr. Gentes grew up and went to college in Connecticut before attending New York University Law School and beginning his law practice in New York

City. He currently represents homeowners in foreclosure as a member of the Staten Island Legal Services staff. Until Jeff begins work, experienced foreclosure attorney Keith Fuller will be teaching the Foreclosure Clinic and working with the lawyers on the Pro Bono Referral Panel.

If you would like more information about the Center's foreclosure prevention program, go to www.ctfairhousing.org.

Testers are the Center of our Center

CT Fair Housing Center testers allow the Center to uncover acts of discrimination which would have otherwise remained undetected. In November the Center honored many of its testers at an appreciation dinner held in Hartford. Themed “You’re the Center of Our Center,” the dinner acknowledged the important contributions of testing to the resolution of discrimination complaints filed by the Center on behalf of its clients.

The keynote speaker Cynthia Watts Elder, a former fair housing tester, explained how her testing experience resulted in the filing of a housing discrimination complaint. The resulting case recognized testers legal right to initiate housing discrimination complaints in Connecticut. A former Executive Director of the CT Commission on Human Rights & Opportunities (CHRO), Cynthia emphasized the importance and

value of testing and encouraged present testers to continue in their work for the Center.

As one tester said after hearing how her work had helped a victim of discrimination get the compensation she deserved, “I had no idea my work made such a difference.”



Landlords cannot refuse Section 8, RAP, or SDGs

“I don’t accept security deposit guarantees.”

“I don’t want to take Section 8 tenants.”

“I won’t renew your lease because I’m not accepting RAP certificates.”

Has a landlord ever said one of these things to you? If

so, you have been the victim of housing discrimination. **More than 30% of the discrimination complaints the Center receives every year are about source of income discrimination.**

IF THIS HAPPENS TO YOU, CALL THE CENTER. We can help you by investigating your complaint and representing you in court or at

the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. If you are successful in proving your case, the landlord will have to agree to accept vouchers, be trained on the fair housing laws, and may have to pay you for any out-of-pocket expenses as well as for any pain or suffering the refusal to rent might have caused. Call the Center at 860-247-4400.

Here Today, Gone Tomorrow! Please Donate Now!

The crucial work of the CT Fair Housing Center was acknowledged by our inclusion in the recent Legislative budget. Unfortunately, the Center’s funding was later cut by \$100,000 due to the falling State income. There may be more cuts endangering our ability to help people like Tyree Winfrey, (right), one of the 300

victims of housing discrimination who seek the Center’s help each year.

We desperately need your help if we are to continue and expand the work you see reflected in these pages. The need for our foreclosure prevention



work has dramatically increased, and Connecticut’s citizens continue to suffer housing discrimination.

Please consider a generous donation to the Center!

Become a Fair Housing Tester!

What is fair housing testing?

Testing is designed to determine whether people looking for housing are treated differently.

Can anyone apply?

Yes, so long as you have voicemail or an answering machine, and are thorough and objective.

Do I need training?

The Connecticut Fair Housing Center will provide training in advance of any testing.

What is the time commitment?

The time commitment can vary depending on your schedule and interest, and the Center’s testing needs.

Will I be paid for my testing work?

Yes. The Center provides its testers with a small stipend and provides reimbursement for mileage.

How do I apply?

Contact Gloribel Gonzalez or Monique Muller at 860-247-4400 or toll free at 1-888-247-4401 to become a tester

“Let us be dissatisfied until integration is not seen as a problem but as an opportunity to participate in the beauty of diversity.”

~Martin Luther King, Jr.

Connecticut Fair Housing Center

221 Main Street
Hartford, CT 06106
888-247-4401 (Toll Free)
860-247-4400
www.ctfairhousing.org

Text by the Staff of the Connecticut Fair Housing Center

Photos by Amanda Boggs and Roger Castonguay

The Connecticut Fair Housing Center is a statewide non-profit fair housing organization dedicated to ensuring that all people, and principally those with scarce financial resources, have equal access to housing opportunities in Connecticut.

To accomplish its mission, the Center provides legal assistance and investigative services to Connecticut residents who believe they may have been the victim of housing discrimination, education and outreach on the fair housing laws, strategic planning and advice for cities and towns on fair housing compliance, and foreclosure prevention legal assistance. To learn more about our organization, go to www.ctfairhousing.org.

Visit us on-line at
www.ctfairhousing.org

Communities Must Fight Housing Discrimination

Recipients of money from HUD are required to affirmatively further fair housing, even if the money is for non-housing related activities. Because Westchester County, NY did not affirmatively further fair housing, it now must spend more than \$62 million to build housing and integrate neighborhoods in that region.

Connecticut cities and towns also receive money from HUD. Each Connecticut city or town receiving HUD money must affirmatively further fair housing. This obligation requires more than hanging up fair housing posters. Cities

and towns must be sure that all neighborhoods in their communities welcome all people. To do this, cities and town receiving HUD money must:

- Look at whether there are any impediments to housing choice;
- Create a plan to address any impediments;
- Implement the plan by taking steps to address any fair housing violations;
- Keep records of all steps taken.

What can you do to ensure that your community is affirmatively furthering fair housing?

- Ask your city or town for its Analysis of Impediments.
- Request information about any steps taken to fight discrimination.
- Send a copy of your town's Analysis and implementation steps to the Center. We are in the process of reviewing what cities and towns are doing to affirmatively further fair housing.

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