Resident and Applicant Fact Sheet: Reasonable Accommodations in Public Housing

If you have a disability and need changes to apply for public housing or to fully enjoy the housing where you live, you have rights.

What is a reasonable accommodation (RA)?

A reasonable accommodation is a change to a rule or service that lets someone with disabilities have an equal chance to use and enjoy public housing. This includes making physical changes to a home or common areas. It can also mean changing programs or activities. In other words, RAs remove barriers that stop a person with a disability from fully using public housing.

The Fair Housing Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 all protect people with disabilities from discrimination in housing. These laws say that public housing agencies (PHAs) must make RAs for people with disabilities.

Does a PHA have to approve and pay for reasonable accommodations?

A PHA must approve a request for an RA if there is a disability-related need. A PHA can deny the request if it is not reasonable, like if it costs too much or changes what the agency does too much. Denying a request for this reason is rare. If a PHA denies an RA, they must engage with you to find a different option. The PHA must pay for RAs. The PHA cannot have you pay extra fees or agree to special conditions to get an RA.

Who is considered a person with a disability?

A person with a disability is someone who has a physical or mental condition that substantially limits one or more major life activities. This also includes people who have a history of a disability or are thought to have one.

How can I request a reasonable accommodation?

You can ask for an RA at any time, even during an application or eviction process. A person with a disability, or someone acting on their behalf, can make the request. You can ask for an RA in person or in writing. A PHA cannot require a specific process or form. You may make as many requests as needed.

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What happens after I make a request?

The PHA must process requests within a reasonable amount of time, usually within 10 business days of getting the request or documentation. The PHA may only ask for information to show that the accommodation is needed because of a disability. If the PHA knows about the disability and the need for the RA, they may not ask for more information. If the PHA plans to deny a request because it would be too costly or would require a fundamental change to PHA programs, the PHA must work with you to find another option.

What if I need an assistance animal?

PHAs must make policy changes to allow a person with disabilities to have an assistance animal. An assistance animal does tasks or provides other support, including emotional support, that helps reduce the effects of a disability.

How can I file a complaint?

If you think you have been discriminated against, you can file a complaint with HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at (800) 669-9777 (voice) or (800) 877-8339 (relay). You can also fill out a complaint form online at https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/online-complaint.

More information:

The Reasonable Accommodations for Public Housing Residents and Applicants Series includes short webinars, fact sheets, and resources: https://tinyurl.com/mur79ms8.

